Hi Coach! Thanks for checking out this 4-3 Defense Quick Start Guide.

We’ve included an introduction to the 4-3 showing the basic alignments and positional responsibilities.

If you’d like to see all 6 coverage schemes, 9 man blitzes and 9 zone blitzes, along with detailed, step by step instructions for implementation and “cheat sheets” you can bring right to practice... make sure you check out the complete Ultimate 4-3 Defense Playbook by going to:

http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/
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.

Download the complete playbook at [http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/](http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/)
4-3 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment

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, 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 split 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.

Defensive Line

The ‘4’ of the 4-3 represents your defensive linemen, often referred to as the front four. Each player has different strengths and weaknesses, as well as differing gap responsibilities in the run game.

Left End (LE): The left end lines up outside of the right tackle and is responsible for controlling the ‘D’ gap in the run game, and has trail responsibilities when the ball is run away from him. He is generally the stronger, better run defender of the two ends, as he’ll often have to deal with the tight end chipping in as an extra blocker next to the right tackle. That said, he does need to be able to rush the passer off the edge with some consistency as well.

Defensive Tackle (DT): This is the three technique tackle, lining up on the outside shoulder of the strong side guard. Of the two tackles, he will be the one better suited to rushing the passer and is generally quicker and lighter. He will shoot the ‘B’ gap, looking to penetrate in the backfield at the snap of the ball regardless of the playcall.

Nose Tackle (NT): The nose tackle is the biggest, strongest member of the defensive line. He will line up on the weak side shoulder of the center, and his job is to control the ‘A’ gap and eat up a double team so as to keep his fellow linemen in one on one situations and the linebackers behind him free and unblocked.

Right End (RE): The right end is the most athletic player on our defensive line and our pass rushing specialist. He’ll lineup on the outside shoulder of the left tackle, although in obvious passing situations, he can step even further out to allow a better angle from which to rush the passer. He is responsible for the ‘C’ gap as well as trailing the play from the backside in the run game.

Download the complete playbook at http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/
Positional Responsibilities and Alignment - Continued

Linebackers
The ‘3’ of the 4-3 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.

Strong Side Linebacker (Sam, S): The Sam linebacker will line up in front of the right tackle, about four to five yards off the line of scrimmage, right in front of the strong side ‘C’ gap. Of the two outside linebackers, the Sam linebacker is generally the stronger and heavier of the two. Since he will be lining up on the same side of the field as the tight end, the Sam linebacker needs to be tough against the run, able to take on lead blockers without giving up ground. He will also need to be strong in coverage, as he will be the one that ends up with the assignment of covering the tight end in a host of different coverage schemes.

Middle Linebacker (Mike, M): The Mike linebacker is often referred to as the quarterback of the defense. This is because it is he who is in charge of calling out most of the defensive signals and making sure that the defense is aligned properly.
He also needs the same savvy a quarterback possesses, with the ability to identify what the opposition is doing and react accordingly; whether that’s dropping into deep coverage, stepping up to lay the boom on a short pass, or making plays in the run game in the backfield as well as from sideline to sideline. He’ll start in the middle of the field, about four to five yards off the line of scrimmage and in between the nose tackle and the three technique tackle, in line with the strong side ‘A’ gap.

Weak Side Linebacker (Will, W): The Will linebacker is the lightest, most explosive athlete of the three linebackers, and he’ll line up in between his right end and the nose tackle, playing the weak side ‘B’ gap. With teams most often running to the strong side, the Sam and Mike linebackers will be taking on the primary blockers, while the Will linebacker gets to fly through traffic to make a play on the ball carrier.

Download the complete playbook at [http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/](http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/)
4-3 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment - Continued

Secondary
The remaining four members of the defense make up your secondary. What we ask our secondary to do has a lot to do with alignment and playcall.

Cornerbacks (CB): Your corners will line up across from their respective matchups, positioning themselves with proper leverage depending on the alignment of the secondary.

In a Cover 2 alignment, the corners will line up on the inside shoulder of the receiver, forcing him out to the sideline and preventing him from running up the seam. These techniques are called playing with an outside or inside shade, respectively.

In a Cover 1 alignment, the corners will line up on the outside shoulder of the receiver, preventing him from beating them out to the sideline where the defense is more vulnerable.

Regardless, whether the defense is in a Cover 1 or Cover 2 alignment, or playing man or zone - your corners are going to be among the fastest, most fluid athletes on the field.

However beyond that, the type of player you use at corner is going to depend greatly on your available personnel and preferred scheme. If you want to play man coverage, you’re going to need athletic corners who can track a receiver one on one, reading his eyes and making a play on the ball with good timing.

If you want to play more zone coverage you’re going to need corners who have the ability to read the quarterbacks eyes and jump routes, looking to get a hand on the ball or deliver a hit on the receiver right as they go to make the catch. If you want your corners to play press, you’re going to want bigger, stronger corners, whether they’re dropping into man or zone after bumping the receivers at the line.

Download the complete playbook at http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/
4-3 Basics

Positional Responsibilities and Alignment - Continued

Secondary – Continued

**Free Safety (FS):** The free safety is your center fielder, playing ten to fifteen yards off the line of scrimmage, either smack in the middle or slightly off to one side, depending on whether it’s a Cover 1 or Cover 2 alignment. He needs to be instinctual and athletic, able to quickly diagnose a play and disrupt it – while still staying disciplined.

He needs to be able to help out in the run game – without overcommitting and leaving the defense vulnerable to playaction. This is especially true when the defense is playing a Cover 1 alignment, as the strong safety is acting essentially as a fourth linebacker in this situation, leaving the free safety as the sole, last line of defense.

**Strong Safety (SS):** A classic strong safety is much like a cross between a free safety and a Will linebacker – and just where they are on that spectrum will depend greatly on your scheme. They need the ability to come up into the box to stuff the run, which is just what most Cover 1 teams will ask them to do.

But they also have the ability to drop into coverage, whether that involves playing flat or deep zones or playing man coverage on a tight end. That said, some schemes essentially play two free safeties, and some schemes essentially have the strong safety as their fourth linebacker. It all depends on your personal preference as well as the talent pool available to you.

Download the complete playbook at [http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/](http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/)
Here’s What’s Included In The Complete Playbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-3 Basics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sam &amp; Mike (SMash) LB Blitz</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 Man Coverages</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Will &amp; Mike (WhaM) LB Blitz</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 - Cover 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sam &amp; Will (SWord) LB Blitz</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 - Cover 2 Man</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sam, Will &amp; Mike (SWarM) LB Blitz</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 - Cover 0 All Out Blitz</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Zone Blitzes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 Zone Coverages</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>CB (Cover 2 Look) Blitz</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 - Cover 2 Zone</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Both CBs (Cover 2 Look ZERO) Blitz</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 - Cover 3 Zone</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Free &amp; Strong (Tornado) Safety Blitz</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base 4-3 - Cover 4 Zone</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Will FIRE ZONE</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man Blitzes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sam FIRE ZONE</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike (Monster) Blitz</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mike FIRE ZONE</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam (SAMson) Blitz</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Suicide FIRE ZONE</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will (Warrior) Blitz</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Freeky FIRE ZONE</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Safety (Suicide) Blitz</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Cover 2 Look FIRE ZONE</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Safety (FREEky) Blitz</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Download the complete playbook at [http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/](http://football-tutorials.com/p/43defense/)