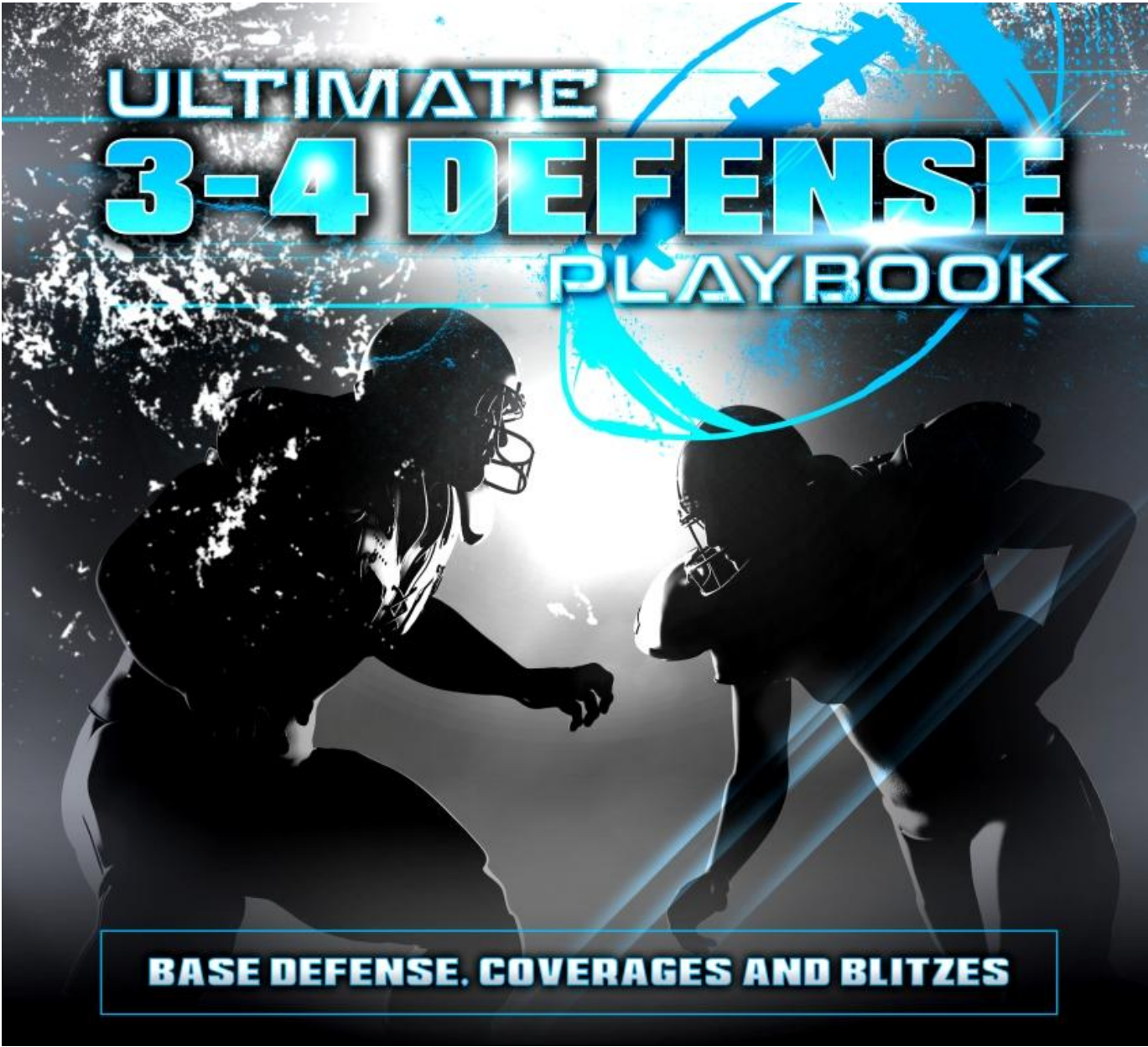




ULTIMATE 3-4 DEFENSE PLAYBOOK

BASE DEFENSE. COVERAGES AND BLITZES

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Introduction

Born in the 1940s at the University of Oklahoma, the 3-4 defense was created by Bud Wilkinson before then being taken into the pros by Chuck Fairbanks. It has been growing in popularity ever since, and now is among the most popular base defenses in football.

The 3 of the 3-4 defense represents the three defensive linemen, playing with a hand in the ground. Their roles will stay fairly consistent – play their gaps, eat space, and allow the four athletes behind the defensive line to fly to the ball and make plays.

Those four athletes are the linebackers, representing the 4 in the 3-4. This is where the advantage of the 3-4 front becomes present. The offensive line and quarterback will never know which of the outside linebackers will be blitzing or dropping into coverage, and that's without accounting for the fact that the inside linebackers could blitz as well.

When it comes to defending the run, there are two differing systems: one-gap and two-gap. Which you choose may end up having less to do with your personal preference and more to do with the personnel available to you. True two-gap players are very difficult to find, as there simply just aren't that many players with the size and strength to do the job consistently. The two-gap defensive lineman must play an offensive lineman heads up, and plug the gap to whichever side the ball is run to, eating up a double team and keeping his linebackers free to flow to the football.

The one-gap system is suited more to smaller, more athletic defensive linemen – players built more like 3-4 defensive tackles. In this type of system, gap responsibilities are split between defensive linemen and linebackers, allowing all the members of the front seven to play more decisively and aggressively.

Whether you decide to play a one-gap system, a two-gap system or some combination of the two, all the information you need to build a dynamic 3-4 defense can be found in this strategy guide.

Last note before we get started... if you'd like to see all of these coverages and blitzes explained with step by step video instructions, coaching tips, and key defensive drills for 3-4 teams you can upgrade your package by visiting the page below:

<http://www.football-tutorials.com/p/upgrade-34>

Legend



Hook zone: A zone located in the middle of the field about 8-12 yards off the line of scrimmage.



Deep zone: A player assigned the deep zone will step back to about 18-20 yards off the line of scrimmage, playing 'top down' defense, meaning that he won't allow any player to get deeper than him on the field.



Flat zone: The flat starts at the line of scrimmage and goes about 8 yards deep, but is located on the outside of the field, from the numbers to the sideline.



Curl to Flat zone: A curl to flat assignment means the defender is responsible for the area covering the numbers to the sideline and the line of scrimmage up to about 10-12 yards deep. Their first responsibility is to defend against the curl, after which they will move up to defend the flat.



Blitz: The player will blitz, attacking the quarterback through the illustrated gap.



Man Coverage Assignment: Indicates a player the defender is responsible for covering man to man. Depending on the play, the defender may need to force said man to the inside or outside.

3-4 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment – Defensive Line

While each position's responsibilities and alignment are subject to change based on the playcall, there are certain base responsibilities that apply to each position on every given position, unless otherwise noted. The alignment is also subject to change based on the variety of offensive formations you may see. Here however, we will look at the alignment when facing a typical two back offense. It should also be noted that a player's position on the field – left or right – is made from the point of view of the defense. For example, the left defensive end lines up in front of the right offensive tackle.

The '3' of the 3-4 represents the three defensive linemen, all playing with a hand in the dirt. With fewer linemen than the 3-4 front, the 3-4 linemen are generally bigger, stronger players. For the purposes of this guide, we will be describing the roles of each player assuming the defense is playing a classic 3-4 'Okie' front.

Left End (LE), Right End (RE): While defensive ends in the 3-4 are looking to first and foremost create a pass rush, the defensive end in the 3-4 is doing just the opposite – playing the run first, then the pass.

Depending on the front, their gap responsibilities in the run game will change. When lining up as a 5 technique end – heads up over an offensive tackle – they will be expected to play a two-gap technique. This means they must read the backfield, watching both the B and C gaps and flowing towards the ball.

If they were playing a one-gap technique, they would have responsibility for just one gap, allowing them to use their athleticism to shoot the gap and take advantage of what is usually smaller stature than the two-gap ends. This is why size and strength are more important in the 3-4 defense – with only 3 defensive linemen, they must all be able to beat double teams, and eat space to occupy the offensive linemen and keep the linebackers free to make a play on the ball carrier. Generally, the better pass rusher of the two ends should play the right side, and the better run stopper of the two the left, but this is not as important a distinction in the 3-4.

Nose Tackle (NT): Playing the nose tackle in the 3-4 is one of the most difficult jobs in all of football, and when it comes to the 3-4 defense, it's also one of the most important. When a nose tackle does his job right, he's plugging both 'A' gaps right up the center of the defense, and drawing double teams so that the inside linebackers are free to flow to the ball. There is only one way that a person can do this – they are big, and they are strong. This should be one of - if not the - biggest, strongest player on your team. If you don't have a player who can consistently fill the type of role, a one-gap system – built better for quicker, attacking nose tackles – may be a better idea.



Figure 1: Defensive Line Gap Responsibilities

3-4 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment - Linebackers

The '4' of the 3-4 represents your linebackers. These players need to be able to quickly diagnose plays and attack the football in the running game, while also possessing the speed and agility to drop into coverage on passing downs.

Outside Linebacker (Sam, S; Will, W): After the nose tackle – and arguably right in line with – the outside linebacker position is one of the most important for building a dominant 3-4 defense. Not only do they need to be effective at rushing the passer, but they must also set the edge in the run game and hold up in coverage as well.

Essentially, they are stand up defensive ends. But by placing five players on the line of scrimmage (three linemen and two outside linebackers), there is an element of surprise, as the defense is unsure as to which of the outside linebackers will blitz the quarterback.

In the run game, the outside linebackers are in charge of making sure no one gets outside of them, funneling everything back inside towards the rest of the defense.

In some defenses, these players are completely interchangeable. In others, teams simply assign left and right designations, and let the players always work from the same spot. Most teams however, will use a strong side and weak side designation.

Sam (S, Strong Side Linebacker)

Much like a Sam linebacker in a 3-4 scheme, this is usually the better run defender off the two outside linebackers. Bigger, stronger, and ideally comfortable dropping back into coverage, as if your team employs a man scheme, he will be the one covering tight end more often than not.

Will (W, Weak Side Linebacker)

The smaller, rangier of the two outside linebackers, this player needs the speed and quickness to beat more athletic left tackles off the edge and pressure the quarterback. They will also be asked to set the edge in the run game – he is the one asked to prevent cutback and bootlegs from escaping to his side – and occasionally drop back into coverage, but this is a spot most teams are looking to create pass rushing opportunities from more than anything else.

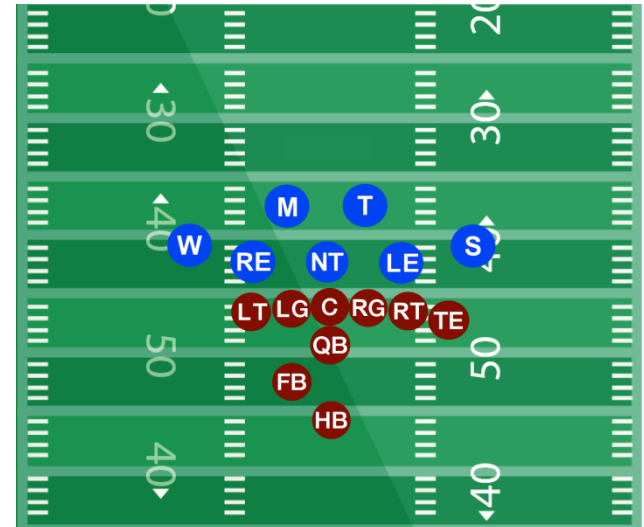


Figure 2: Classic 'Okie' Front 3-4

3-4 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment – Linebackers Continued

Inside Linebacker (Mike, M; Ted, T): In the 3-4 front, we play two inside linebackers, the Mike and the Ted. These two linebackers have roles very close to that of a 3-4 Mike, with one of them usually taking the role as the quarterback of the defense. Aside from his run and pass responsibilities, he will also be in charge of getting the defense set and calling out any necessary adjustments.

In general, both inside linebackers will need to be better at taking on and shedding blocks than linebackers in a 3-4 – especially if the team is playing a one-gap system. In a two-gap system, the defensive line will be expected to eat blocks and keep the linebackers free to flow to the ball. In a one-gap system, each inside linebacker is responsible for a specific gap, and will be taking offensive linemen on directly much more often.

In Figure 3, we see an ‘Okie’ alignment and Mike and Ted designations for the inside linebackers. In this example the Ted lines up on the strong side and the Mike on the weak side, but some teams do not choose to make this designation. Some teams

assign left or right sides to inside linebackers and leave them there. In that case, either linebacker could be expected to take on the role of the Ted backer. The two inside linebacker positions are similar, but there are some differences.

Mike

The Mike linebacker is the playmaker. Normally slightly smaller than the Ted, he is the more sudden of the two. It is vital that we keep him off blocks, able to use his athleticism to attack the ball on the run or blitz, or to drop back into pass coverage.

Ideally, as the defensive play caller, he is also an on field extension of the coaching staff.

Ted

The Ted linebacker is often referred to as the fullback of the defense. Slower, but also stronger and built more solidly than the Mike, he wants to attack blockers, allowing Mike linebacker to flow to the ball and make the tackle.

Together, these linebackers form a dynamic one two punch for stuff runs as early as they start.

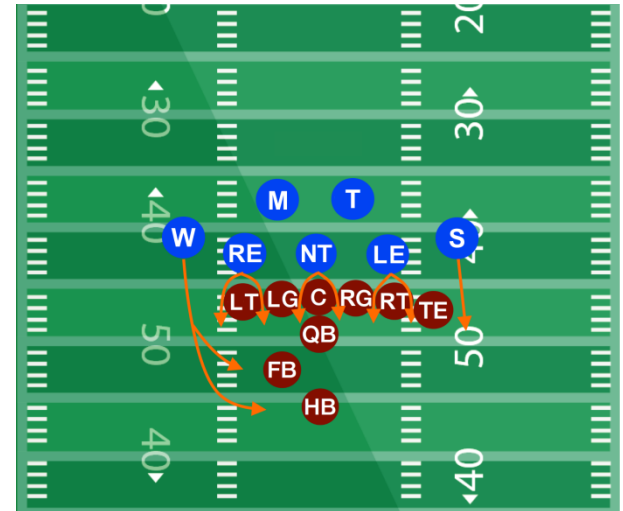


Figure 3: 3-4 'Okie' Front Gap Responsibilities

3-4 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment - Secondary

Whether you're playing 3-4 or 3-4, the responsibilities and alignment of the secondary behind the front stay the same.

Cornerbacks (CB): Every coach has their favorite type of defensive back, but the reality is that sometimes you might have to adjust your scheme to better fit the personnel around you. First you have to see if press coverage is a fit for your team before you even get into man vs. zone. If you do want to play press, you're going to need corners with the size and strength to bump receivers at the line effectively. Whether you're bumping at the line or not though, most coaches will lean towards either man or zone coverage philosophies.

Man coverage demands corners with the physical tools to stay with wideouts one on one, able to track the ball in the air and make a play on it when necessary. Zone coverage on the other hand requires a different skillset, where corners must read both the quarterback's eyes and the

receivers routes so that they can get into position to either bat the ball down or separate the receiver from the ball after the catch. As for their alignment, this will vary slightly depending on the whether the defense is in a Cover 1 or Cover 2 alignment. In a Cover 2 alignment – as pictured in Figure 4 – the corners will line up with an inside shade on their assigned receivers. With two safeties deep, they know they have better protection towards the sideline and that the defense is vulnerable up the seam, and by lining up inside they are influencing the receiver outside.

In a Cover 1 alignment – Figure 5 for reference – the receivers will line up with an outside shade, moving receivers inside towards the single high safety and away from the sidelines, where they don't have help.

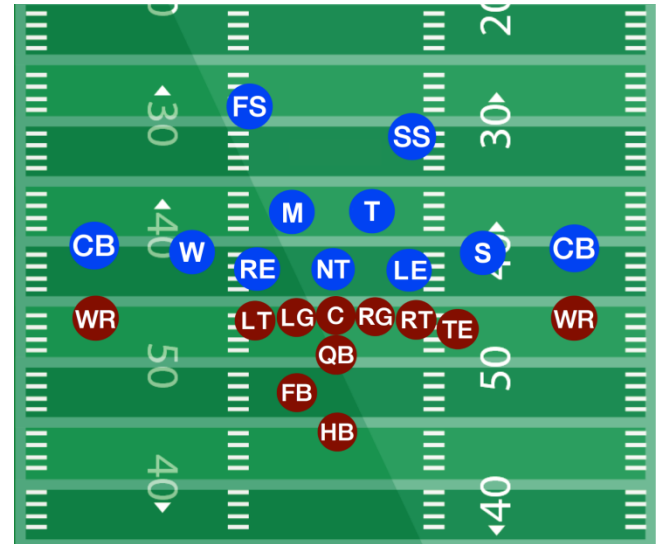


Figure 4: Base 3-4 Cover 2 Alignment

3-4 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment – Secondary Continued

Free Safety (FS): The roles of both safeties vary greatly from team to team, but all teams will keep at least one true free safety. Some teams use this player more conservatively, forcing him to keep all players in front of him at all times, while others will allow him to play more instinctually, a ball hawk looking to make plays all over the field. Ultimately, he needs to be able to do some combination of both of these things, making plays in the run game and passing game if he wants to be truly effective. How you use him will depend on the personnel available to you, and that may factor into which alignment you prefer to run more often as well.

When playing Cover 1, the free safety is the only player back, and as such will usually play a couple yards deeper. In Cover 2, the free safety has a second safety deep with him, cutting the deep responsibilities in half.

Strong Safety (SS): Classically, the strong safety was a much better run defender than the free safety, built to play in the box almost as a fifth linebacker at times. If you prefer to play a Cover 1 alignment, this is likely the type of player you would prefer. The Cover 2 alignment lends itself to a strong safety that is more similar to a free safety, fast and better in both man and zone coverage. This player can be anything from a second free safety to a fifth linebacker, and where they fall on that spectrum should be a happy marriage of your preferred scheme and the personnel available to you.

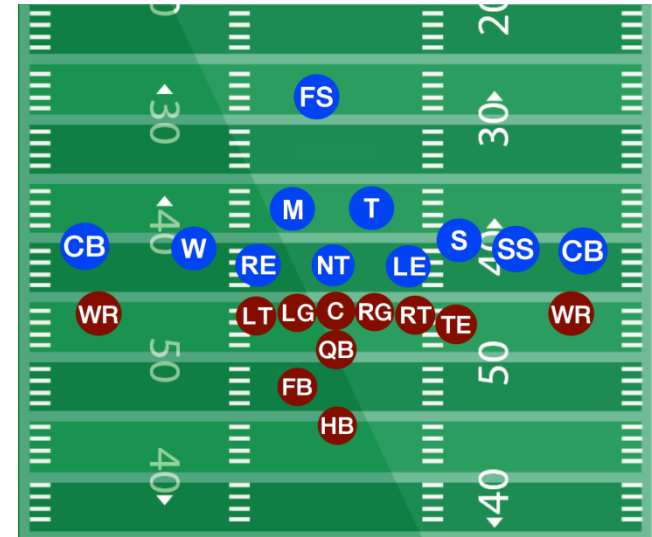


Figure 5: Base 3-4 Cover 1 Alignment

3-4 Basics

Defensive Front Variations Overview

The 3-4 is a defensive scheme known for its versatility, and that versatility extends to the wide variety of possible alignments at your disposal. While there are plenty more, we're going to have a look at three of the most effective 3-4 fronts – the 'Okie', the 'Eagle', and the 'Under'.

Okie Front

The 'Okie' front is the classic 3-4 alignment straight from the old-school, where the entire defensive line is given two gap responsibilities, requiring bigger, stronger defensive lines than we might see in other fronts.

This is one of the main reasons that it has become slightly less popular in recent times, as the type of defensive linemen that have the ability to control two gaps in the run game aren't usually the same kind who can rush the quarterback. And with the widespread use of offenses that lean on the passing attack, traditional run stuffing defensive linemen have been replaced by lighter, faster defensive linemen who shoot gaps and rush the quarterback.

The downside to this adjustment is that as a result, your linebackers need to be better equipped to take on blocks, meaning while you'll gain speed on the line, you'll lose some in your linebacking core.

In Figure 6 we can see the defensive linemen aligned heads up over offensive linemen, ready to flow the gap on either side. The Will and Sam linebackers will have outside responsibilities, working to set the edge and contain any runs, cutbacks, or bootlegs, forcing them back into the middle of the field.

The Mike and Ted linebackers will watch their respective A and B gaps, ready to plug the hole should a run come their way. Often coaches who wish to further protect their inside linebackers from the two free guards will increase their use of both stunts on the line and blitzes from the linebackers. This will keep the guards occupied and the inside linebackers free to pursue the ball.

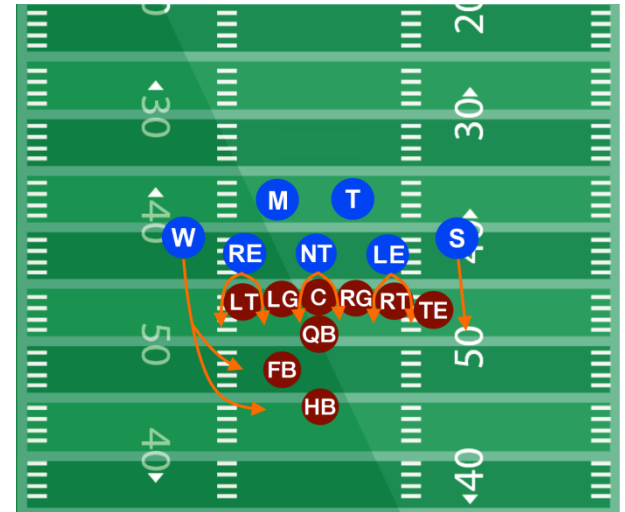


Figure 6: 3-4 'Okie' Front Gap Responsibilities

3-4 Basics

Defensive Front Variations Overview - Continued

Eagle Front

A big part of the decision of how you align your front should be the personnel available to you. If you have three defensive linemen capable of controlling two gaps, then the 'Okie' front makes a lot of sense. But what if you only have one? If you have a nose tackle who can align heads up over the center and play two gap, but your other linemen are better suited to a one gap system, the 'Eagle' front is your best bet.

In the 'Eagle' front, the defensive ends will line up on the inside shoulder of their respective tackles, shooting the C gap as soon as the ball is snapped.

The Sam linebacker in the Eagle front is asked to do quite a bit in the run game, lining up over the tight end and playing a two gap technique. On outside runs he needs to be able to flatten the tight end's block and set the edge. Otherwise, he needs to work inside and plug the C gap. The Will linebacker will again come off the edge, playing contain and watching for any bootlegs or counter runs back to his side.

The Mike and Ted linebackers will first look to support the nose tackle on a run at either A gap. If the ball is run elsewhere, they will flow to the ball, looking to chase the ball carrier and make a play.

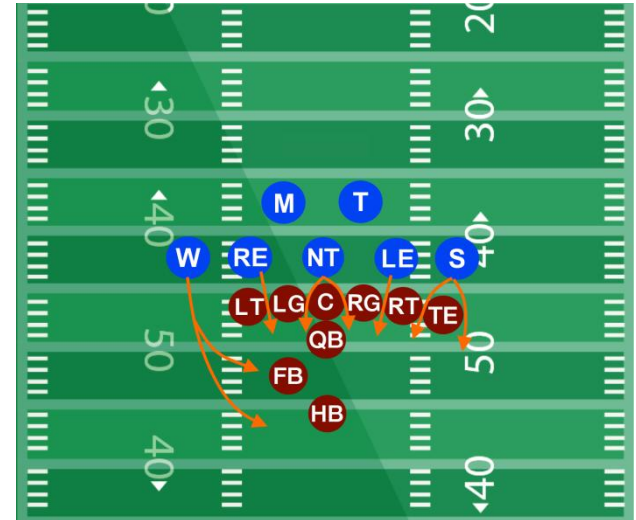


Figure 7: 3-4 'Eagle' Front Gap Responsibilities

3-4 Basics

Defensive Front Variations Overview - Continued

Under Front

A two gap scheme is a bit passive in it's nature – watch the ball, see what happens, react. When it works well it's fantastic, but some players are best suited – whether physically or mentally – to just shoot one gap as best as they can. If that sounds like a fit for either your defensive philosophy or your personnel, than the 'Under' front is your best fit.

For the 'Under' front, we need to move the defense around a bit. The right end will slide inside, lining up on the guard's outside shoulder. The nose tackle will bump over to the strong side – barely. He'll line up just slightly to the outside shoulder of the center. The left end will also slide over, moving to the outside shoulder of the right tackle. This shift over to the strong side allows each of the defensive linemen to play one gap: the right end takes the weak side B gap, the nose tackle takes the strong side A gap, and the left end takes the strong side C gap.

For this scheme not only do you need defensive linemen with the speed to shoot

their gaps effectively, but you also need inside linebackers who can take on blocks and make plays, as they will also be responsible for their own gaps. The Mike linebacker plugs his A gap, and the Ted is responsible for the strong side B gap. With the Will linebacker playing contain on the backside and the Sam linebacker lined up wide of the tight end, ready to attack any outside runs, the defense has every gap on the strong side of the formation accounted for.

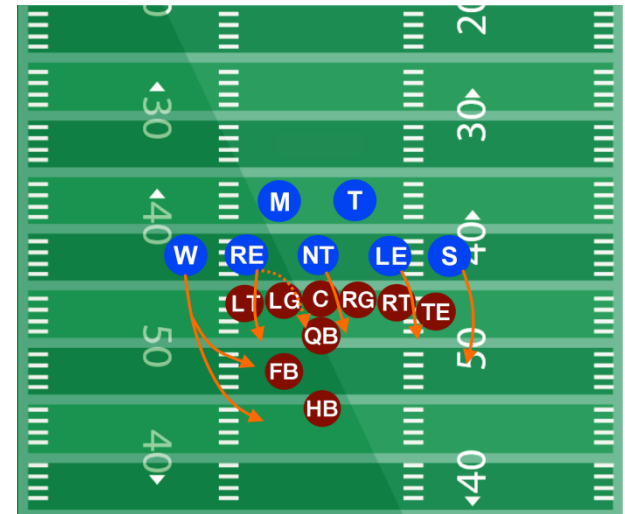


Figure 8: 3-4 'Under' Front Gap Responsibilities

3-4 Basics

Defensive Personnel Variations Overview

Aside from your classic Will, Mike, Ted and Sam linebacker groupings, there are other variations that are worth exploring, especially if they seem like a better fit for your personnel.

Some teams employ what is called a 'Joker'. This is a player who is an absolutely fantastic pass rusher, and has the combination of strength and speed necessary to line up anywhere along the line while remaining effective. He has the freedom to move around pre-snap, lining up where ever he likes and attacking the passer as soon as the ball is snapped.

Another example would be forgoing the Ted backer and using two Mike backers in the middle of the field. If you don't have the classic Ted linebacker who can play that defensive fullback role, then instead of trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, let both your inside linebackers play as Mike backers.

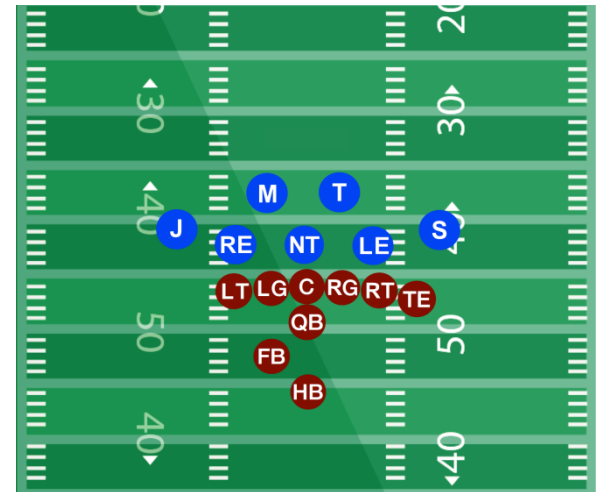


Figure 9: 3-4 'Okie' Front, Weakside Joker



Figure 10: 'Okie' Front, Double Mike Back Personnel

Base 3-4 – Man Coverages

Man coverage is generally the simpler of the two kinds of coverage. There isn't going to be a lot of deception - you are betting that your players can play man to man coverage for as long as it takes the pass rush to get to the quarterback. It's the same when it comes to the run – each player in the front seven always has the same gap responsibilities.

That's why to run man coverage consistently, it's important that you have good athletes with the ability to stay in front of whoever they've been assigned. There is more pressure on the defensive backs in man coverage, as except for the safety help over top, they are all on their own. One mistake can mean a wide open receiver, and in man defense where every player is focused on their own individual assignments, that one mistake could be a touchdown.

The other side to that is that it puts that same amount of pressure on the quarterback. His windows are going to be much smaller, and a slightly off throw that might be completed against zone coverage could be knocked down or even intercepted by a defensive back playing good tight man coverage.

Man coverage is a good idea to lean on if you feel you have the players that can consistently win those individual matchups – and not just one or two. One weak link can break the chain, but when they are all strong, it can be one hell of a coverage to try and crack.

Base 3-4 - Cover 1

Play Objective

Cover 1 allows your free safety to be a playmaker, letting the rest of your secondary get into man coverage and funnel their receivers back into the middle of the field to their help over the top.

Strengths

With man coverage on the tight end and both receivers, the pressure is on the quarterback to be on target. That coverage is also going to be better on the tight end, as since the strong safety is able to come up into the box pre-snap, he can bump the Sam linebacker off and cover the tight end himself – a much better matchup.

Weaknesses

This type of coverage puts a lot of pressure on your corners. And with only one safety deep, if the defense makes any mistakes in coverage its likely going to mean a wide open receiver.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The front three will play their run gaps initially before trying to beat blocks and rush the quarterback.

Linebackers: All four linebackers will key in on the backfield, ready to cover any routes coming out but also watching the quarterback's eyes, looking to make a play if possible.

Secondary: The free safety will be the lone member of the secondary not up near the line of scrimmage on this play, dropping back to play a single high deep zone. The strong safety is up in the box, manning up on the tight end, while the corners cover their respective receivers, working from an outside shade.

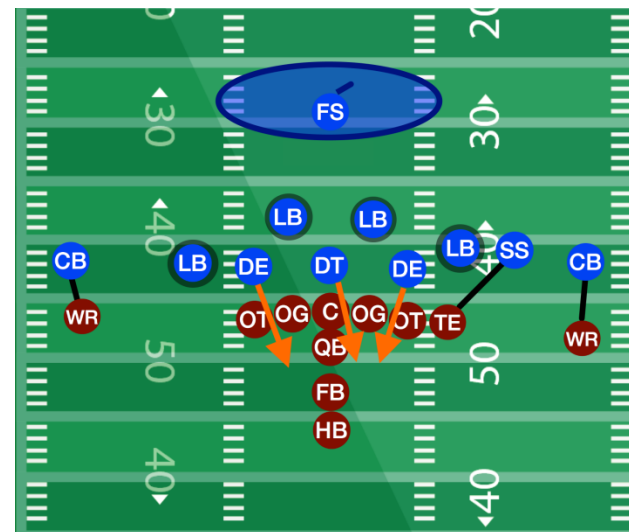


Figure 11: Cover 1 Man

Base 3-4 - Cover 2

Play Objective

With two safeties back, we can move our corners to an inside shade, forcing the quarterback and receiver to beat us with an outside throw.

Strengths

This coverage is much less susceptible to multiple deep routes the way Cover 1 is, and therefore the rest of the defense can be much more aggressive, playing tough press coverage without having to be worried about getting beat over the top.

Weaknesses

By moving the strong safety deep, we also have to move him off the tight end. The Sam linebacker will line up on him instead, which, depending on the players involved, can be a tough matchup. Also, with the strong safety now out of the box, the defense is more susceptible to the run game.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will attack their gaps and try to sack the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Will, Mike, and Ted linebackers will key in on the backfield, with the Will and Ted linebackers covering the first back out of their side of the backfield. The Mike will play the second back if two come out the same side, otherwise, he will spy the quarterback and look to make a play in the middle of the field.

Secondary: The corners will play man press coverage, working with an inside shade. The free safety and strong safety will split deep responsibilities, each taking half the field.

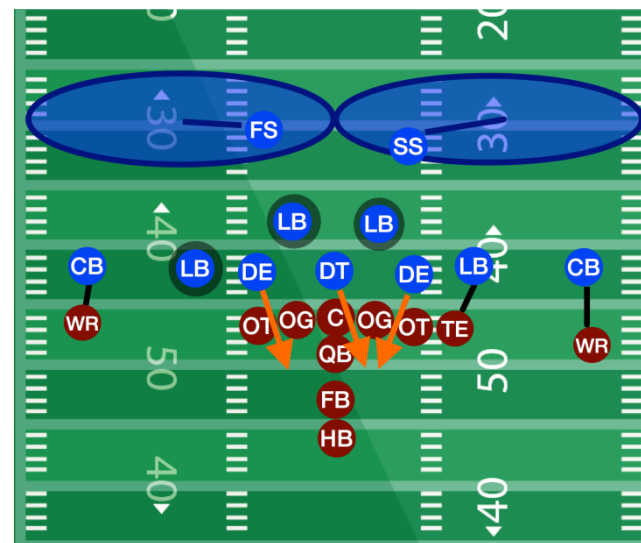


Figure 12: Cover 2 Man

Base 3-4 – Zone Coverages

When playing zone coverage, we divide up the field into smaller zones, letting the players patrol them with their eyes up, trying to anticipate and ready to react to anything the offense does. That's why there is less of a premium on athleticism on teams that like to run zone defenses – it doesn't matter if you get to the spot early because you're fast or because you read the quarterback's eyes – just that you get there.

It's also more important to use deception to try and impose confusion on the offense, switching up alignments and zones when you can. For example, let's say you always run Cover 2 on 1st and 10. Every zone has a weakness, and if the offense can anticipate your coverages reliably, they will run zone beaters designed specifically to beat Cover 2 next time they're on 1st and 10. You can prevent this – by varying your playcalling and disguising your coverages,

The downside to this constant deception of the offense is that some of your players may fall victim to it as well occasionally. Responsibilities vary greatly from play to play, and you're more likely to see missed assignments when running the zone.

But with enough practice and players that are willing to learn, zone defenses are a great place to set the foundation for any team that wants to have a stout pass defense.

Base 3-4 – Cover 2 Zone

Play Objective

The Cover 2 relies on six defenders in short to medium zone coverage, taking away the middle of the field, with another two defenders back deep to take care of any home runs.

Strengths

This play has eight players in coverage, meaning the quarterback is going to have a tough time finding a window to fit the ball into. Especially if he was planning on throwing something over the middle – with four linebackers all patrolling the middle of the field, completions will be hard to come by.

Weaknesses

With only two deep safeties and the rest of the coverage playing short to medium, if the offense sends more than two players deep the defense could find itself in a bit of a bind. There are also a couple weak spots for pass patterns – seam routes as well as anything that attacks the empty gap in coverage along the sidelines between the corner and safety.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will be the only players rushing the quarterback on this play, so it's important they go hard.

Linebackers: All four linebackers will play hook zones.

Secondary: The corners will line up with an inside shade, forcing the receiver back out to the sideline and up their safety help deep. The free safety and strong safety will be lined up deep, splitting the field and their deep zone responsibilities in half.

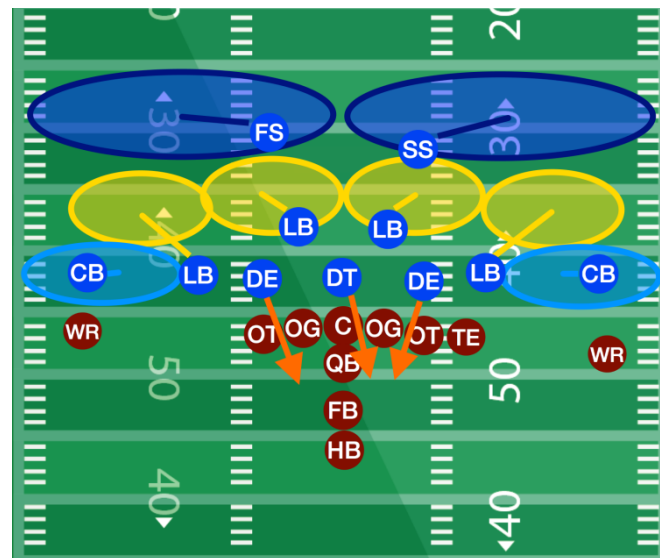


Figure 13: Cover 2 Zone

Base 3-4 – Cover 3 Zone

Play Objective

Working from a Cover 1 alignment, the Cover 3 is a play that has skyrocketed in popularity recently, due in part to the dominance of the Seattle Seahawks Cover 3 press scheme. With the free safety and two corners taking care of the deep responsibilities, the five remaining players will play a combination of flat zones and hook zones, working to take away the intermediate throws.

Strengths

With three players deep, your defense is well covered on the deep ball, despite the fact the strong safety is playing up by the line of scrimmage. Also, with five players left playing the underneath coverages, you'll be able to cover a lot of ground in the passing game.

Weaknesses

Since the defense is only rushing three players, even if the coverage is outstanding, there will eventually be a hole in the defense and the quarterback will find it, unless the defense can generate some pass rush with just their front three.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The three members of the defensive line will rush the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Will linebacker will kick out into the flat on the weakside and zone up there, while the other three linebackers take middle hook zones.

Secondary: The corners can either press at the line or bail deep – it's up to you – but either way, they will end up covering their deep third of the field. The free safety will be back in center field, reading the whole defense and looking to make a play, and the strong safety will kick out to the flat on the strong side.

The corners will be lined up close to the line of scrimmage, playing press man coverage on the wide receivers, playing with an outside shade. The strong safety will come up as well, lining up in front of the tight end and playing man coverage on him in any passing situation. The free safety will drop back, responsible for any deep routes from sideline to sideline.

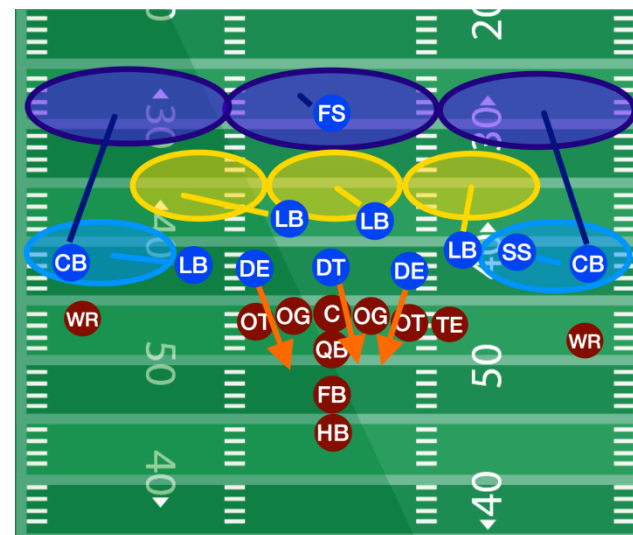


Figure 14: Cover 3 Zone

Base 3-4 – Cover 4 Zone

Play Objective

When it's not only an obvious passing down, but an obvious *long* passing down the Cover 4 is a safe bet. With four deep zones, two middle zones, and two curl to flat zones on the outside, there is a lot available underneath, but absolutely nothing over top.

Strengths

By taking the four best cover players on the field and dropping them into deep zones you are putting the offense in a very tough spot, especially if this is an obvious passing situation, as it often is when a defense goes into Cover 4. There is no reason a big play should ever happen when in this coverage, as aside from the defensive line, every other play is lined up close to 10 yards off the line of scrimmage.

Weaknesses

With everyone bailing out and retreating deep, a screen pass can be devastating if executed properly. It's important that the whole team keep their head on swivel, always aware of any potential screen or draw plays that could gouge the defense for big yardage if caught slipping.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will look to beat a block, get upfield, and sack the quarterback.

Linebackers: The outside linebackers will be playing curl to flat zones while the inside linebackers will play a pair of middle hook zones.

Secondary: All four members of the secondary have the same job here – a deep zone. Only difference is which 'column' is theirs to defend. The corners will be playing the outside fourths of the field, while the free safety and strong safety take the inside two.

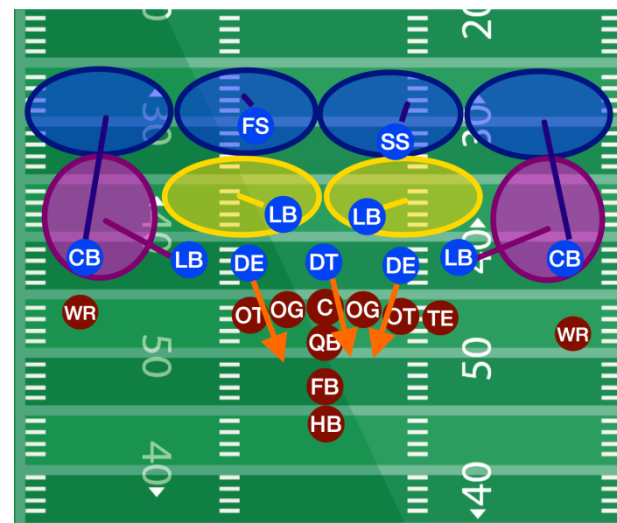


Figure 15: Cover 4 Zone

Man Blitzes

Man blitzes make for an very aggressive playcall, allowing you to bring an extra rusher without sacrificing the tightness of your coverage. Despite the extra rusher, you will still have tight individual coverage on receivers, forcing the quarterback to fit the ball into tight windows – with much less time than they normally do.

But the extra rusher does have to come from somewhere, and that usually means either one or both safeties will be in man coverage as well. This puts much more pressure on each defender, as they know they'll have little to no help over the top if they make a mistake.

And with every player now focused on their own man coverage responsibilities, a missed tackle after the catch or a quarterback breaking out of the pocket can mean big yardage for the offense.

You also maintain the simplicity of man plays, both in coverage rules but in the run game as well, with each run gap accounted for by the front seven.

Base 3-4 – Monster Blitz

Play Objective

An A gap blitz where the Mike linebacker comes down the middle to bring some extra heat on the quarterback. Great for attacking an offensive line with weak pass blockers on the inside.

Strengths

By bringing pressure over the middle, we can force the quarterback out of the pocket where he is much more likely to make a rushed throw. And with tight man coverage all over the field, the slightest error by the quarterback could result in a turnover.

Weaknesses

With one fewer linebacker back in coverage, the middle of the field is more open. And with just one safety deep, you need your corners to win their matchups – or most likely it will be a completion.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The front three will push upfield, trying to get off a block and on the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Mike linebacker is blitzing, coming through the A gap and attacking the passer. The rest of the linebackers are in man coverage – the Will linebacker on the weak side running back, and the Ted and Sam linebackers double teaming strong side backer.

Secondary: The corners will line up just outside of their matchups, bumping at the line and trying to force them back towards the free safety, patrolling deep over the middle. The strong safety, aligned up in the box, will play man coverage on the tight end.

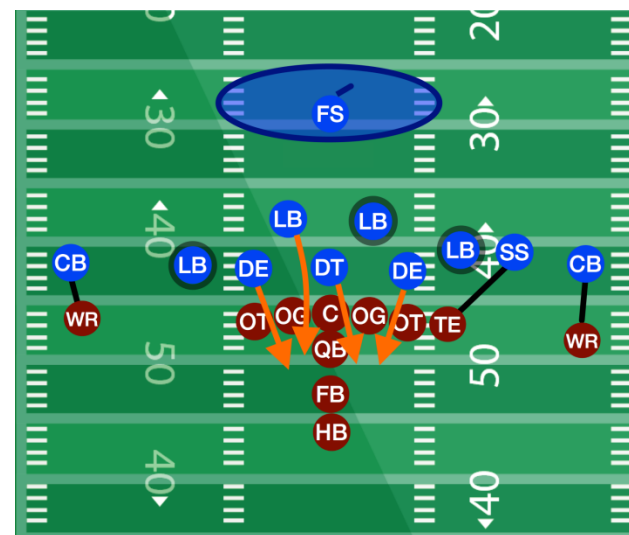


Figure 16: Monster Blitz

Base 3-4 – Samson Blitz

Play Objective

The Samson blitz brings heavy pressure to the strong side of the offensive line while the rest of the defense plays their Cover 1 responsibilities.

Strengths

The advantage of a strong side blitz is that on most teams, the right tackle is going to be weaker pass blocker of the two tackles. And by putting the Sam linebacker in a one on one matchup with him, we have a good chance at creating pressure off the strong side and either getting to the quarterback or forcing him out to the left side, where most quarterbacks are much less comfortable throwing.

Weaknesses

As with any play with Cover 1 behind it, this play needs the pass rush to get to the quarterback fast, as the cornerbacks are under a lot of pressure with just one safety deep to help.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: All three members of the defensive line will rush the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Sam linebacker will blitz the strong side C gap, working inside of the tight end. The Will and Mike linebackers will cover the weak side running back, while the Ted linebacker takes the strong side backer.

Secondary: The strong safety will come up into the box so as to better play man coverage on the tight end after the snap. The free safety will sit in a single deep zone, with the corners up playing press with an outside shade, forcing the receivers back to their inside help.

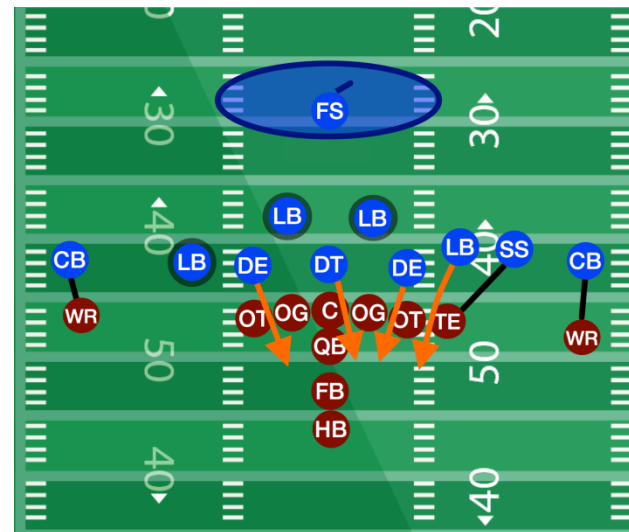


Figure 17: Samson Blitz

Base 3-4 – Warrior Blitz

Play Objective

The Warrior blitz attacks the left side of the offensive line, bringing one of your best pass rushers off the edge while the rest of the defense plays Cover 1 behind.

Strengths

Lined up way off the left tackle, the Warrior blitz allows the Will linebacker to use his speed and pass rushing ability to try and beat a block on the quarterback's blind side. If he can get through, the quarterback likely won't be able to react in time, a scenario in which a really savvy player would go for the strip sack.

Weaknesses

Without a second safety playing deep, even the most talented free safety is going to have to choose one side if both receivers go deep. That means that your corners are under a lot of pressure, both before and after the ball has been released by the quarterback.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: Your defensive line will play their regular gaps, looking to attack the quarterback.

Linebackers: With the Will linebacker blitzing off the weak side, the rest of the linebackers are left to cover the remaining two members of the backfield.

Secondary: Both corners will be lined up in outside technique, since the strong safety has come up into the box to play the tight end in man to man coverage and their only help deep is the free safety playing a deep zone directly over the middle.

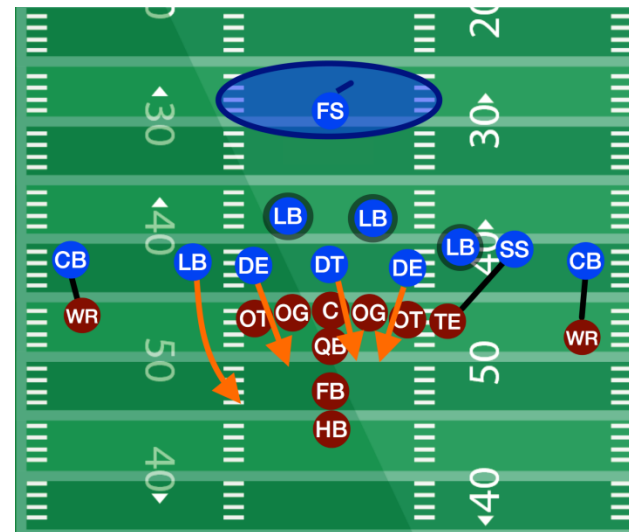


Figure 18: Warrior Blitz

Base 3-4 – Suicide Blitz

Play Objective

With Cover 1 defense behind, the Suicide blitz sends our strong safety off the edge to blitz the quarterback.

Strengths

The offensive line has a very hard time accounting for safeties in their blocking schemes, which means that there is a good chance the strong safety comes off the edge free – an exciting prospect for one of your most athletic players on the field. This will force the quarterback to either: go to their hot read, take the sack, or throw the ball out of bounds. And all three of those options present your defense with a great opportunity to force a turnover.

Weaknesses

Blitzing the strong safety means the Sam linebacker has to bump over and take the man coverage responsibility on the tight end – this can be a tough matchup at times. Also, with only four members of the secondary on the field, sending one on a blitz leaves little margin of error for the rest.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will look to beat their blocks and rush the passer.

Linebackers: The Sam linebacker is covering the tight end man to man, while the other three linebackers will keep an eye on the backfield, covering any backers that come out their way.

Secondary: The free safety is in the centerfielder role, keeping an eye on the field and keeping everything in front of him. The strong safety is up by the line of the scrimmage, ready to blitz off the edge, and the corners are up in the face of the receivers, ready to play bump and run coverage.

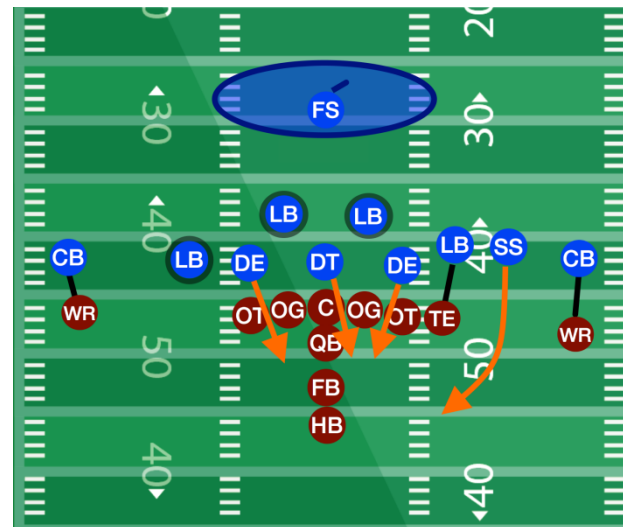


Figure 19: Suicide Blitz

Base 3-4 – Freeky Blitz

Play Objective

Showing a Cover 1 alignment, this is a disguised coverage that uses pre-snap movement to confuse the defense and blitz the last person on the field they'd expect – the free safety.

Strengths

This play is very confusing for both the offensive line and the quarterback – a great combination for your defense. The offensive line will have a hard time sliding protection over to the free safety, so it will fall on either a running back to make a block or the quarterback to get rid of the ball quickly if they want to avoid a sack. And with the quarterback so worried about the free safety on the left, he might not have seen the strong safety drop back on the right and make a pass somewhere he thought was open, but the strong safety is ready to make a play on.

Weaknesses

Generally, the strong safety is better suited to playing up by the line of scrimmage, or at least if he is back deep, its with the help of another defensive back or two. As a result, playing single high can be a little tough, especially for a traditional, run thumping strong safety.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive ends and nose tackle will try to beat their blocks and sack the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Will, Mike, and Ted linebackers will cover the two running backs out of the backfield, while the Sam linebacker plays the tight end in man coverage.

Secondary: At the first words out of the quarterback's mouth, the free safety will leave his position as the single high safety, creeping up to the weak side of the offensive line. At the same time, the strong safety will retreat back to center field, playing a deep zone. If timed correctly, the free safety should be picking up speed towards the line just as the ball is snapped, allowing him to come off the edge with more speed than any end or linebacker could from a dead stop. The corners will maintain their regular Cover 1 responsibilities, playing tight man to man coverage with an outside shade.

The free safety will be the lone member of the secondary not up near the line of scrimmage on this play, dropping back to play a single high deep zone. The strong safety is up in the box, manning up on the tight end, while the corners cover their respective receivers, working from an outside shade.

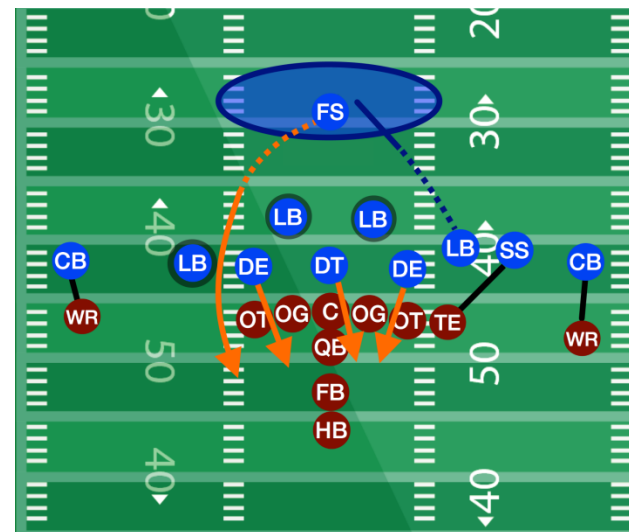


Figure 20: Freeky Blitz

Base 3-4 – Slingshot Blitz

Play Objective

The slingshot blitz sends four pass rushers at one side of the offensive line, bringing heat to the strong side while keep tight Cover 1 in behind.

Strengths

By bringing an overload blitz to the strong side of the offensive line, we send four pass rushers at a side of the offensive line that is better suited to run blocking a real test in communication. Unless the quarterback can anticipate the blitz and slide the protection, this play will often result in at least one free rusher getting through to the quarterback.

Weaknesses

With five rushers going after the quarterback, the remaining members of the defense are all in one on one man coverage – aside from the free safety, playing single high. And while the corners and strong safety may be comfortable on an island, the linebackers stuck in solo coverage might not be quite as well suited to the task. That's why its so important the blitz gets home.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will shoot their gaps aggressively, trying to get after the quarterback.

Linebackers: On the strong side, the Sam and Ted linebackers are going to blitz the C and A gaps, respectively. Over on the weak side, the Will linebacker will take the first backer out of the backfield on his side, and the Mike will do the same on his side. If they both come out the same side, the second one out is the responsibility of the linebacker with the farthest distance to travel.

Secondary: Back in a standard Cover 1 look, the free safety will play single high, the strong safety will play man on the tight end, and the corners will play man press coverage, making sure to play with an outside technique, forcing the receivers back to their help if possible.

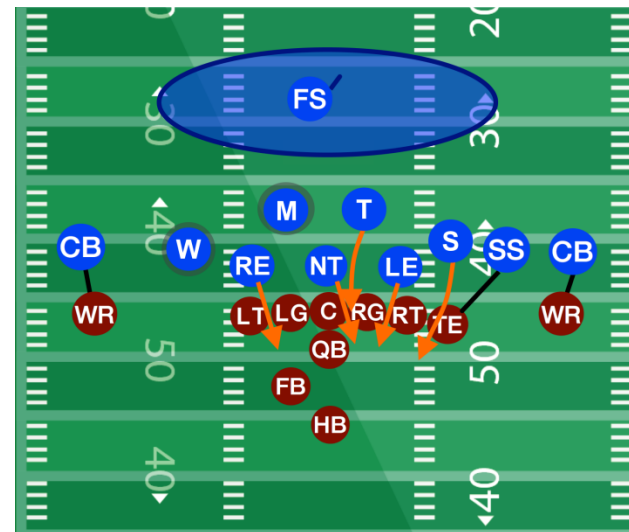


Figure 21: Slingshot Blitz

Base 3-4 – Wham Blitz

Play Objective

Here we bring pressure off the weak side, using a combo blitz from the Will and Mike linebackers to create pressure up front while the secondary plays Cover 1 behind.

Strengths

With four rushers coming at the rest of the offensive line, the Wham blitz gets our best pass rusher in a one on one matchup, either against the left tackle or a running back depending on the offense's protection schemes. Either way, there is going to be a lot of pressure on the weak side of the offensive line with two very good athletes being added to the pass rush. The Cover 1 behind also ensures tight coverage, with the quarterback likely having to fit the ball into a small window.

Weaknesses

By sending so many rushers, a smart offense can use the defense's aggressiveness against itself, like calling for a halfback slip screen out to the left side. That's why it's vital that both the Sam and Ted linebackers communicate loudly, alerting the defense to any possible screen or misdirection plays.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will look to beat their blocks, get upfield, and sack the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Will and Mike linebackers will both blitz from the weak side, with the Will linebacker coming off the edge and the Mike linebacker right up the A gap. The Ted linebacker will pick up the fullback in man coverage, and the Sam linebacker will pick up the halfback.

Secondary: The secondary will play Cover 1, with the free safety playing deep centerfield, while the strong safety as well as both corners play man coverage.

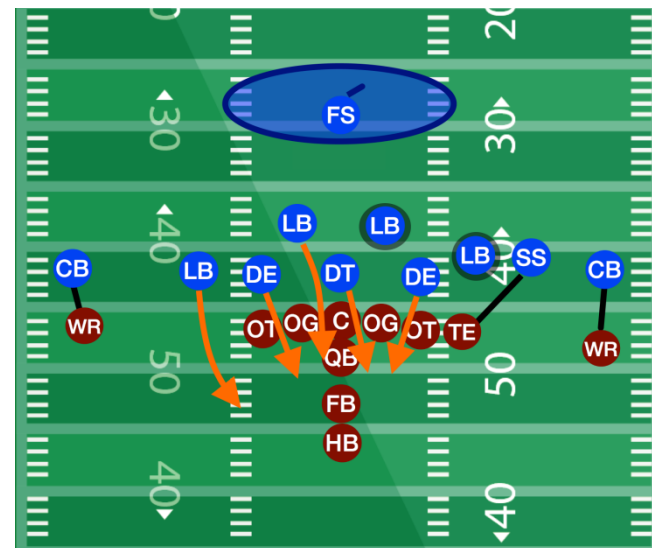


Figure 22: Wham Blitz

Base 3-4 – Sword Blitz

Play Objective

A classic 3-4 blitz, the Sword blitz brings extra pressure off both edges while the rest of the defense plays a tight Cover 1 man behind it.

Strengths

On passing downs the ideal place to bring pressure is from the outside, as the extra space allows players to use speed and quickness as well as an assortment of pass rushing moves to beat blockers. This is especially true in a 3-4, where your two outside linebackers are most likely the best pass rushers on the field. With the defensive line putting pressure on the inside of the line, and the outside linebackers bringing the head on the outside, the quarterback is going to have to make a quick, accurate throw if he wants to escape the blitz and beat the man coverage in the secondary.

Weaknesses

With the rest of the defense in one on one coverage, it's very important that the five players rushing the quarterback do their job to create pressure, as even the best man to man coverage will break down given long enough.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will bring pressure up the middle, trying to force the offensive line to pinch so that the outside linebackers have one on one matchups.

Linebackers: The inside linebackers will each play man coverage on the first back out of the backfield to their side. The Sam and Will linebackers will blitz, with the Will linebacker coming off the edge and the Sam linebacker working through the C gap.

Secondary: Playing an outside technique, the corners will play tight man coverage, knowing they have help from the free safety in a deep zone over the middle. The strong safety is also in man coverage, up in the box and manned up on tight end.

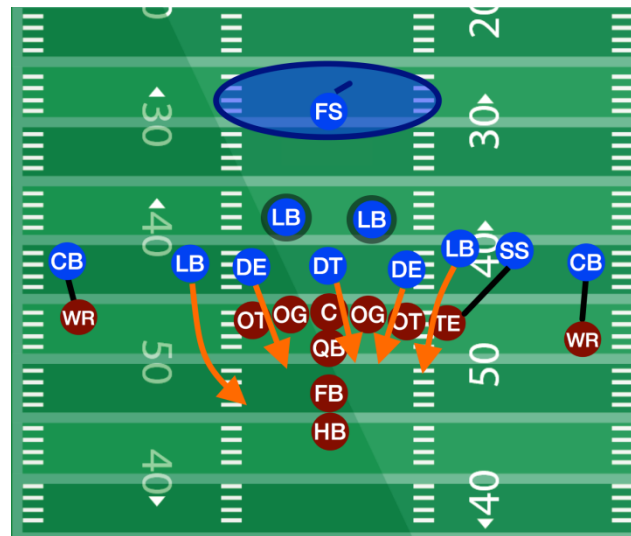


Figure 23: Sword Blitz

Base 3-4 – Mutant Blitz

Play Objective

The double A gap blitz is a fantastic play that works is effective in almost all situations. Combined with a solid Cover 1 defense in behind it, the Mutant blitz is a real headache for centers to deal with.

Strengths

By sending two linebackers in straight lines right at the A gaps, we're forcing the center to pick one. Whoever runs free will then usually have to deal with a chip block from a running back if anything at all, meaning the quarterback will have very little time before he has pressure coming right up the gut of the pocket – something all quarterbacks despise.

Weaknesses

With both Mike and Ted plugging the middle, the defense is more susceptible than usual to a quick toss or sweep – any kind of play that is going outside in a hurry. There's also a huge gap in the middle of the field, so it's important the blitz is successful as there is heavy burden on all four members of the secondary in this play.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The front three will play their regular gaps and look to rush the passer.

Linebackers: With Mike and Ted blitzing down the A gaps, the Will and Sam linebackers are left in man coverage on running backs – the Will takes the weak side, and the Sam takes the strong side.

Secondary: Lined up deep in the middle of the field, the free safety will play single high coverage, with the strong safety as well as both corners playing man coverage on the tight end and wide receivers, respectively.

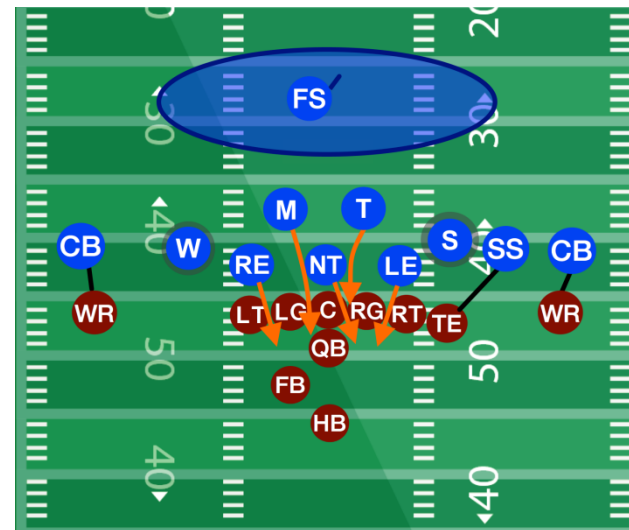


Figure 24: Double A Gap Blitz

Base 3-4 – Swarm Blitz

Play Objective

Here we come just short of the All Out Blitz, sending six rushers instead of seven. The design here is simple – with a player rushing each and every gap on the offensive line, your betting that the man coverage can hold up long enough for the blitz to get home.

Strengths

While it does send six rushers, this play still has solid coverage on the back end. With only one player unmarked and a free safety patrolling the deep middle of the field, there is a small margin of error for the players in coverage – but the fact there's a margin at all considering how many players are blitzing is what makes this play so popular. Okay, maybe not – it's because this blitz does a great job of attacking the offensive line from all angles, putting the offense in a position where they need to rely on chip blocks from their running backs to protect the quarterback.

Weaknesses

If the offense is able to beat the blitz somehow – maybe a screen pass or a couple great blocks from the backfield for example – then the defense is in a tough spot. With only the Ted linebacker in the middle of the field a completion on a slant is going to require sure tackling, otherwise you could see a big gain.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line will look to create pressure pass rushing the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Will, Mike, and Sam linebackers will all blitz here. The Will linebacker will come off the weak side edge, while the Sam linebacker comes through the C gap and the Mike linebacker plugs the A gap.

Secondary: With only the free safety back, it is of the utmost important that the corners play with an outside shade. This means they are forcing the receiver away from the sidelines and back towards their safety help in the middle of the field.

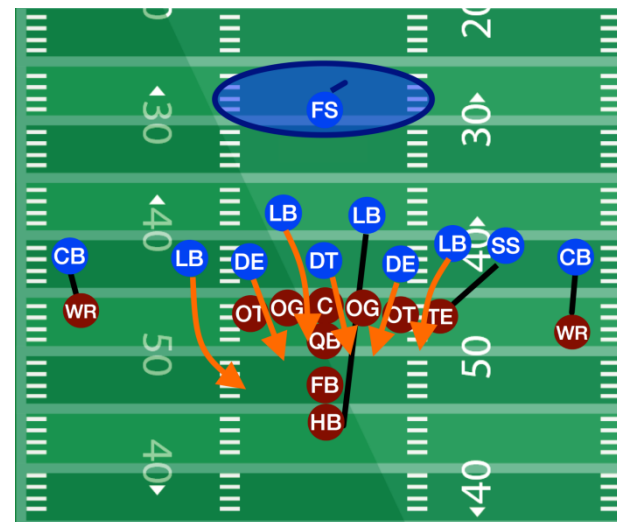


Figure 25: Swarm Blitz

Base 3-4 – Cover 0 (All Out Blitz)

Play Objective

Here we send the house, bringing all four linebackers for a total of seven rushers while our corners and strong safety play tight man coverage. This is the definition of a high risk, high reward playcall.

Strengths

By sending seven rushers, one of two things can happen. Either the offensive line is in max protection and is able to assign a blocker per rusher, or they aren't, and you know at least one player will have a free run at the quarterback. This play will snuff out any long developing routes - the quarterback will be rushed, and will have made a quick (and hopefully poor) decision.

Weaknesses

If the protection is able to slow the rush down and the quarterback can get the ball out to his hot read, there is big play potential for the offense. Same with the corners and strong safety – if they get beat, there isn't even a single high safety to help them out.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive line rush the quarterback from their normal gaps.

Linebackers: All four linebackers will blitz. The Will linebacker off the edge, the Sam linebacker on the strong side C gap, and the Mike and Ted linebackers up their respective A gaps.

Secondary: The free safety will move up after the ball is snapped, taking the place of the Mike linebacker. He'll spy the quarterback, reading the quarterback's eyes and trying to pick off the pass to the hot read if the quarterback can get it off. The strong safety and corners will be on their own islands, each playing man coverage with zero help.

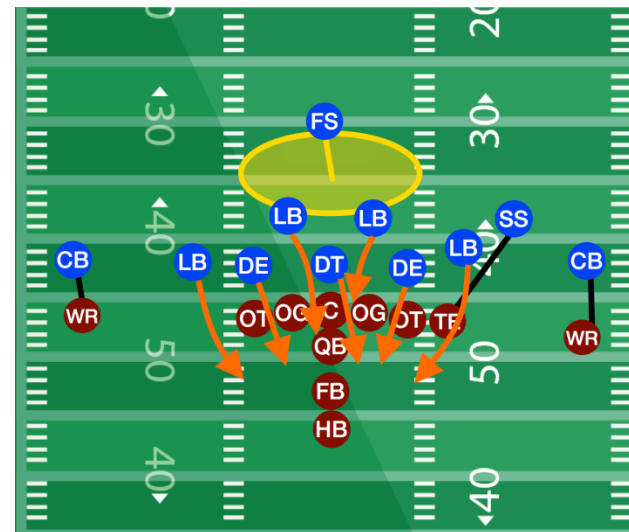


Figure 26: Cover 0

Base 3-4 – Cover 2 Look Zero Blitz

Play Objective

Starting from a Cover 2 look, this play gives the two fastest players on your defense a chance at a free run at the quarterback while the rest of the team plays Cover 0.

Strengths

Cornerbacks are incredibly fast, and if they time their approach right, should be coming in at a running start off the edge. Even the most athletic left tackle will have a tough time getting out that wide, meaning it will fall to the quarterback to get the ball out to their hot read – if they even see the blitz coming.

Weaknesses

With the safeties filling in for the corners in man coverage and the linebackers occupied with the backfield, the defense has no help over the top, so this blitz really needs to get home fast for this play to be effective.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The front three are in the role of pass rushers here, looking to get after the quarterback.

Linebackers: The Sam linebacker will be in man coverage on the tight end, but the rest of the linebackers will be keying in on the backfield and covering them should they run any routes over the middle or in the flat.

Secondary: Once the quarterback has spoken, the corners will begin to slide over to edge, with the safeties also moving up – into the corners old positions. Once the ball is snapped, the safeties will play man coverage on the receivers while the corners try to get to the quarterback.

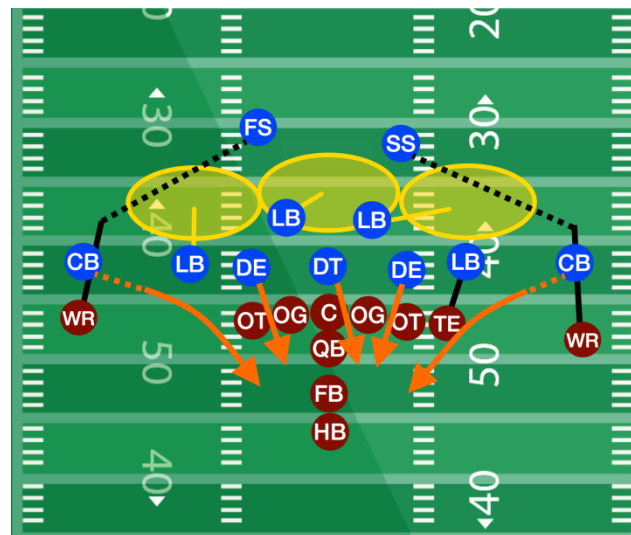


Figure 27: Cover 2 Look Zero Blitz

Zone Blitzes

When running zone blitzes, you are using disguises and deception to give your team an edge – the quarterback and offensive line can never be quite sure where the pass rushers will be coming from, as well as who will be dropping into coverage.

And when you combine that with the threat of an extra rusher, it can be an overwhelming amount of information to digest in a very small amount of time.

While this constant turnover of roles for the defense can be tough for the offense to keep up with, its important to remember it can be tough for the defense to keep up with too.

The only problem with relying on confusion and deception is that it can just be just as confusing for players on your own team. That's why for a zone defense to be running on all cylinders, you need cerebral players, capable of playing whatever role is necessary for that particular play.

Base 3-4 – Tornado Blitz

Play Objective

Starting from a Cover 2 look, the Tornado blitz uses pre-snap movement to confuse the quarterback and offensive line, bringing pressure off the edge with the two players the offense is least likely to expect – the safeties.

Strengths

The double safety blitz will give us a good chance to get after the quarterback, and even if the offense is able to recognize and stop the blitz, the quarterback may rush a throw over the middle thinking its an empty zone, giving the Will backer a good chance to make a play. And with three men deep, despite the fact that we send both our safeties, we have solid protection both deep and in the intermediate over the middle.

Weaknesses

The flats are wide open, and a screen could be tough for the defense to cover. Also, the Will backer, as athletic as he may be for a linebacker, isn't best suited to playing centerfield in a Cover 3.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive linemen will play their regular gaps and looks to get upfield and sack the quarterback.

Linebackers: On the first words out of the quarterback's mouth, the Will backer will begin to back pedal towards the deep middle of the field, heading back to play a deep zone over the middle when the ball is snapped. The Mike, Ted, and Sam backers will all play hook zone over the middle of the field.

Secondary: The corners will play off, and bail deep on the first words out of the quarterbacks mouth, each playing a deep zone on their respective third of the field. The safeties will also be moving on the first words out of the quarterback's mouth, each creeping up on one edge, and blitzing hard off it when the ball is snapped.

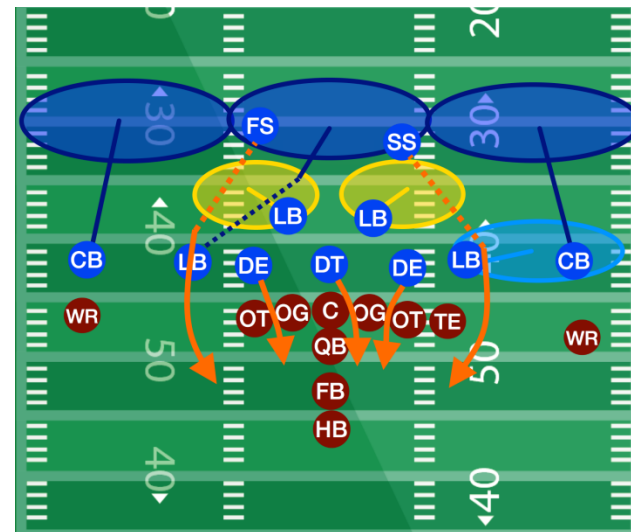


Figure 28: Tornado Blitz

Base 3-4 – Will Fire Zone

Play Objective

The Will Fire Zone allows you to play a full Cover 3 defense while using a fake from the right end to get the Will backer an advantage rushing the passer off the weak side.

Strengths

When the Will backer and the right end get both the timing and execution of this play correct, it will force the offensive line to respect the threat of four pass rushers, without forcing you to pull an extra rusher out of coverage. This can also confuse the quarterback, as he may expect an area of the field to be open and not even notice the right end dropping back, giving him a chance to make a play.

Weaknesses

Although the Will backer will feel comfortable rushing off the edge, the right end is generally not well suited to playing in coverage, something a good quarterback can exploit if he has the time in the pocket.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The defensive tackle and left end will both play their normal gap responsibilities. The right end will initially feint as though that is what he is going to do as well, before dropping back and playing a flat zone.

Linebackers: The Mike, Ted, and Sam linebackers will all play middle hook zones. The Will backer, using the right ends fake as cover, will rush the passer off the edge of the formation.

Secondary: The free safety will play a zone deep over the center of the field, with the two cornerbacks playing deep zones as well, splitting the field three ways. The strong safety, lined up on the strong side of the box, will play a flat zone on that same side.

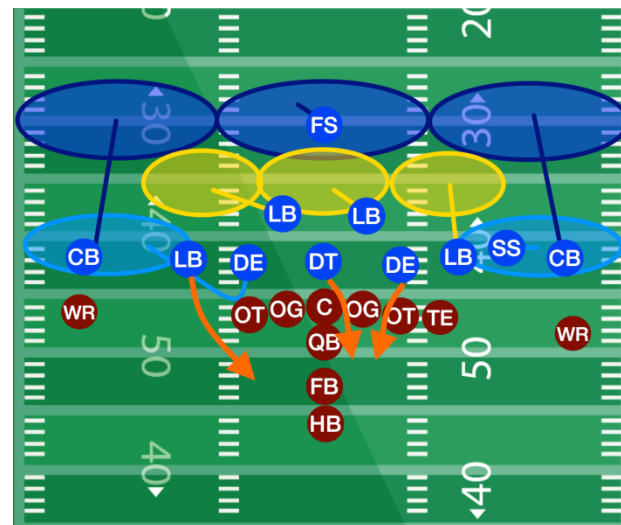


Figure 30: Will Fire Zone.

Base 3-4 – Sam Fire Zone

Play Objective

Starting from a Cover 1 look, the Sam Fire Zone uses a feint from the left end to free up the Sam backer off the strong side.

Strengths

The offensive line will have to respect the left end's initial fake, forcing them to respect the threat of 4 rushers while the defense is only sending 3. This also allows the defense to remain in a Cover 3 behind the fire zone since we haven't sent any extra rushers.

Weaknesses

The left end is not best suited to pass coverage, meaning he could be targeted in the pass game if the quarterback has time.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The right end and tackle will both play their normal gaps, but the left end will not. The left end will fake as if he is going to his gap, then drop back and play a hook zone over the middle.

Linebackers: The Will backer will play a flat zone on the weak side, while the Mike and Ted backers will play middle hook zones. The Sam backer will use the left end's fake to get around the edge and rush the passer.

Secondary: The corners will both play deep zones on their respective thirds of the field, with the free safety patrolling deep center field. The strong safety, lined up in the box, will play a flat zone over on the strong side.

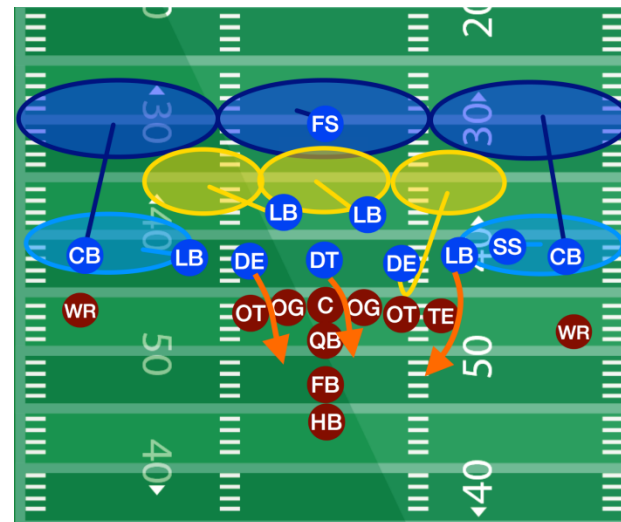


Figure 29: Sam Fire Zone.

Base 3-4 – Ted Fire Zone

Play Objective

This next play presents some confusion for the interior of the offensive line, starting from a Cover 1 look and using a fake from the defensive tackle to give our Ted backer an advantage blitzing up the middle.

Strengths

The defensive tackle is the last player the offense will be expecting to drop back into coverage, meaning both that the fake can be very effective in freeing up the Ted backer, but also meaning the quarterback is unlikely to even notice the defensive tackle dropping back, meaning he may throw into what he thinks is an open zone, but in fact is not.

Weaknesses

As the player who is generally both the biggest and slowest on the entire field, the nose tackle can have a tough time with the agility necessary to play extended coverage if the offensive line can give their quarterback time.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The nose tackle will step up and engage the offensive line momentarily, before dropping back and playing a hook zone over the middle of the field. The ends will both rush the quarterback, playing their normal gaps.

Linebackers: The Will backer will play a flat zone on the weak side, and the Mike and Sam backers will play hook zone over the middle with the nose tackle. The Ted backer will use the nose tackle's feint at the line of scrimmage to get an edge, looking to beat a lineman and get after the quarterback.

Secondary: The strong safety will play the other flat zone, over on the strong side, while the free safety stays back, playing deep centerfield. The corners will also have deep zone responsibilities, each patrolling their respective third of the field.

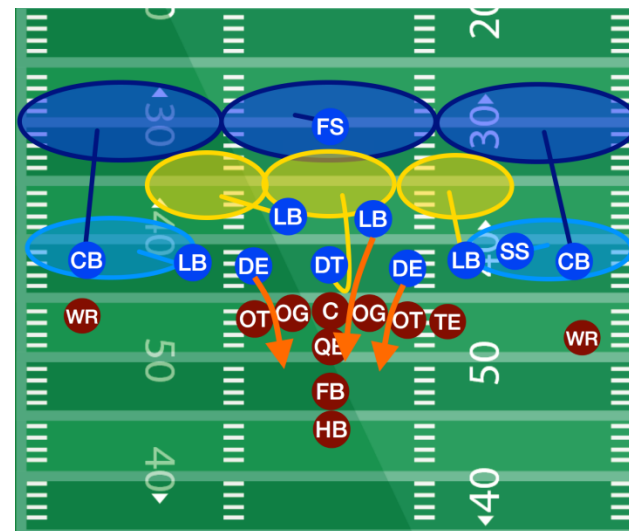


Figure 2: Ted Fire Zone.

Base 3-4 – Freeky Fire Zone

Play Objective

Beginning from a Cover 1 alignment, this next play uses pre-snap movement and a fake from the right end to get our free safety an opportunity to rush the quarterback off the edge.

Strengths

The last player both the offensive line and quarterback are expecting to rush the quarterback is the free safety, and by waiting until just before the snap to bring him up to the line, we avoid tipping our hand and give him a good opportunity to make a play.

Weaknesses

The strong safety will replace the free safety in his regular deep centerfield role, which doesn't play to the strengths of a traditional in the box safety. We also have put the right end in a flat zone, taking him out of his element as well.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The nose tackle and left end will both rush their regular gaps. The right end will fake as if he is going to rush the quarterback, after which he will quickly drop back and play a zone on the weak side flat.

Linebackers: The Will, Mike, and Ted backers will all play middle hook zones, with the Sam backer playing the flat zone over on the strong side.

Secondary: On the first words out of the quarterback's mouth once he's up at the line of scrimmage, the free safety will begin to creep up to the weak side of the offensive formation while the strong safety begins to drop back to deep centerfield. On the snap of the ball, the free safety will blitz off the edge, while the strong safety will play that deep middle zone. He will be flanked on either side by the corners, each playing deep zones on their respective thirds of the field.

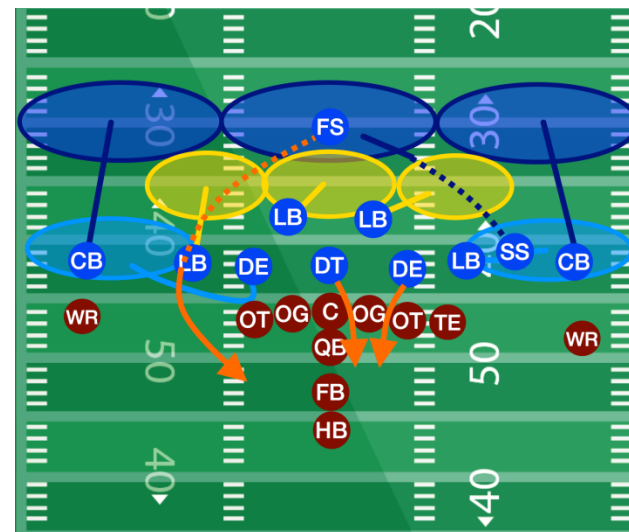


Figure 31: Freeky Fire Zone

Base 3-4 – Cover 2 Look CB Fire Zone

Play Objective

For this zone blitz, we present a Cover 2 look, disguising our coverage and using pre-snap movement to allow the corner to blitz off the edge and get the defense in position to play Cover 3.

Strengths

Your cornerbacks are generally among the fastest players on your team, making them great candidates to blitz off the edge in space. Both the quarterback and offensive line will be ill-prepared for a well-timed corner blitz, which could mean a free run at the quarterback's blind side for your corner if you execute the play properly.

Weaknesses

If the offensive line is able to pick up the corner, he is going to have a hard time getting off of a left tackle's block – and the same goes for the right end playing his flat zone.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The nose tackle and left end will both rush the quarterback, while the right end will offer a fake at the offensive line before dropping back to play the flat.

Linebackers: All 4 linebackers will be in coverage, with the Will, Mike and Ted backers playing middle hook zones and the Sam backer playing a flat on the strong side.

Secondary: The secondary will shift at the first words out of the quarterback's mouth, rolling the coverage over to the side the blitz is coming from. That means the right corner will start to creep in towards the edge of the offensive line, while the free safety and strong safety both slide over to the right side. The left corner will start to drop back, and when the ball is hiked, he will play a deep zone on his third of the field, the strong safety will play deep center field, and the free safety will pick up the right corner's deep zone. In the meantime, the right corner is blitzing off the edge, looking to make a play on the quarterback.

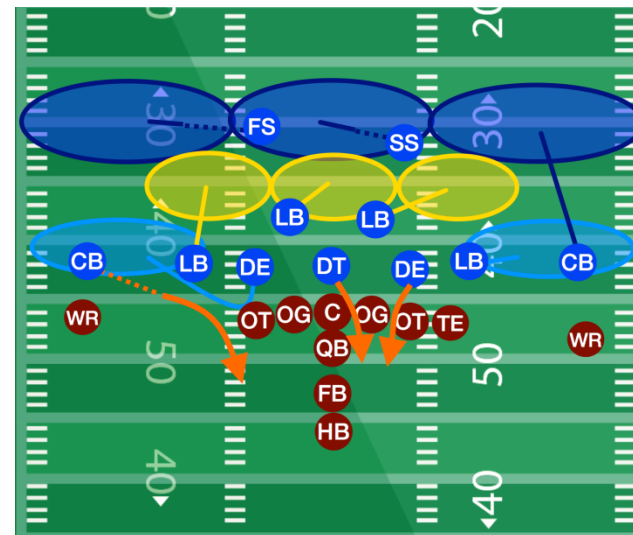


Figure 32: Cover 2 Look CB Fire Zone

Base 3-4 – Suicide Fire Zone

Play Objective

Playing a Cover 1 alignment with the strong safety up in the box, the Suicide Fire Zone uses a fake from the left end to free the strong safety up to make a play in the backfield.

Strengths

The strong safety has a unique blend of speed and power, which often makes them very effective blitzers – they have the speed of the rest of the members of the secondary, but also the strength to fight off blocks as well. And with the right end faking his rush before dropping into coverage, we're able to maintain a Cover 3 defense in the secondary.

Weaknesses

The left end is put out on a bit of an island, and if the offense sees the blitz coming or is just able to neutralize it, he could be exposed in coverage.

Positional Responsibilities & Alignment

Defensive Line: The left end will take a step up and fake as if he is going to rush the quarterback, then drop back into a flat zone. The right end and nose tackle will each shoot their regular gaps.

Linebackers: The Will backer will play a flat zone on the weak side, while the Mike, Ted, and Sam backers play middle hook zones.

Secondary: The strong safety will use the left ends fake to try and gain an advantage rushing the passer off the edge, while the corners and free safety will split deep zone responsibilities three ways, with the free safety patrolling center field.

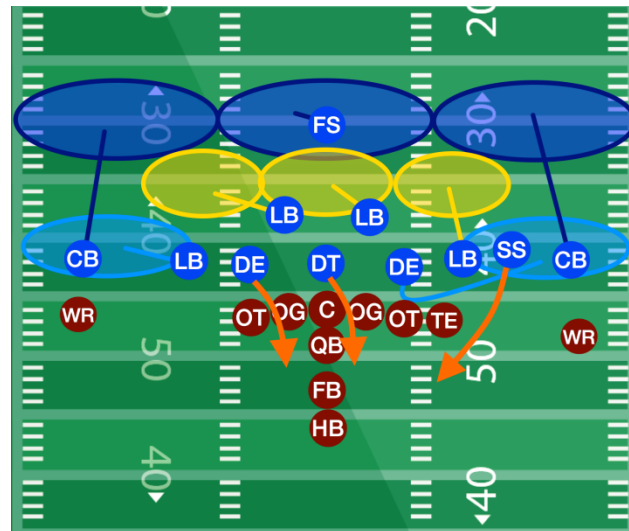


Figure 2: Suicide Fire Zone

Recommended Resources

Thanks for checking out this playbook!

If you'd like to see all of these coverages and blitzes explained with step by step video instructions, coaching tips, and key defensive drills for 3-4 teams, you can upgrade your package by visiting the page below:

<http://www.football-tutorials.com/p/upgrade-34>

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