

DOMINANT RUNNING GAME PLAYBOOK

BREAD AND BUTTER RUNNING PLAYS TO
DRAMATICALLY BOOST ANY TEAM'S OFFENSE



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Introduction

Welcome to the Dominant Running Game Playbook!

This resource is designed to help any coach, at any level, running any system, develop a more productive, consistent, and high-scoring run game.

The playbook is divided up into 8 sections:

1. Power Run Plays
2. Belly Run Plays
3. Trap Run Plays
4. Iso Run Plays
5. Speed Option Run Plays
6. Load Option Run Plays
7. Zone Option Run Plays
8. Outside Zone Run Plays

In each section, we'll describe the back ground and basic strategy for the play. Then provide specific player assignments , diagrams, and blocking schemes against a variety of defensive fronts. As well as simple coaching tips to improve your execution.

If you'd like to see all of these plays demonstrated on video, with live practice and game footage, drills ,and practice plans, you can upgrade your purchase to include the **Dominant Run Game Platinum Video Edition** by visiting

<http://footballtutorials.com/up-runplaybook>

Okay, let's get started!

Power

For almost as long as football has been around the Power play has as well – there are versions that have been found in playbooks dating as early as 1905.

The philosophy is simple – overwhelm the defense with players are the point of attack, and use aggressive blocking techniques to clear the hole out for your halfback. By allowing big, heavy guards to wrap around the line and get a running start, while the others slide up to the second level, our strongest players are being put in a position to *overpower* the defense.

To run this kind of play, you need the right personnel – while it's always important to have linemen that can block well, there are some jobs specific to the power, and if you have the players to do them correctly, even if the defense knows what you want to do, it won't matter.

The two most important blockers against most formations are the pulling guard and the fullback. The pulling guard's job is to block the first unblocked defender coming down the hole – if he doesn't do his job, the halfback is getting met head on at the line of scrimmage by a linebacker, and that can make his job pretty tough.

The other block is the fullback's. With the tight end moving up to the second level, we leave the first defender off the edge unblocked, with the fullback having to come across the formation and kick him out to the outside. Think of him like the crowbar that pries the hole open, so that the halfback can get through and out to the second level.

People often confuse power football with the power play – this isn't an attitude, or a way of approaching the game – this is a play that has been around for more than 100 years, hitting the defense for 4-5 yard gains over and over until you put up six points.

And now it's time to add it to your arsenal!

Play Name

Power (Strong)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

With the strong side tackle lined up over the 'B' gap, we will attack the 'A' gap, using the left guard's lead block to spring the halfback into the next level. The halfback should also keep his eyes open on the weak side 'B' gap as he comes up to the line, as occasionally, the defense will over pursue and leave themselves vulnerable to the cutback.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will take care of the back side 'B' gap, executing a hinge block.

LG: He will execute a tight wrap, hitting anything he sees in front of him to the weak side.

C: The center will block back on the tackle shaded to his left shoulder.

RG: Will double team the 3 technique tackle with the right tackle. It's the guard's responsibility to come off the block for anything that comes down the inside of the field – he can ignore anything to the outside.

RT: After starting the double team with the right guard, it will be the right tackle's responsibility to take over the block as the guard works down field.

TE: The tight end will outside release, trying to draw defenders away from the line.

FB: Is responsible for the strong side 'C' gap, working to kick out any 'C' gap defender to the sideline.

HB: The halfback will take a drop step, and then come straight downhill, trying to punch the ball right up the 'A' gap behind the lead block from the left guard.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot, coming straight back to hand the ball, making sure not to push the halfback off the sideline.

Coaching Keys

The left guard is probably the most important player here, as if he is late or misses a block, the halfback will get blown up before he even gets to the line of scrimmage.

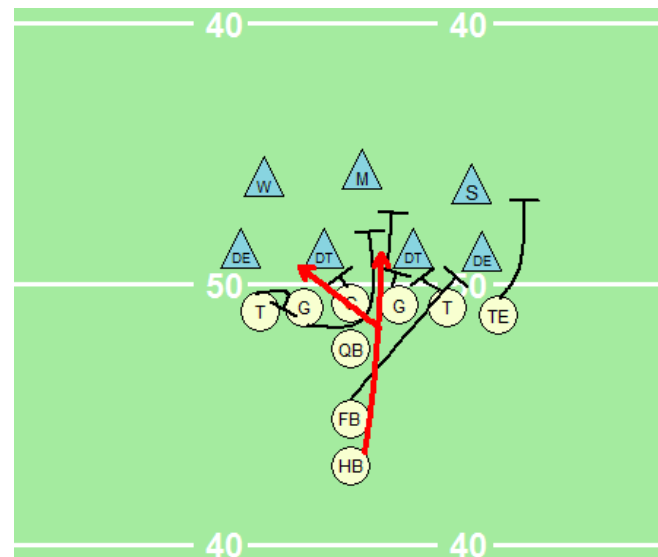


Diagram 1: Strong Power against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power (Strong)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

With an eight man box, the blocking scheme will stay roughly the same for the power. The left guard still needs to get out in front of the halfback and give him a good block through the hole, but we also want to keep an eye on that cutback lane to the weak side 'B' gap.

Player Assignments

LT: To protect the backside 'B' gap, the left tackle will execute a hinge block.

LG: The left guard will pull and wrap tight in behind the center,

C: The center will block the tackle shaded to his left, pushing him away from the playside action.

RG: The right guard and right tackle will execute a double team on the playside defensive tackle. If the defense sends any players down the middle, it is the guards responsibility to slide off the double team and block that man.

RT: Will double team the playside tackle with the right guard, taking the block on himself if the guard needs to release to the second level.

TE: The tight end will release to the outside, attempting to draw defenders away from the play.

FB: The fullback will execute a kick out block on the strong side, taking care of any defenders trying to come down through the 'C' gap.

HB: After taking a drop step, the halfback will take the hand off and come straight down the 'A' gap, following the left guard's lead block.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot, coming down to hand the ball off to the halfback while making sure to give the halfback enough room to come down the midline.

Coaching Keys

While most teams prefer to run their Power as more of a 'B' or 'C' gap play, we like to get the guard going downhill earlier and have the halfback come right down the pipeline. With no 'A' gap defender to the strong side, a well executed Power right down the middle can be devastating to the defense.

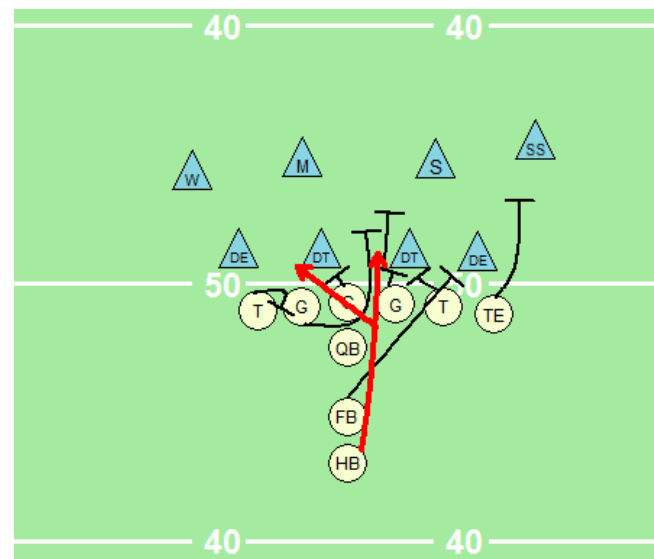


Diagram 2: Strong Power against an 8 Man Box.

Play Name

Power (Strong)

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

With the defense in a 4-3 under alignment, they will have a defender lined up over the 'A' gap. So to adjust, we will instead run the Power here as more of a 'B' gap play, having the left guard perform a big wrap and come up the right guard's outside hip while the fullback seals the edge with a kick.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will perform a hinge block, protecting the weak side 'B' gap.

LG: Again will wrap, but this will be a big wrap, coming behind the right guard and leading the halfback through the hole.

C: The center will block down on the weak side defensive tackle, pushing him away from the playside.

RG: The right guard will block down on the defensive tackle lined up over the 'A' gap, clearing him out to the backside..

RT: The right tackle will release to the inside, heading up to the second level to lay a block down on the weak side linebacker.

TE: The tight end will block the strong side linebacker, pushing him to the outside.

FB: The fullback has to get out to the playside defensive end and get a kickout block on him, sealing the inside edge for his halfback.

HB: After taking the handoff, the halfback will take a direct line to the 'B' gap on the strong side, following his lead blocker through the hole.

QB: The quarterback will take the snap and hand the ball off to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

The block of the fullback on the strong side end will often make or break this play. In the 4-3 Under defense, often that end will squeeze in, meaning the fullback has to cover a lot of ground and make a good block or the end may be able to tackle or at least disrupt the halfback in the backfield.

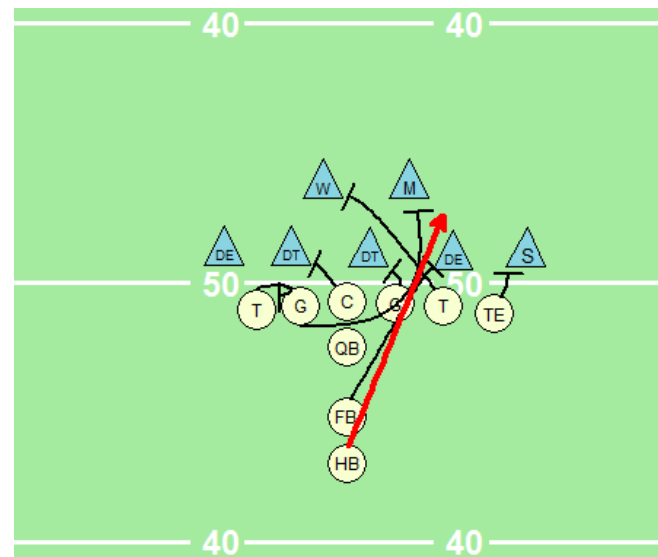


Diagram 3: Strong Power against a 4-3 Under Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power (Strong)

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

When faced with a nose tackle – as we see in a 3-3 or 3-4 defense – we will treat this player as an ‘A’ gap defender in our rules. This means the halfback will be running this as more of a ‘B’ gap play, following tightly behind the left guard as he comes down the hole.

Player Assignments

LT: Protecting the weak side from any pursuant defenders, the left tackle will execute a hinge block.

LG: The left guard will execute a big wrap, coming in tight behind the right guard and leading the halfback up through the ‘A’ gap.

C: The center will block the nose tackle to the weak side, getting some help with a chip block from the right guard before taking over on his own.

RG: To help the center get inside leverage, the right guard will hit the nose tackle with a chip block, before moving on to the next level and blocking the weak side line backer.

RT: The right tackle will release inside, heading straight for the middle linebacker and blocking him to the weak side.

TE: The tight end will block the strong side linebacker to the outside.

FB: The fullback has to execute a kick out block on the playside defensive end.

HB: The halfback will take a drop step to help him gain a bit of steam, take the handoff, then come right up behind his left guard, following him through the hole.

QB: After taking the snap, the quarterback will hand the ball off to the halfback and get out of the way.

Coaching Keys

Nose tackles are big, strong players, capable of plugging up a hole or two all on their own. We need a clear ‘B’ gap so that our left guard can get out to the second level, so the key block versus this alignment is the double team of the center and the right guard, clearing the nose tackle over to the weak side.

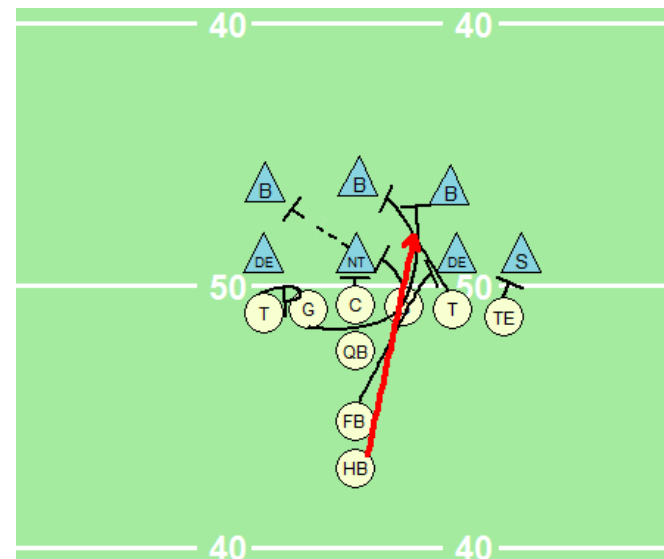


Diagram 4: Strong Power against a 3-3 Stack Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power (Strong)

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

In the 3-4, we again have a nose tackle, meaning we need the double team from our center and guard to clear out the 'A' gap. The left guard will be executing a tight wrap, as the halfback will be coming somewhere in between the 'A' and 'B' gaps against this particular alignment.

Player Assignments

LT: To protect the backside, the left tackle will execute a hinge block.

LG: The left guard will pull a tight wrap here, coming up in behind the right guard and leading the back through the hole.

C: The center will double team the nose tackle with the right guard, taking over the block when the right guard heads to the second level.

RG: After double teaming the nose tackle with the center, the right guard will release up to the second level and block a linebacker on the weak side.

RT: The right tackle will release inside, heading straight to the second level to block the middle linebacker.

TE: The tight end will block the strong side linebacker to the outside.

FB: The fullback is responsible for the strong side 'C' gap, performing a kick out block on the defensive end.

HB: The halfback will take the handoff and head straight up the 'A' gap, following the left guard.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot and hand the ball off to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

This can be a very tough block for your fullback, depending on the alignment of the strong side defensive end. This is why we don't run this as a 'B' gap play – we need to get our halfback going downhill and past the line quickly, as the fullback won't be able to sustain that block for long against a good defensive end, and going wider would just make it an easier play for the end to make. This play will hinge on the ability of the right guard to help keep the nose tackle out of the 'A' gap, and the fullback's ability to prevent the defensive end from crashing in.

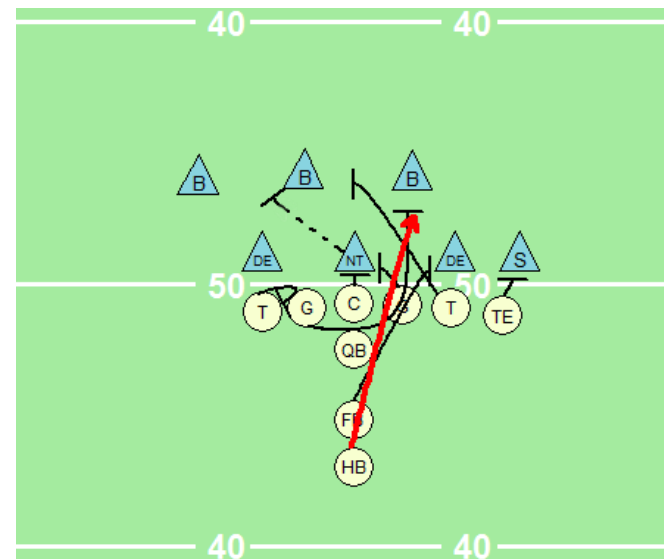


Diagram 5: Strong Power against a 3-4 Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power (Weak)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

While the play is no longer being run to the strong side, don't let the word 'weak' fool you. The fundamental idea stays the same – overwhelm the defense at the point of attack. While the offense may have fewer players on the weak side of the formation, more often than not, the defense will too.

With a defensive tackle lined up right over the 'A' gap, this play will definitely be run to the 'B' gap, with the left guard and center both blocking the defensive tackles down and away from the playside.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release inside, picking up the Mike linebacker at the second level.

LG: The left guard will block down on the defensive tackle, pushing him to the right side and sealing the 'B' gap.

C: The center will block down on the strong side defensive tackle, pushing him away from the action.

RG: The right guard will release, wrapping up behind the left guard and coming through the 'B' gap looking to clear the way for the halfback.

RT: To keep any backside defenders from coming in and blowing up the play in the backfield, the right tackle will execute a hinge block.

TE: The tight end will release to the outside, attempting to draw defenders away from the play.

FB: The fullback will seal the outside edge, kicking out on the play side defensive end.

HB: The halfback will take the handoff and follow the right guard up through the 'B' gap.

QB: The quarterback will hand the ball off to the halfback and get out of the way.

Coaching Keys

It is very unlikely versus this formation that the halfback has any kind of cutback lane. However, with the fullback in a one on one situation against the defensive end, there may be an opportunity to bounce the play outside if the Will linebacker is too aggressive, trying to meet the halfback in the 'B' gap for example.

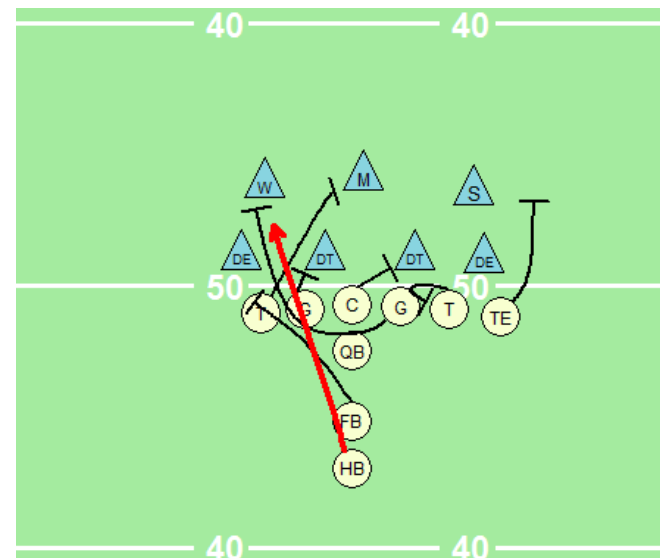


Diagram 6: Weak Power against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power (Weak)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

Regardless of whether the play is being run versus a 7 or 8 man box, the blocking responsibilities and running lanes will stay almost the exact same. Keep in mind though that a team stacking the box is leaving themselves vulnerable to the pass, and working some playaction in here is a great way to clear up some running room – or even pick up a big play.

Player Assignments

LT: Releases inside, allowing him to block any linebackers coming across to the playside at the second level.

LG: The left guard will be responsible for blocking the 'A' gap defender, blocking him over to the strong side.

C: The center will block down the line, pushing the strong side defensive tackle away from the play.

RG: The right guard will come with a big wrap, coming in off the left guards outside hip and lead blocking up through the hole.

RT: The right tackle will execute a hinge block, protecting the play on the backside from any weak side defenders chasing from behind.

TE: The tight end will pull as many defenders away from the play as he can by releasing to the outside.

FB: The fullback is responsible for getting a kick out block on the defensive end.

HB: The halfback will take the hand off and head up through the 'B' gap, following his lead blocker.

QB: After taking the snap, the quarterback will pivot and hand the ball off to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

Against an 8 man box, it can be very difficult to pick up short chunks of yardage – especially if the team starts to run blitz. The one benefit to this though is that with so many players up at the line of scrimmage, if the offense can give him a couple good blocks, the halfback has the potential to go for a huge gain if he can get into the second level.

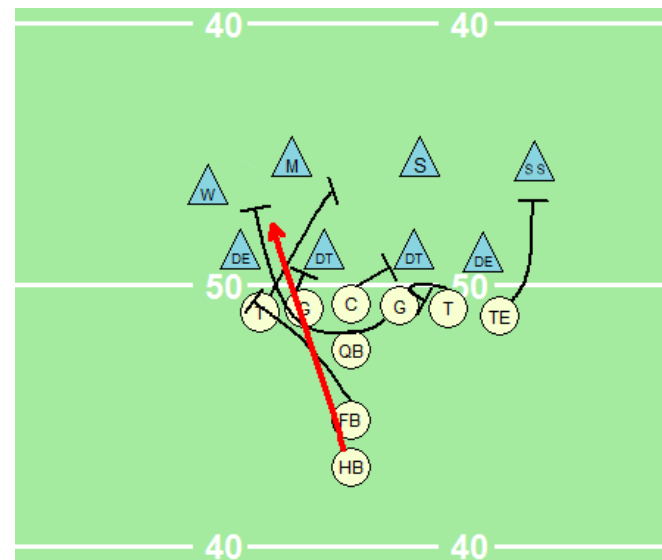


Diagram 7: Weak Power against an 8 man box.

Play Name

Power (Weak)

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

With no 'A' gap defender to the strong side, we are going to have our halfback take a drop step and come straight down the middle. To keep the defensive tackle from blowing up the hole, we will have our left tackle leave the playside defensive end and double team the 3 technique tackle.

Player Assignments

LT: Will double team the weak side defensive tackle with the left guard, taking over the block when the guard slides up to the second level.

LG: After double teaming the 3 technique tackle with the left tackle, the left guard will move up to second level and block the first linebacker he sees.

C: The center will block the strong side tackle, sealing the 'A' gap.

RG: The right guard will execute a tight wrap, coming off the center's left hip and leading the halfback through the hole, picking up any linebackers coming down the middle of the field.

RT: The right tackle will protect the backside of the play with a hinge block.

TE: The tight end will block the strong side linebacker to the outside.

FB: To seal the edge, the fullback has to kick out block on the weak side defensive end.

HB: The halfback will take the handoff and come directly down the 'A' gap, aiming for the center's left hip.

QB: After reverse pivoting, to make sure not to move the halfback off his line, the quarterback will hand the ball off.

Coaching Keys

While we're looking to come down the 'A' gap, it's important the halfback keep his head up and stay aware of the potential over pursuit by the defense, which would leave the cutback lane over to the strong side of the formation wide open.

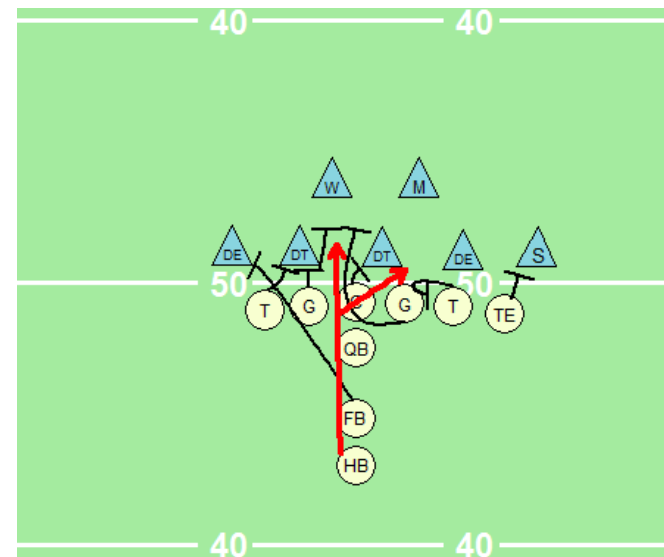


Diagram 8: Strong Power against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power (Weak)

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

Much like the strong power against the 3-3 stack, we will treat the nose tackle as an 'A' gap defender here, meaning we will slide the halfback's hole over closer to the 'B' gap. The only real difference between the weak power and the strong is that we have removed two players – the Sam linebacker and the tight end – over to the backside of the play.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will head for the middle line backer immediately, blocking him to the backside.

LG: The left guard will double team the nose tackle with the center before heading up to the next level to block a linebacker on the strong side.

C: With the help of the left guard, the center will seal the 'A' gap and keep the nose tackle inside to provide a clear running lane for his halfback.

RG: The right guard will come across the line with a big wrap, leading the halfback up through the 'A' gap, and blocking the first linebacker to get in his lane.

RT: The right tackle will take care of the strong side 'C' gap, executing a hinge block.

TE: The tight end will block the strong safety out to the sideline.

FB: The fullback will pick up the weak side defensive end, hitting him with a kick out block to keep the 'A' gap open.

HB: The halfback will take a drop step to help gain momentum, then take the handoff and head straight up the 'A' gap.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot, staying off the halfback's line, and hand the ball off.

Coaching Keys

If you're playing a team with a dominant Sam linebacker or maybe you just have a tight end that is better suited to catching passes than blocking, you'll be better off running the play to the weak side, allowing you to rely on the blocks of your fullback and interior linemen to clear up the hole.

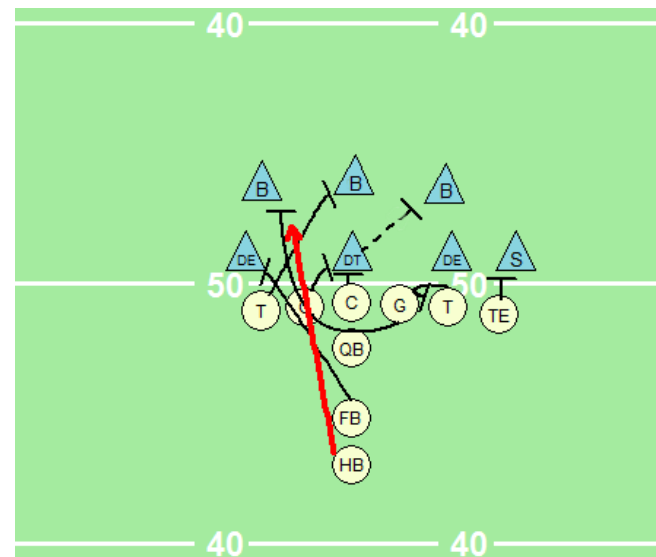


Diagram 9: Weak Power against a 3-3 Stack Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power (Weak)

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

Here we use the double team from our center and playside guard to push the nose tackle off the 'A' gap. The left guard will bump up to the 2nd level, but it's important he make absolutely sure the 'A' gap is clear before doing so, as it is a very tough proposition for a center to win that battle.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release inside here, coming across the formation to block a linebacker at the second level.

LG: The left guard will double team the nose tackle with the center, then slide off to go hit a linebacker at the next level.

C: The center will use the left guard's help on the initial double team, pushing him out of the 'A' gap.

RG: The right guard will wrap behind the line, coming in tight off the left guard's left hip, hitting the first defender he sees coming up the hole.

RT: The right tackle will perform a hinge block, protecting the backside of the play.

TE: The tight end will block the strong side linebacker to the outside.

FB: To seal the edge, the fullback will perform a kick out block on the defensive end.

HB: The halfback will take the handoff and come right up the 'A' gap, following his lead blocker through the hole.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot and hand the ball off to the halfback, making sure to stay off his line.

Coaching Keys

Against the 3-4, it can be a very tough proposition for the full back to take on the defensive end head on, clearing out enough space for the halfback, so to minimize his potential effect, we slide the halfback over to the 'A' gap.

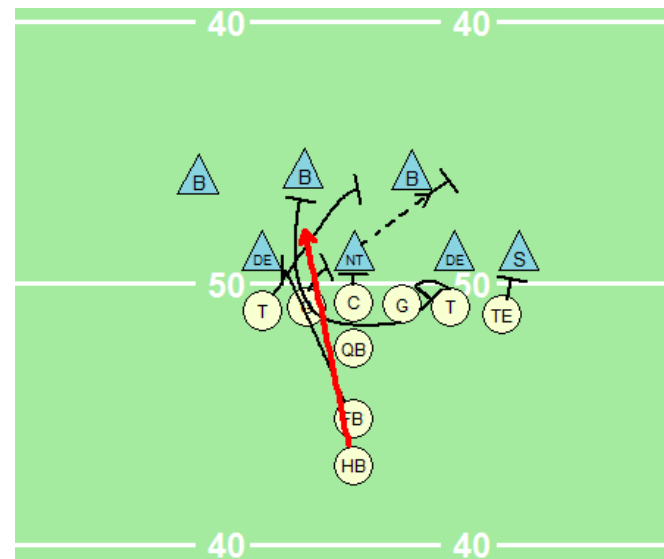


Diagram 10: Weak Power against a 3-4 Defensive Front.

Belly

The belly is a great complementary play, as when run correctly, the defense can be confused into believing the offense is going into the option, power, and the trap, forcing them to respect each play that much more, as they can't begin to play aggressively downhill until they are sure which of the four plays is being run.

In this playbook, we'll have a look at how to effectively run the belly to the strong side. While it can be occasionally run to the weak side, it can be much more difficult to block that way.

That's one of the beautiful things about this play – how easy it is to block. While there is a lot of movement, it is actually very simple. Your linemen need only know how to perform 3 blocks – the reach block, down block, and the kick out block. If they can execute those techniques with consistency, then you are ready to run this play.

If you're a fan of old school football – a fullback on the field, and a between the tackles running game that opens the defense up to the playaction pass, then the belly is play you definitely need to add to your arsenal.

Play Name

Belly

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

When the defensive linemen start to get too aggressive – slanting, playing games – the belly is a good way to make them stick to their responsibilities.

The backside players will work over to the playside blocking, but the most important blocks are the right guard, right tackle, and tight end.

The play is designed to be complementary to the power, so the fullback must sell initially that he is going out as a blocker – then square his shoulders, take the snap, and hit the hole hard, coming right off the right tackle's outside hip.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will execute a scoop block, stepping over to the playside and double teaming the weak side tackle before moving up to the 2nd level.

LG: Also scoop blocking in this situation, it is the guard's job to prevent the weak side tackle from getting over to the playside.

C: The job of the center is to protect the 'A' gap initially, before releasing to the 2nd level to block any linebackers trying to penetrate into the hole.

RG: The playside guard will pull, kicking out on the 'C' gap defender – in this case the strong side defensive end.

RT: The right tackle will block down on the strong side defensive tackle.

TE: With no one lined up over the right tackle, the tight end is free to release to the Mike linebacker and block downfield.

FB: The full back will begin to step over to the playside as if still a blocker, before squaring his shoulders, planting, and heading North, following the blocks of the right tackle and tight end.

HB: The halfback will sell the play as if about to receive the handoff, running to the outside after to try and draw defenders away from the point of attack.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot, doing his best to get the ball to the fullback as deep as possible so that he has a chance to read the defense as he takes the handoff and adjust accordingly.

Coaching Keys

The tackle and tight end will use the down rule – if there is anyone touching the man inside of you, you block down on him – otherwise you go block down on a linebacker up at the 2nd level.

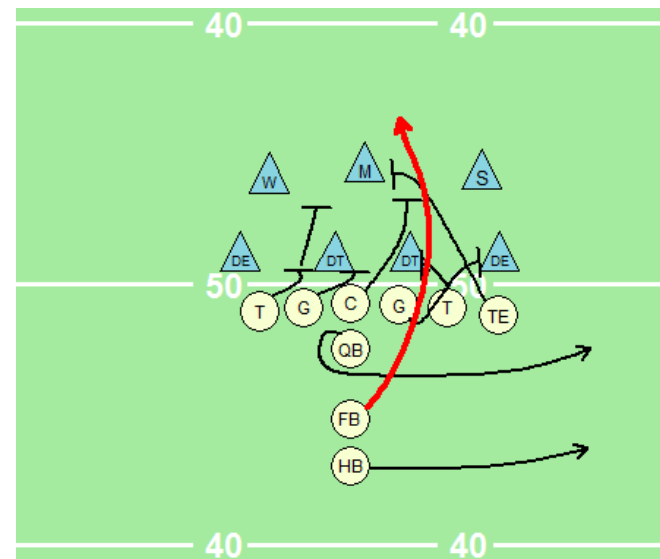


Diagram 11: Belly against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Belly

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

The blocking is the same here as for the regular 7 man box. The only major difference being that the tight end has the option to release to the inside or the outside – as long as he gets to the Mike linebacker and lays a good block down on him, it doesn't matter.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will scoop block, helping out on the defensive tackle before moving downfield to a linebacker.

LG: The left guard must get inside of the weak side tackle, scooping inside of him.

C: The center is still first in charge of protecting the 'A' gap, at which point he can release into the 2nd level and find a linebacker to block.

RG: The right guard will pull, performing a kickout block on the defensive end.

RT: The right tackle will block down on the strong side defensive tackle, pushing him over to the backside and out of the 'B' gap.

TE: The tight end will release to the second level, picking up the first linebacker he sees.

FB: After taking a couple steps over, the fullback will square his shoulders, take the handoff, and get vertical as soon as possible.

HB: The halfback is responsible for selling the playfake, keeping the defense guessing on who the play is going to for as long as he can.

QB: Will reverse pivot, then get the ball to the fullback early, so that he has a chance to see the hole develop and make any appropriate cuts.

Coaching Keys

When this play is blocked properly, especially by the right side of your line, it is almost a guaranteed 3-5 yards.

Once you've run it a couple times, the defense will notice this, and the outside linebackers will begin to crash in, at which point you can take advantage with playaction, a counter, or some other complementary run play.

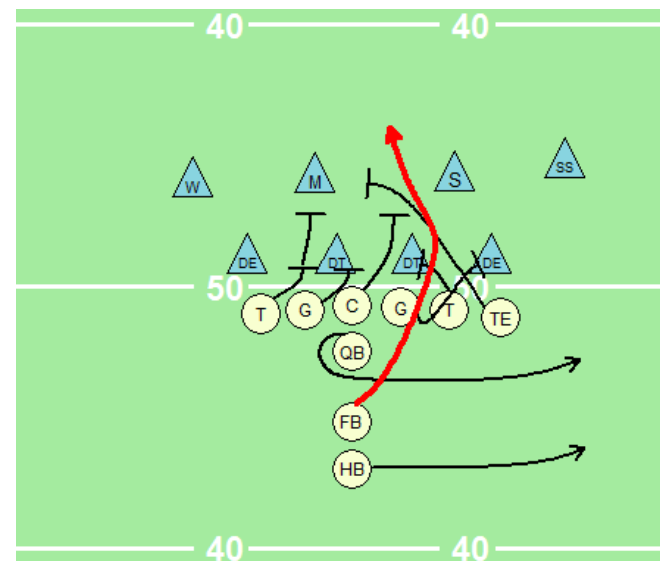


Diagram 12: Belly against an 8 Man Box.

Play Name

Belly

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

Versus a 4-3 under front, there is a defensive end lined up head on over the playside tackle. According to the down rule, this means that the tight end will block down on the defensive end, with the right tackle now the one who moves up to the 2nd level, blocking down on the Will linebacker.

Player Assignments

LT: Scoop blocking, along with the rest of the backside, the left tackle will get inside of the weak side tackle and prevent him from getting to the playside.

LG: The left guard will scoop inside, chipping the strong side tackle before moving up to block a linebacker at the 2nd level.

C: The center will scoop over as well, blocking the strong side tackle.

RG: Will pull, kicking out on the Sam linebacker.

RT: The right tackle will release up to the 2nd level, blocking the first linebacker he sees over to the backside.

TE: The tight end will block down on the defensive end, pushing him out of the 'C' gap to clear the way for the fullback.

FB: The fullback will most likely run this play a bit wider – somewhere in between the 'B' gap and 'C' gap, depending on how the play develops.

HB: The halfback will run hard to the outside, trying to draw the defense away from the point of attack.

QB: After reverse pivoting, the quarterback will hand the ball off to the fullback, doing his best to get hand the ball off as deep as possible to the fullback.

Coaching Keys

Against a 4-3 under front, we look for the fullback to get a little wider – closer to a 'C' gap hole than a 'B' gap – because of the alignment of the strong side end as well as the Sam backer. With the Sam up on the line of scrimmage, our guard pulls out to block him, instead of the defensive end, as seen versus the other 4-3 alignments.

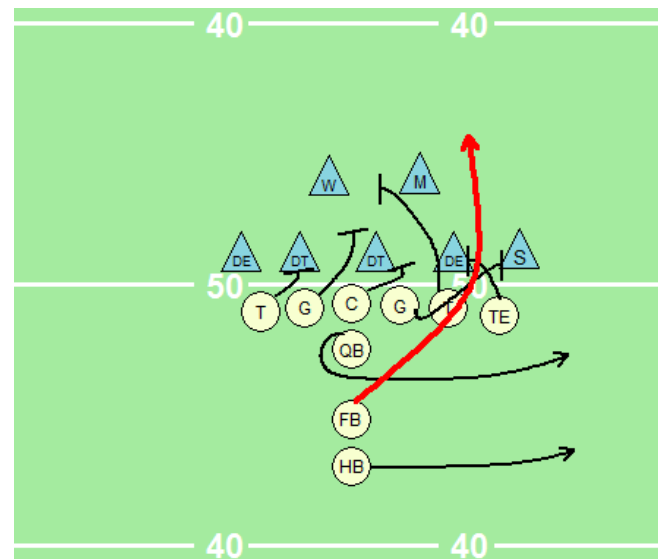


Diagram 13: Belly against a 4-3 Under Defensive Front.

Play Name

Belly

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

The reason why it is so important for the fullback to get the ball as deep as possible, as there are a lot of moving parts in this blocking scheme, and as such, the position of the hole is more fluid than it is on other plays. The fullback needs the time to see the blocks develop and make the correct adjustments – otherwise, even if there is a wide open hole, he may not have the time to cut over into it.

This is especially apparent when running the play against the 3-3 stack, as there is a chance for the hole to be anywhere from the 'B' gap all the way to the 'C', depending on the effectiveness of the blocks/assignments of the defense.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will scoop block over to the playside.

LG: The left guard will scoop over, picking up the nose tackle, and protecting the strong side 'A' gap.

C: The center will scoop inside, moving up to the second level and looking to pick up a linebacker.

RG: The right guard will pull, kicking out on the Sam linebacker, pushing him out to the sideline and clearing the hole for his fullback.

RT: The right tackle will release into the 2nd level, picking up the Mike linebacker, preventing him from penetrating into the hole.

TE: The tight end's responsibility is to block down, clearing the defensive end out of the hole.

FB: The fullback will step to the strong side, planting his foot and looking to get vertical, coming in behind off the tight end's outside hip.

HB: The halfback will sell the run fake to the outside, attempting to draw the defense away.

QB: Will reverse pivot, then work back to get the ball to the fullback as deep into the backfield as possible.

Coaching Keys

The reason why it is so important for the fullback to get the ball as deep as possible, as there are a lot of moving parts in this blocking scheme, and as such, the position of the hole is more fluid than it is on other plays. The fullback needs the time to see the blocks develop and make the correct adjustments – otherwise, even if there is a wide open hole, he may not have the time to cut over into it.

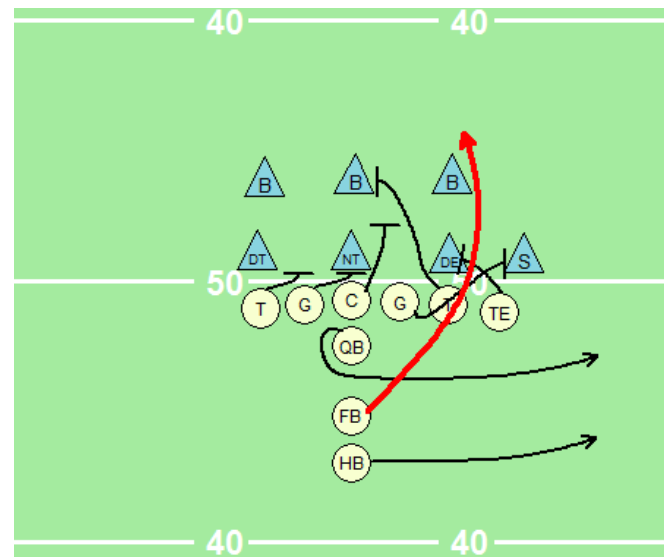


Diagram 14: Belly against a 3-3 Stack Defensive Front.

Play Name

Belly

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

The blocking will stay much the same for the 3-4 and 3-3, with the offensive line basically ignoring the backside linebacker. This play, and really this entire series of plays, hinges heavily on the ability of the tight end to make that down block. And because that is true, he is also generally the primary receiver when you run the playaction on this play, meaning if you have a true tight end, capable of both blocking and receiving effectively, this is a play you will definitely want to add to your playbook.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will scoop block inside to help out on the nose tackle before moving up to the 2nd level and picking up a linebacker.

LG: The left guard will also scoop block, with his responsibility being the nose tackle, and preventing him from penetrating to the strong side.

C: The center will also scoop block, working up to the second level to help out with the linebackers.

RG: After pulling out, the right guard will wrap tight behind the tackle and kick out on the Sam linebacker.

RT: The right tackle will release to the 2nd level, picking up the Mike linebacker.

TE: The tight end will block down on the defensive end that is heads up over the right tackle.

FB: The fullback will sell initially as if he is a blocker, before taking the hand off and getting North/South behind in the hole created by the tight end's down block and the right guard's kick out block.

HB: The halfback's job here is to draw as much of the defense as he can to the outside, really selling the play fake.

QB: Once the ball is snapped, the quarterback will reverse pivot and take a couple steps back, doing his best to get the ball to the fullback as early as possible so that he has a chance to read and react to his blocks.

Coaching Keys

The reason why it is so important for the quarterback to reverse out and the halfback to sprint, is that if you drill both the belly and the option hard enough, the backfield should look exactly the same for the first second or two, making all that much harder for the defense to get a read on where the football is going.

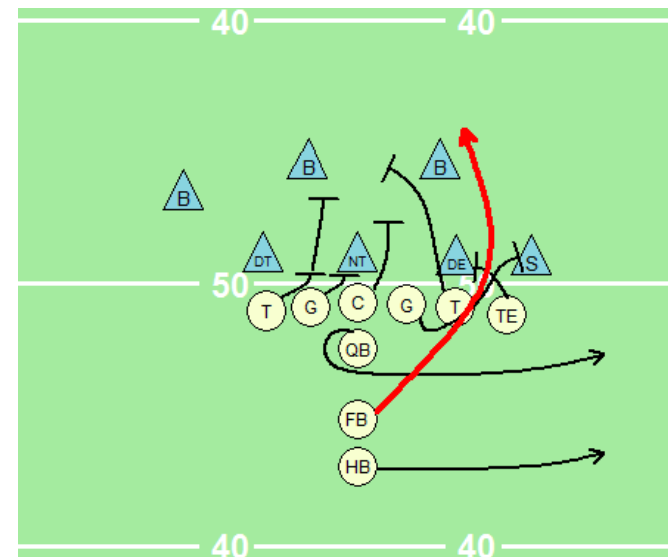


Diagram 15: Belly against a 3-4 Defensive Front.

Trap

The trap has long been a coach's favorite – it was even on Sports Illustrated's list of the greatest college football plays.

It has been around for years, and that's because it's central conceit is so valuable. The main idea behind the trap, is using a defensive tackle's own aggressiveness against himself. That's why the play is so invaluable – not only is it an extremely effective play on its own, but it forces the defensive line to play slower and more cautious against every other running play you run – much in the same way that a draw or screen will slow down the defense's pass rush.

Once the defensive tackle has crossed the line into the backfield, he creates an easy angle for the trap block from the backside guard, who will simply come across the formation and lay a block down. Even if the block only lasts for a second, that is more than enough time, based on the angle of the block and the fact that the running back should be well downfield and through the hole at that point.

So let's learn how to lay the 'trap', and catch some over aggressive defensive linemen in it!

Play Name

Trap

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

It's important to remember here that we want to sell this play as the belly or power initially – it will make the 3 technique tackle even more aggressive, making it easier to use his aggression and run right up through the 'A' gap.

Player Assignments

LT: With no one over the left guard, the left tackle will initially protect the left guard's gap as he pulls across the line for the trap, before moving up to the 2nd level to block the backside linebacker.

LG: The left guard will pull, coming in tight off the center's right hip, executing the trap block on the strong side defensive tackle as he comes into the backfield, believing he's got a bead on the ball carrier.

C: The center will block down on the back side defensive tackle, pushing him over to the weak side.

RG: The right guard will also pull, executing a kick out block on the strong side defensive end.

RT: The right tackle will release to the 2nd level and block the middle linebacker.

TE: The tight end will simply outside release and get downfield.

FB: This is a really tight trap for the fullback. He will start off as if executing the belly, then take the handoff, coming in off the trapping guard's inside hip and getting downfield.

HB: The tailback will sell the run to the outside, attempting to draw defenders away from the run down the middle.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot and hand the ball off to the fullback, before running to the outside with the halfback.

Coaching Keys

There is no strong or weak delineation when it comes to the trap. That is because against a 4-3 front, the trap will always be run to the side with the 3 technique tackle. Otherwise, the angles and timing of the blocks won't work, and you'll just have a free defensive tackle running at your halfback in the backfield.

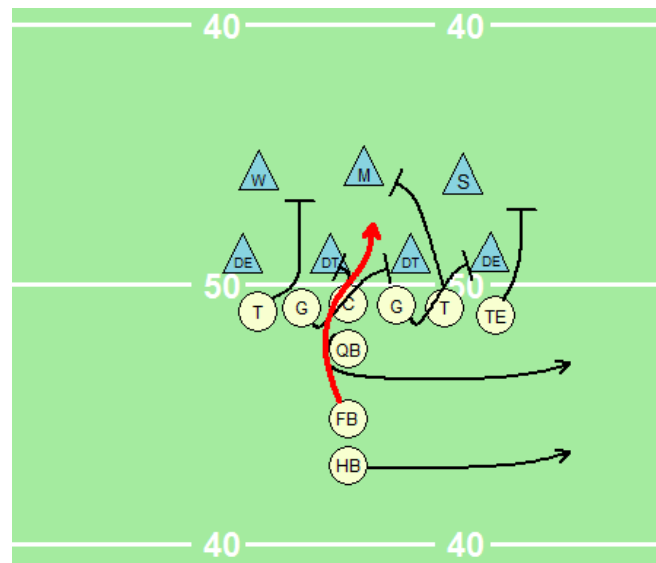


Diagram 16: Trap against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Trap

Defensive Front

4-3 Over - 8 Man Box

Strategy

Against the 8 man box, the trap is run almost identically, as the most important blocks are all happening right at the line of scrimmage, not the 2nd level of the defense. The main adjustment is that now the strong safety is the one being blocked by the tight end, while more or less ignoring the Will backer off to the split side.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release to the 2nd level, getting inside of the Mike linebacker and laying a good block down on him.

LG: The left guard will pull, and perform a trap block on the 3 technique tackle.

C: The center will block down on the weak side tackle, pushing him over to the backside of the play.

RG: The right guard will pull and kick out on the strong side defensive end.

RT: The right tackle will release up to the 2nd level, blocking the Sam linebacker and preventing him from disrupting the play.

TE: The tight end will outside release, heading downfield to block the strong safety who has crept up into the box.

FB: The full back will take the handoff going up the weak side 'A' gap, before quickly cutting in on the guard's inside hip as he executes the trap block, getting downfield and into the 2nd level.

HB: Must sell the fake to the outside, as he may be able to draw defenders away from the point of attack if the defense has to respect the possibility of an option to the outside with the halfback and quarterback.

QB: After reverse pivoting and handing the ball off to the fullback, the quarterback will sprint to the outside.

Coaching Keys

Remember, the success of this play hinges on the aggression of the 3 technique – don't call it if he's slow playing, reading the offense and then making his move, as he will clearly see what is happening and since he is unblocked, he will be able to blow the play up in the backfield. The trap is predicated on the defensive tackle getting too far upfield to maintain his gap responsibilities.

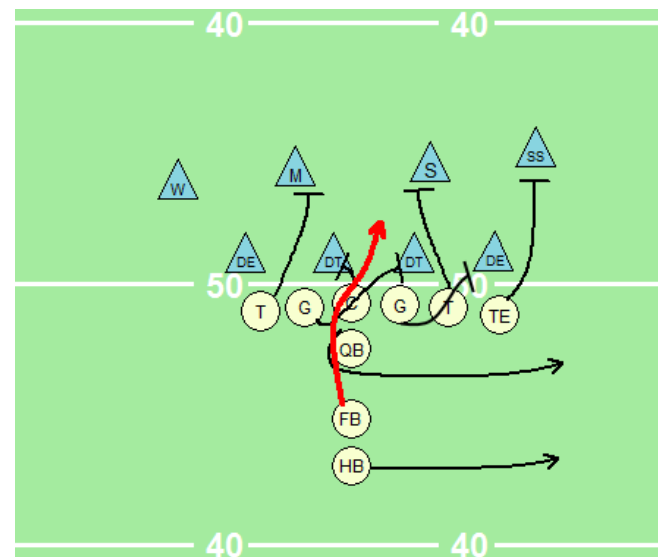


Diagram 17: Trap against an 8 Man Box.

Play Name

Trap

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

When running this play to the split side, like here against the 4-3 under front, we have one fewer player at the point of attack. As a result, we will often use that extra player on the strong side – the tight end – to release to the secondary and pick up the free safety. However, if you are playing against a special Sam backer, who seems to really be able to fold in, you may have the tight end stay in and lay a block on him first.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release up to the 2nd level, taking on the Will linebacker.

LG: The left guard will pull, executing a kick out block on the defensive end.

C: Will block down on the 1 technique tackle to his right.

RG: The right guard is executing the trap block, coming in behind the center to the weak side.

RT: The right tackle will release inside, blocking the Mike linebacker.

TE: The tight end will release inside of the Sam backer, attempting to drag him downfield.

FB: The fullback will take his first step to the right, taking the handoff from the quarterback before blasting up through the hole created by the center's down block and the right guard's trap.

HB: The halfback will sprint out to the weak side, selling the play fake.

QB: After reverse pivoting and handing the ball off to the fullback, the quarterback will roll to the outside, selling the playfake along with the halfback.

Coaching Keys

Against a 4-3 under front, the 3-technique is on the split side. The play will stay the same, except we flip it, now leaving the Sam backer unblocked and having our left tackle release to the 2nd level and lay a block down on the linebacker. Again, it's important to emphasize that the trap can only be run to the 3 techniques side.

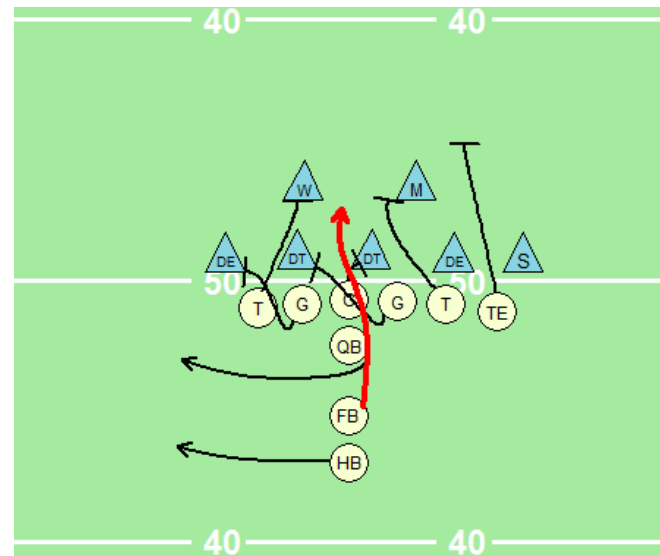


Diagram 18: Trap against a 4-3 Under Defensive Front.

Play Name

Trap

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

Just like when we run the power in the 3-3 stack, we don't need to worry about filling for the pulling guard – with only 3 down linemen, we can instead have our center and right guard double team the nose tackle at the point of attack.

With no 3 technique tackle, the trap is instead laid for the defensive end on the playside.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release inside, looking to block the weak side linebacker.

LG: The left guard will pull, executing a trap block on the strong side defensive end.

C: Will double team the nose tackle with the help of the right guard, working him over to the backside.

RG: The right guard will double team the nose tackle with the center, pushing him away from the 'A' gap.

RT: After releasing to the inside, the right tackle will pick up an inside linebacker and block him to the weak side.

TE: The tight end will release up to the 2nd level, blocking the strong side inside linebacker.

FB: The fullback will take the handoff head to the weak side 'A' gap, before cutting in behind the trap block and getting north south behind the blocks of center, right guard, and trapping left guard.

HB: The halfback will sprint to the edge, selling the playfake to the outside.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot, hand the ball off to the fullback, and roll to the outside, selling the fake with the halfback.

Coaching Keys

While running the trap against the 4-3 is much tighter, against a 3 man defensive line we end up running more of a long trap, meaning the left guard has to work across all the way to the defensive end. This can make for a larger margin of error, making it easier to get an angle, as long as you have a guard with the speed and agility to work all the way across the formation.

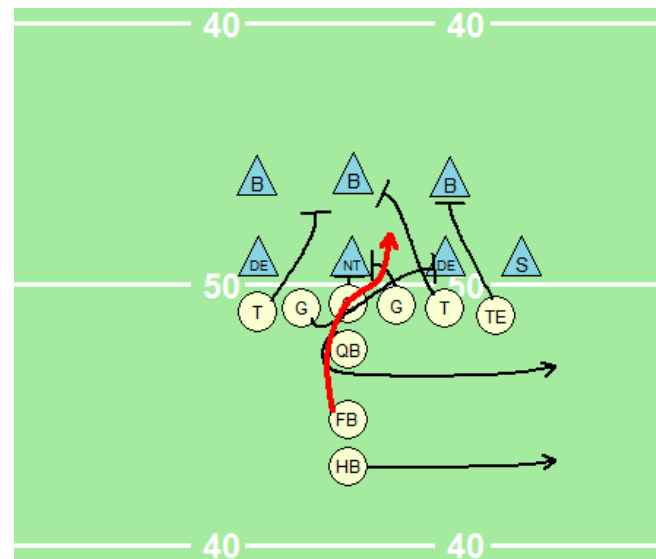


Diagram 19: Trap against a 3-3 Stack Defensive Front.

Play Name

Trap

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

Against the 3-4, much like the 3-3 the hole will generally be bigger once he can get to it, but the fullback will have to show more agility in changing direction and getting over to the strong side when dealing with a 3 lineman front, as the double team and nose means there are 3 bodies basically sitting on the playside 'A' gap.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will ignore the defensive end, releasing inside to go block a middle linebacker.

LG: The left guard will be executing the trap block here, pulling, and coming in tight behind the center and guard and take the strong side defensive end right out of the play.

C: The center will double team the nose tackle with the help of the left guard, working to move him over to the weak side of the formation.

RG: With the help of the center, the right guard will block the nose tackle away from the 'A' gap and over to the backside of the play.

RT: The right tackle will release inside, getting leverage on the other inside linebacker and blocking him downfield.

TE: The tight end will also release downfield, looking to help out on a linebacker or any other defensive player from the 2nd level working to the middle of the field.

FB: The fullback will take the handoff going left, before coming in tight on the backsides of the center and guard and breaking to the strong side 'A' gap behind the left guard's trap block.

HB: The halfback will break to the outside, selling the play fake hard.

QB: The quarterback will reverse pivot, hand the ball off to the fullback and sprint to the outside, selling the play fake.

Coaching Keys

The importance of the quarterback and halfback selling their fake to the outside cannot be understated. While most of the front seven – except for the Sam and Will backers – are already accounted for by blockers, the safeties will be watching the backfield, and if you can draw them out of position, you give your fullback a much better chance at picking up a large gain.

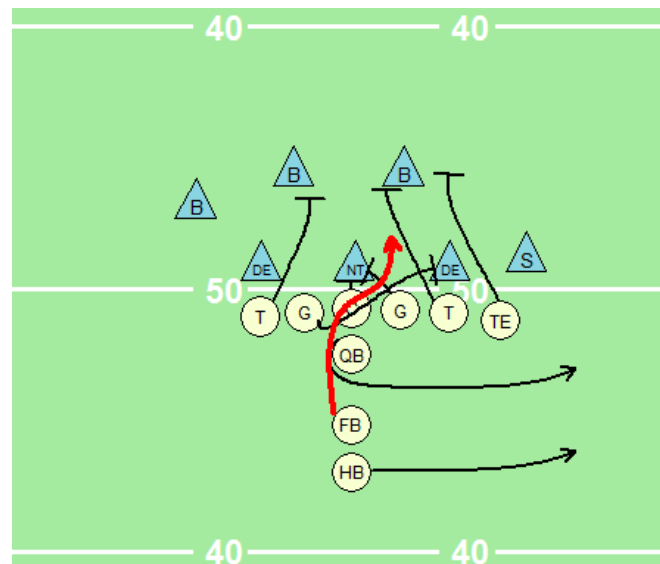


Diagram 20: Strong Power against a 3-4 Defensive Front.

Iso

The Iso is an ageless offensive scheme – it's a great call when you're up 20 and in the shadow of your own end zone, or down 14 and in need of yardage on first. In fact, in a recent poll, four out of five coaches agreed that the Iso is a useful play in any situation on the field.

The key to running the play successfully is handling the playside defensive tackle – usually a three technique. If you can get a handle on him, the rest of the defense usually has good angles and matchups in their man to man blocking assignments, meaning there is the potential for solid yardage every time you run the play.

If you want it to go for big yardage though, you'll need receivers who can block. Whether they've been motioned over to pick up a Will backer, or simply are bursting inside to lay blocks on the safeties, a couple big blocks from your receivers can mean the difference between four yards on this play, and forty.

So the defense will begin to creep up, slowly cheating forward inch by inch, getting frustrated by the short, consistent gains, until they've left themselves vulnerable to the playaction pass over top.

It's also very simple, and as such, is perfect for youth football; blockers, block your man, running back, run straight downfield. The zone run game is a natural evolution of the Iso, allowing the holes to fall where they may, and having the fullback and halfback fill them appropriately. And the better the fullback and halfback work in tandem, the deadlier the play becomes.

Play Name

Iso (Strong)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

This play is designed to be run as a downhill play – ideally right through the ‘A’ gap. While some teams like to run it a bit wider, we will almost run it like a sprint draw, as the halfback will take a quick side step then explode forward through the hole.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will block out on the weak side end, pushing him out to the sideline.

LG: The left guard will release to the 2nd level, taking on the back side linebacker.

C: The center will block down on the weak side defensive tackle, pushing him over to the weak side.

RG: The right guard will block the 3 technique tackle lined up on his outside shoulder. He will block him where he wants to go, using the defenders aggression against him, and allowing the halfback to read the block and make the correct adjustment.

RT: The right tackle will release to the 2nd level and block the strong side linebacker. Depending on the defensive end’s alignment, we may have him give a quick chip block before he moves on to the linebacker.

TE: The tight end will get inside leverage, and work to keep the defensive end from coming middle and disrupting the play.

FB: It’s important that the fullback sell as if going into the option, taking a step over to the side before planting, getting a full head of steam and laying a block down on the Mike linebacker.

HB: The half back will also take a quick sidestep, allowing the quarterback to come to him deep in the backfield, then sprint up the hole following his fullback. The deeper he gets the ball, the more of a chance he has to read the blocks of the right guard and center.

QB: The quarterback also wants to initially sell this as an option play, opening up, and then getting the ball to his halfback as deep as he can.

Coaching Keys

The halfback needs to keep his eyes on the weak side defensive tackle, as if the tackle is able to work across to the strong side, the ‘A’ gap will be plugged, but there will also be a huge cutback lane available to the weak side.

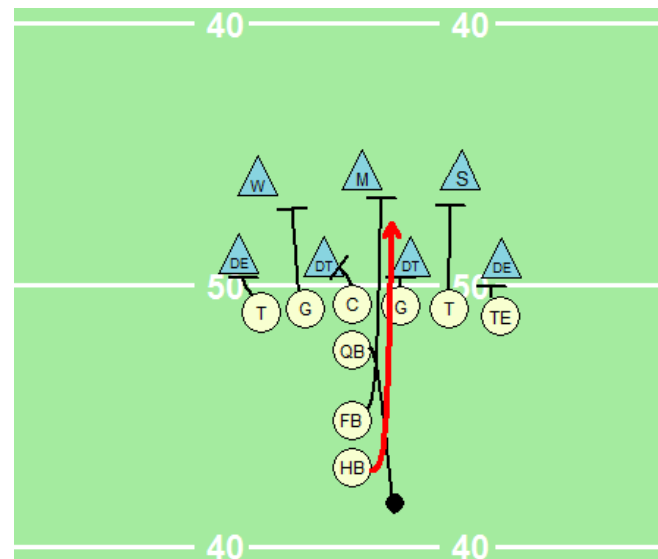


Diagram 21: Strong Iso against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Iso (Strong)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

We will still run this against an 8-man box, the main difference being, that at the point of attack, we will use a combo block from the left guard and center to ensure the weak side tackle is unable to work across over to the strong side, as with an unblocked Will backer, the cutback lane to the weak side isn't nearly as inviting.

Player Assignments

LT: Will block the backside end, keeping him from penetrating inside.

LG: Will double team the backside tackle with the help of the center.

C: After helping out the left guard, double teaming the backside tackle, the center will release to the 2nd level and pick up the Mike linebacker.

RG: The right guard will block the defensive tackle head on, clearing out the 'A' gap for his fullback and halfback.

RT: The right tackle will block out on the strong side end.

TE: After releasing outside, the tight end will work into the 2nd level to give support where he can, likely picking up the strong safety.

FB: The full back will head through the 'A' gap, clearing the way for his halfback and picking up the play side linebacker.

HB: The halfback will sidestep, allowing the quarterback some time to work back to him, before taking the handoff and reading the blocks of the left and right guard at the line of scrimmage, and his fullbacks block at the next level.

QB: The quarterback will open up, selling the option initially, before working back deep to get the ball to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

The halfback and fullback need to both need to read the 3 technique defensive tackle, as if he crashes in, they both need to re-adjust, bumping the run further outside, to the 'B' or 'C' gap.

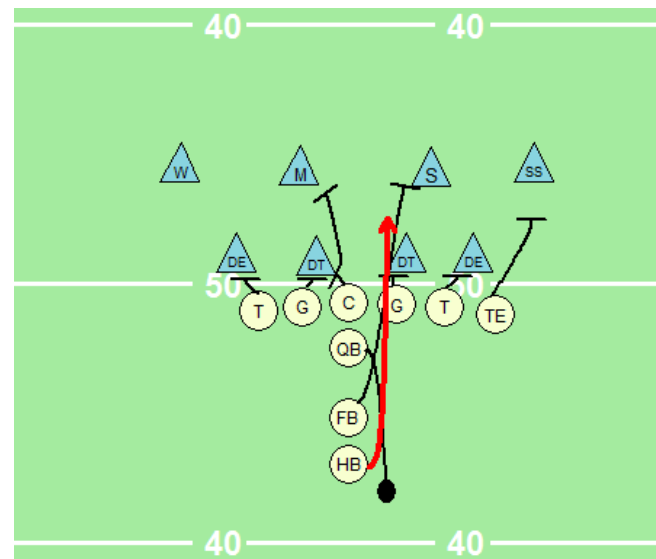


Diagram 22: Strong Iso against an 8 Man Box.

Play Name

Iso (Strong)

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

The 4-3 Under is very susceptible to the Iso, as our blockers all have great angles, and the double team on the playside tackle will do a great job of opening up that hole.

Player Assignments

LT: One on one, the left tackle will be man blocking the weak side end, pushing him away from the play.

LG: The left guard will also be blocking one on one, pushing the weak side tackle out and away from the point of attack.

C: Will double team the 'A' gap defender, taking over the block on his own after the right guard works up to the linebackers.

RG: After double teaming the strong side tackle initially, the right guard will release to the 2nd level and pick up the weak side linebacker.

RT: Blocks out on the strong side defensive end.

TE: Blocks out on the strong side linebacker.

FB: The fullback will come down through the hole to pick up the playside linebacker.

HB: The halfback will take the handoff, and follow his fullback through the big hole and into the 2nd level.

QB: The quarterback will open up, faking as if about to run the option, before handing the ball off to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

Its important in this alignment – or against any front for that matter – that our blockers know that pushing players off the line of scrimmage isn't the goal here, especially for our playside guard and tackle. We want to open the hole up at the line as wide as possible, so our fullback can get through unscathed and lay a big block down on the Mike backer.

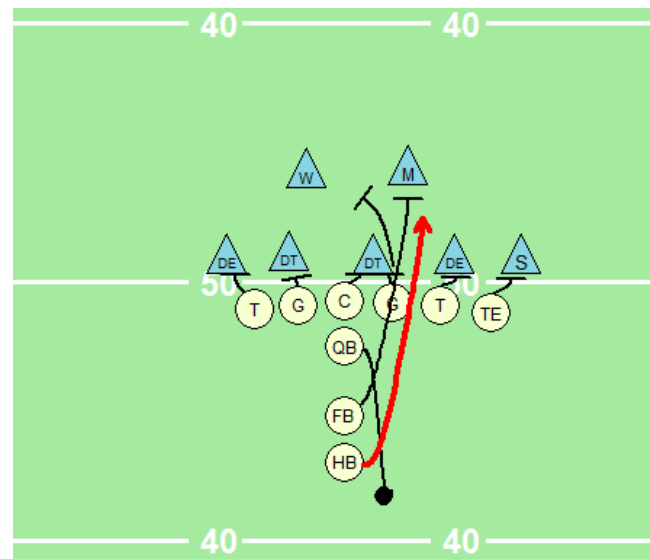


Diagram 23: Strong Iso against an 8 Man Box.

Play Name

Iso (Strong)

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

There are a lot of variations on this play, but the one constant, is that the halfback will always make his read on the first down lineman to the playside. In this case, that means the right guard. And with no one lined up over top of him, the right guard will be working up to the 2nd level, meaning that along with the fullback, our halfback will have two lead blockers headed to the 2nd level to block a line backer.

Player Assignments

LT: Will block the defensive end lined up over top of him.

LG: Releases into the 2nd level, blocking the back side linebacker.

C: The center will take on the nose tackle, blocking him away from the playside 'A' gap.

RG: Depending on your confidence in the center's ability to win that matchup against the nose tackle, you may have your right guard chip block the nose before moving up to the second level and taking on the middle linebacker stacked behind the nose.

RT: The right tackle will block the strong side end out to the boundary, keeping him away from the point of attack.

TE: The tight end is responsible for the Sam backer, base blocking him and taking him out of the play.

FB: The fullback will come through the hole vacated by the right guard, picking up the playside linebacker.

HB: The half back will open step, take the handoff, and follow his fullback up through the hole and into the 2nd level.

QB: After opening up, the quarterback will work to get the ball nice and deep to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

It's very important for the quarterback to work back to the halfback, trying to get him the ball as deep as possible. Since we are mostly blocking the defense where they want to go, the holes can be very fluid, and the halfback needs a chance to read the defense and see some blocks develop before he begins to charge downfield.

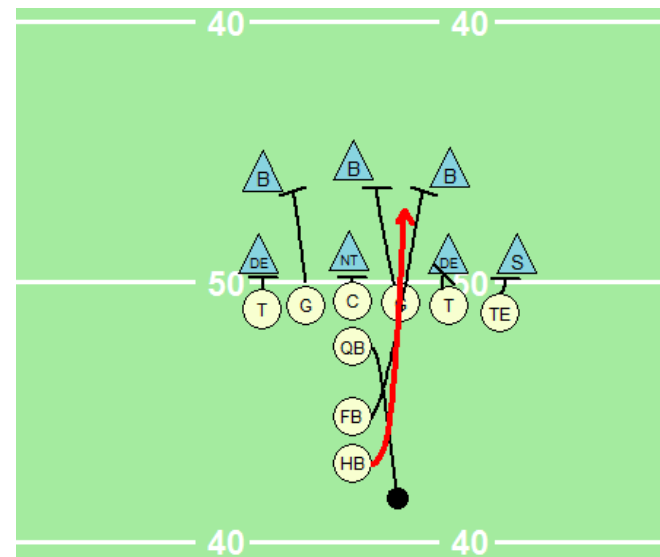


Diagram 24: Strong Iso against an 3-3 Stack Defensive Front.

Play Name

Iso (Strong)

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

With an open 'A' gap, we can have the right guard combo block the nose tackle, ensuring he can't penetrate to the playside, then working up to block a backside linebacker, leaving the playside linebacker for the fullback.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will block the back side end with the help of the guard, initially.

LG: The left guard will double team the back side end, then move up to the second level and pick up the backside linebacker.

C: The center will block the nose tackle, double teaming him with the right guard before taking over the block for himself.

RG: Will double team the nose tackle, pushing him over to the backside before moving up to the second level and picking up the middle linebacker coming over from the backside.

RT: The right tackle will block the strong side end out over to the boundary, away from the point of attack.

TE: The tight end is responsible for blocking the Sam linebacker, executing a base block and keeping him out of the play.

FB: The full back will come off the right guard's outside hip, right down the 'A' gap and heading for the middle linebacker on the strong side.

HB: The halfback will take an open step, then take the handoff and read the blocks of both the right guard and fullback as he comes up through the hole.

QB: The quarterback will open up and hand the ball off to the halfback as far into the backfield as possible.

Coaching Keys

The halfback is taught to read the first playside lineman as he comes up, but with a double team on the nose from the right guard, the block of the right tackle in this particular instance is actually the one he should be looking at. If he is able to beat the right tackle inside somehow, there is a good chance that bouncing the run out to the 'C' gap could pay big dividends, especially if the tight end is able to properly execute his block.

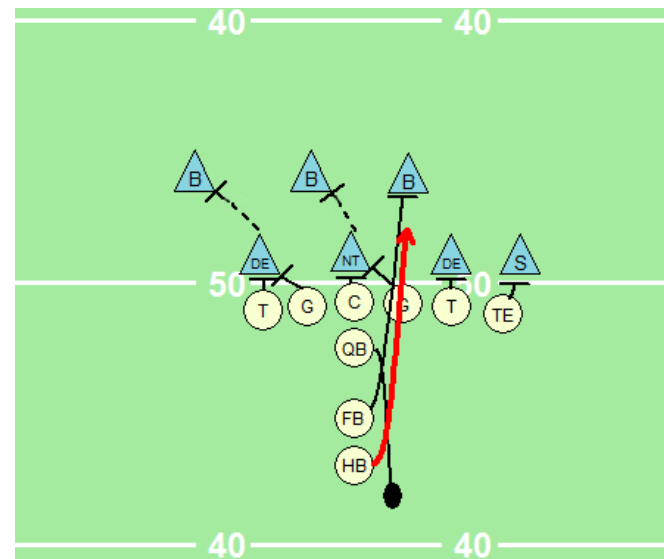


Diagram 25: Strong Iso against 3-4 Defensive Front.

Play Name

Iso (Weak)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

The Iso weak against the 4-3 over defense may be the most ideal time to run this play. Because of the way the defense is aligned, almost every offensive player is set up with the ideal angle for getting proper leverage and delivering great blocks.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will block the weak side end, pushing him to the outside and clearing him out of the 'B' gap.

LG: Will initially double the defensive tackle lined up over the 'A' gap with the center, before moving to the 2nd level to lay a block down on the middle linebacker.

C: The center will have the help of the left guard to protect the 'A' gap initially, taking over the block on his own once the guard moves up to the 2nd level.

RG: The right guard will block the backside defensive tackle on his own, pushing him away from the point of attack.

RT: With no one over top of him, the right tackle will release to the 2nd level and block the Sam linebacker.

TE: The tight end will also have a one on one block, working to get inside of the back side defensive end and prevent him from working over to the playside.

FB: The fullback will come down through the hole hard, laying down a block on the Will linebacker.

HB: Will take the handoff from the quarterback and follow his fullback up through the hole and into the next level.

QB: Will open up, and work to get back and hand the ball off as deep as possible to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

The tight end and right tackle are playing what is called base/fold/zone. What this means, is that they are together responsible for blocking the same linebacker and strong side defensive end. If they are able to base block it, as shown above then they will. If that proves to be difficult based on the alignment of the Sam backer, we will have them fold – the right tackle will block out on the defensive end, and the tight end will come behind that block and up to the 2nd level to block the Sam backer. If the Sam backer is even further wide, we will just have them zone block, dealing with them together.

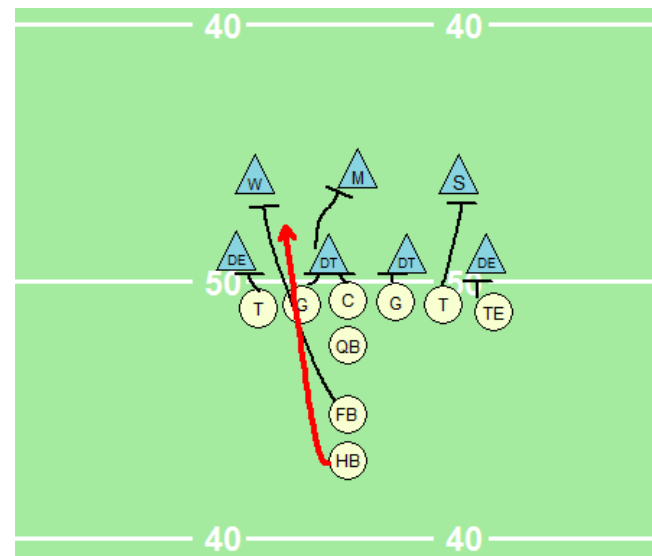


Diagram 26: Weak Iso against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Iso (Weak)

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

When running this play to the weak side, we need to create another support blocker to take care of the Will linebacker for us – your options are to either run a different type of formation – twins for example, with two receivers to the split side – or to simply motion a player over to the split side pre-snap.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle must block out on the back side end, pushing him away from the 'B' gap.

LG: Must block the playside tackle one on one, pushing him to the backside.

C: Will release immediately all the way to the 2nd level to block the backside linebacker.

RG: The right guard will work the defensive tackle over to the backside, away from the point of attack.

RT: The right tackle will block out on the defensive end.

TE: The tight end's job here is to release outside, picking up the strong safety.

FB: The full back will get a head of steam and come down the 'B' gap, blocking the Mike backer when he gets to the 2nd level.

HB: Will sidestep, take the handoff, and follow his fullback down and through the hole.

QB: The quarterback will open up, trying to sell the option to the defense, then try to get back to hand off the ball to the halfback as deep as possible.

Coaching Keys

If you don't have the confidence in your wide receivers blocking ability, one way to combat this is by getting bigger on the field. Bring an extra tight end on the field, leave him on the strong side, then motion him out into the slot on the split side – he will fare much better in one on one blocking situations against the Will backer.

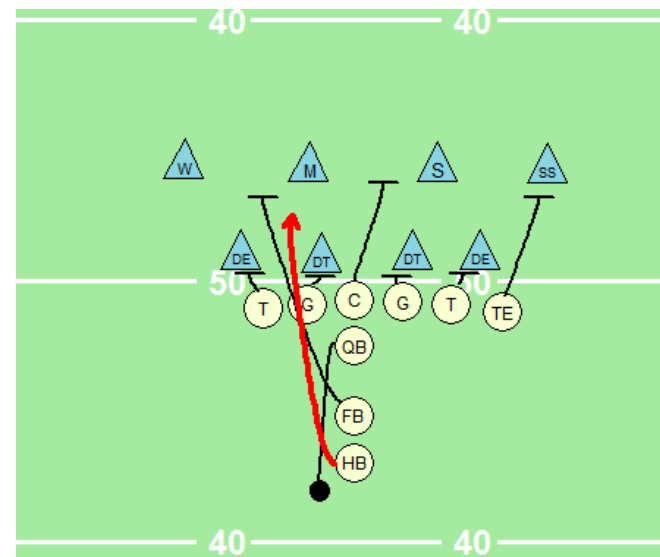


Diagram 27: Weak Iso against an 8 Man Box.

Play Name

Iso (Weak)

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

Against the 4-3 under, all of our players will be in one on one blocking situations. The most important of all those one on one matchups is the left guard's. Most of the other players – the left tackle and center for example – have fairly easy angles for delivering their blocks. The left guard, however, does not, and if he can win that battle at the line of scrimmage, the rest of the offense is in pretty good shape.

Player Assignments

LT: Will block out on the weak side defensive end.

LG: The left guard will push the defensive tackle to the boundary, clearing out the 'A'/'B' gap.

C: The center will block the strong side tackle one on one, keeping him from penetrating over to the playside.

RG: The right guard will release to the 2nd level and pick up the weak side linebacker.

RT: The right tackle will base block the back side end one on one

TE: The tight end will take the Sam linebacker on head on, preventing him from working over to the point of attack.

FB: The fullback will burst right up through the 'A' gap, making a B-line for the Mike backer.

HB: The halfback will open step, take the handoff, and follow his fullback up through the hole, looking to bounce outside at the 2nd level.

QB: After taking the snap, the quarterback will open up, and hand the ball off to the halfback as deep into the backfield as he can.

Coaching Keys

The importance of taking the defender where he wants to go is prevalent here, especially for the left guard. While we would prefer to push him to the sideline, if he works to get across the left guard to the inside, there is a chance for a huge gain bumping this play to the outside, as the playside end and Mike backer are the only two players left to the playside of the center.

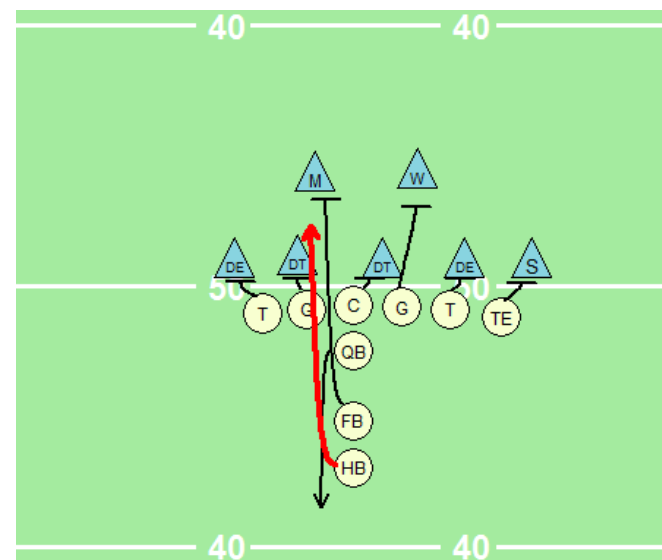


Diagram 28: Weak Iso against a 4-3 Under Defensive Front.

Play Name

Iso (Weak)

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

Against the 3-3 stack, The decision as to whether the playside guard works directly to the Mike backer, or stays in to chip on the nose tackle will come down to your confidence in your center's ability to win that matchup. If you are not 100% sure – have the guard combo block him – it is far too disruptive, and even a running back with great vision may have a hard time avoiding a loss with a nose tackle flying through the 'A' gap.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will block the playside end one on one, pushing him away from the point of attack.

LG: Will release out to the 2nd level and pick up the Mike backer. May be required to chip block on the nose tackle before moving up to the 2nd level, depending on the level of confidence you have in your center to make that block.

C: The center will block the nose one on one, working him over to the backside, preventing him from disrupting the play side 'A' and 'B' gaps.

RG: The right guard will release up to the next level and pick up the backside linebacker.

RT: The right tackle will base block the defensive end on the back side, preventing him from coming over across the formation.

TE: The tight end will engage the Sam backer, blocking him long enough to prevent him from chasing the play down from the backside.

FB: The fullback will get north south quickly, coming up through the 'B' gap and laying a block down on the play side linebacker.

HB: The halfback will take an open step, receive the handoff, and follow his fullback up and through the hole.

QB: The quarterback will take the snap, then make sure to work back and get the ball to the halfback deep enough that he has a chance to read his keys.

Coaching Keys

When run to the weak side, we are single blocking all the way across the formation, meeting each member of the front 7 head on with a player from our offense. If you have confidence that your blockers can consistently win these kind of one on one matchups, then you are going to want to call this play early and often against this kind of front.

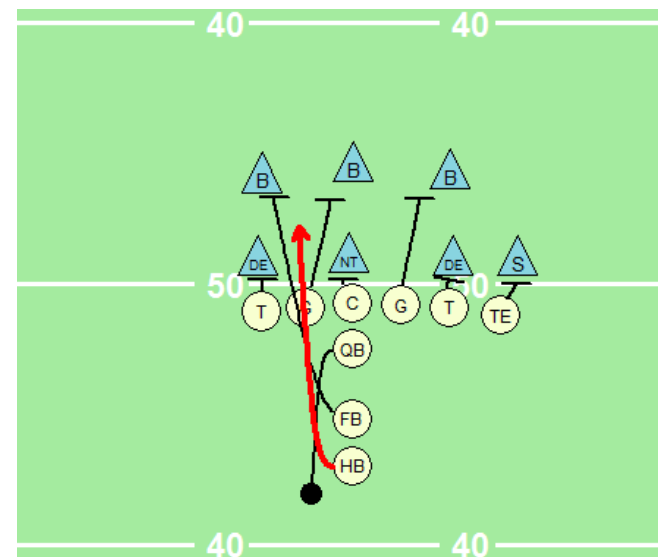


Diagram 29: Weak Iso against a 3-3 Stack Defensive Front.

Play Name

Iso (Weak)

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

Against the 3-4, we will have unblocked Will backer, so it is important that either through a formation change or motion, we add an extra support blocker. We also have the possibility of having two blockers – both guards – working towards the backside linebacker here. The halfback should be aware of this, looking to cut back middle off the fullback's block on the Mike backer if possible.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will block the playside end one on one, pushing him out to the sideline away from the 'B' gap.

LG: The left guard will combo block on the nose tackle, before moving up to the 2nd level, where he will clean up any missed blocks by the right guard.

C: The center will block the nose tackle, using the left guard's chip block to help him gain inside leverage and push him out away to the backside.

RG: The right guard will release to the 2nd level and pick up the backside linebacker.

RT: The right tackle will base block on the defensive end, keeping him engaged over on the backside.

TE: The tight end is responsible for the Sam backer, keeping him over on the backside away from the point of attack.

FB: The fullback will pick up a head of steam, coming through the hole and laying a block down on the playside inside linebacker.

HB: The half back will take a step over, allowing the quarterback to make some ground towards him, then take the handoff, coming up through the hole, following the fullback's lead.

QB: The quarterback will take the snap and then work to get the ball into the hands of the halfback as early as possible so that he has a change to see his blocks develop.

Coaching Keys

Regardless of the formation, or if we're running this play to the strong or weak side, we want this play to look like an option play on the first step. If the defense is forced to respect the possibility of the outside run, that will slow them down – at least a couple inches. And as we all know, football is a game of inches.

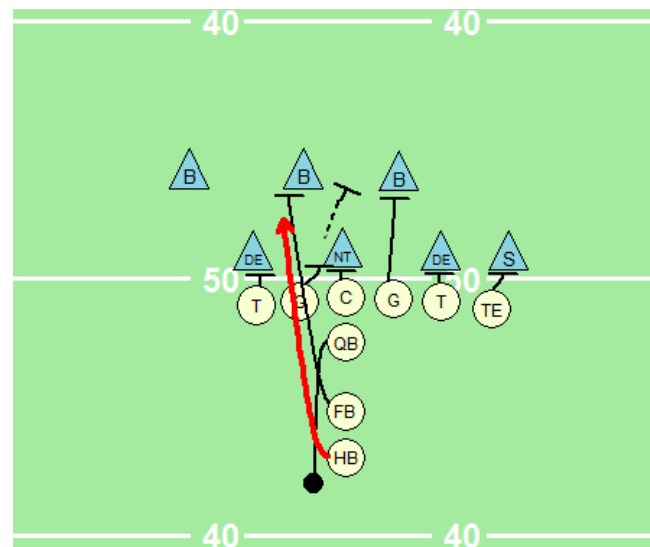


Diagram 30: Weak Iso against a 3-4 Defensive Front

Option

Every year, a new team starts running the option, and every year we hear the nay-sayers say that all you have to do is play assignment football to beat it. And every year, they're proved wrong.

It has been popular for a long time, with Nebraska being one of the most popular examples in the mid 1980s. It's a simple concept – by combining smash mouth football, the option, and the threat of the playaction pass, the defense is forced to pick their poison, often leaving themselves exposed to one of the other two elements.

In this playbook, we will have a look at a few different versions of the option: the speed option, the power option, the zone option – as well as an outside zone run just for good measure.

The premise is easy to understand – we leave a defender unblocked, and allow the quarterback to read said defender, giving him the *option* to either keep the ball for himself, or pitch it out to the halfback. By doing so, we are able to win one of the most important battles in football – the battle of numbers. By ignoring the defensive end and running the option, we take him out of the play, and by using our quarterback as the runner, we give ourselves a number advantage at the point of attack. That's why even if a team does play assignment football, it doesn't matter – the player who is assigned to take the running back also has a fullback assigned to blocking him, because of the numbers advantage we've created.

With that said – let's have a look, starting off with the traditional speed option.

Play Name

Speed Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

It is absolutely vital that we secure the 'A' gap when running the option, as a defensive tackle in the backfield will not only blow up the play, but runs the high risk of a fumble. So, we will always double team any 'A' gap defender to the playside.

On the backside of the play, we will often have our players cut block, since with the halfback and quarterback sprinting hard in the other direction, this is more than enough to take them out of the play.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will ignore the defensive end lined up over him, releasing inside to go lay a block down on the Mike linebacker.

LG: The left guard will secure the 'A' gap with the help of the center, working a combo block and moving up to the 2nd level to help out with the linebackers if the opportunity presents it self.

C: The center will execute a combo block with the left guard. Depending on your confidence level in the center, you can either have the left guard stay there with the double team, or combo block, leaving the center to handle it himself after the initial help.

RG: The right guard will scoop block inside, with the possibility of moving up to the 2nd level to help out on the linebackers.

RT: The right tackle will also execute a scoop block, working over to the playside.

TE: The tight end will scoop block as well, with the option to cut block the defensive end or chip him before moving up to the 2nd level and picking up the Sam linebacker.

FB: The fullback will step forward initially, selling the dive, before flattening out and getting around the edge, ignoring the playside defensive end and laying a block down on the Will linebacker.

HB: The halfback will sprint out wide as fast as he can, ready for the pitch from the quarterback at anytime.

QB: The quarterback will sell the blast fake initially to the fullback, then sprint out, coming flat down the line of scrimmage, looking to pitch the ball to the halfback if/when the defensive end crashes down on him.

Coaching Keys

Some teams have a specific pitcher-pitcher relationship – not us. The halfback must just get wide, and keep his eyes on the quarterback, who will pitch or not pitch based on his own read of the defensive end.

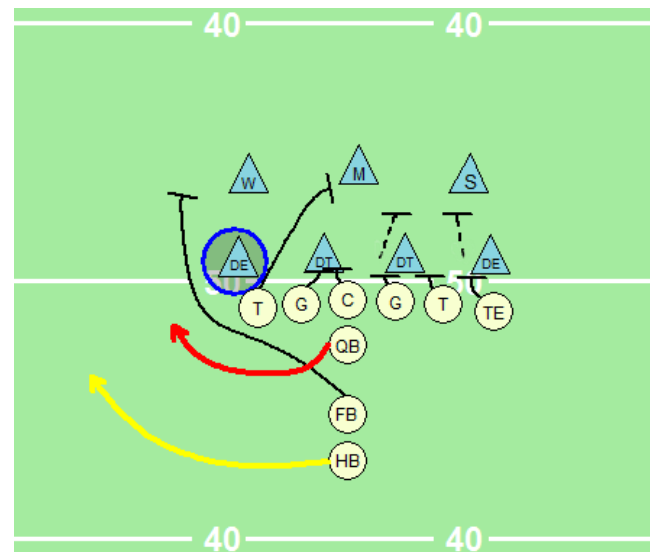


Diagram 1: Option against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Speed Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

With an extra player in the box, we need to generate an extra support blocker to the split side when we run the speed option against this kind of front.

To do so, you can either motion a player over pre-snap, or simply come out in a twins formation that will give you a wideout lined up to the split side.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release inside, coming down to lay a block on the Mike linebacker.

LG: The left guard will secure the 'A' gap with the center, using a combo block before moving up to the 2nd level to help pick up any pursuant linebackers.

C: The center will combo block with the left guard, using his help initially before working on his own to keep protecting the 'A' gap.

RG: The right guard will scoop to the playside, with the option to work up to the 2nd level or execute a cut block on the defensive lineman.

RT: The right tackle will scoop block to the inside.

TE: The tight end will also scoop block, moving up to the 2nd level to get a block on the Sam backer afterwards if he can.

FB: The fullback will step up, selling the inside run initially, before flattening out and getting around the edge to lay a block on the playside linebacker.

HB: The halfback will sprint out, getting wide as fast as he can to make the quarterback's read on the defensive end as simple as possible.

QB: The quarterback will take the snap, fake as if handing the ball off to the fullback, then run parallel to the line of scrimmage, reading the defensive end and deciding whether to pitch out to the halfback, or keep it.

WR: Will block down on the Will linebacker.

Coaching Keys

The wide receiver – or whichever player you motion over to the split side – has a very important block, so make sure you put a player who you trust to make it in that position. If you don't trust a wide out to make it, consider coming out in a big formation with an extra tight end, and motion him out to the split side pre-snap.

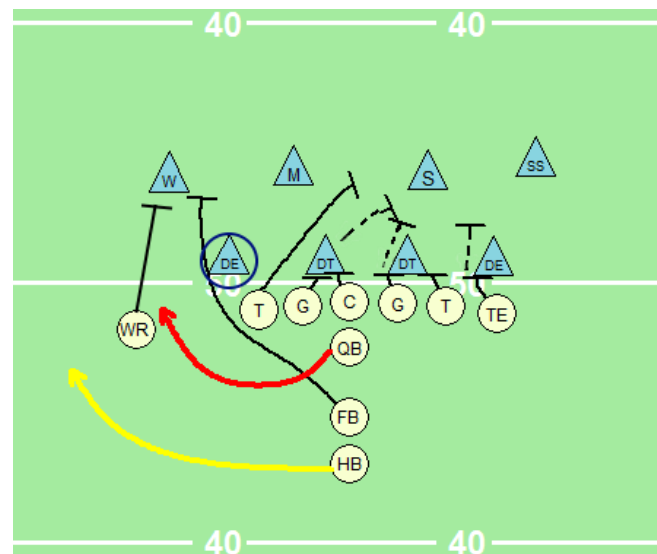


Diagram 2: Option against an 8 Man Box.

Play Name

Speed Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

The 'A' gap is our first priority when running the option. So what do we do if there is no 'A' gap defender? Well, our first priority becomes securing the 'B' gap instead. We will use the same technique, ensuring our quarterback can get out and around to the playside defensive end before he comes in contact with a defender.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will combo block the play side defensive tackle, working up to the 2nd level to hit the playside linebacker with a block right after.

LG: Will use the left tackle's help to get proper leverage on the playside tackle, making absolutely sure to protect the 'B' gap from penetration.

C: The center will chip on the defensive tackle before moving up to the 2nd level to block the backside linebacker.

RG: Will scoop or cut block the back side tackle, trying to get him on the ground and out of the play.

RT: Will scoop inside, taking the backside defensive end out of the play, ideally with a cut block.

TE: Blocks the Sam linebacker, using a scoop block to prevent any chase down from the back side.

FB: Will step up initially, selling the dive, before flattening out to get around the edge and picking up the first defender he comes across.

HB: The halfback will bust his butt to get out wide, giving him quarterback a good angle for the pitch should the defensive end crash in on him.

QB: Takes the snap, fakes the handoff to the fullback, then sprints alongside the line of scrimmage, reading the defensive end.

Coaching Keys

While we aren't sending a double team there against this front, it's still very important that the 'A' gap is secured. This is the center's first responsibility – ensuring there is no penetration in the 'A' gap – and only once he is sure of that can he release to the 2nd level.

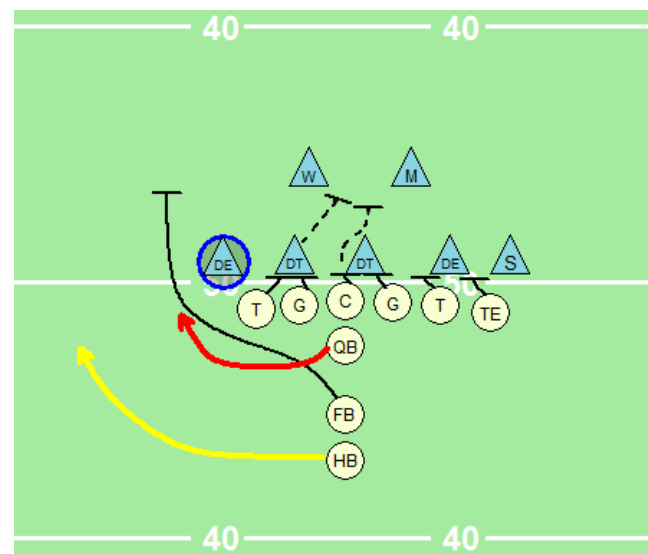


Diagram 3: Option against a 4-3 Under Defensive Front.

Play Name

Speed Option

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

There is no 'A' gap defender in a 3-3 stack, but you do have a nose tackle, who generally has the ability to penetrate the 'A' gap to either side. To combat this, the left guard will combo block him, securing the 'A' gap before working up to the 2nd level and blocking a backside linebacker.

Player Assignments

LT: Left tackle will release inside, ignoring the playside end and delivering a block on the middle linebacker.

LG: The left guard will combo block, chipping in on the nose tackle before moving up to the 2nd level and laying a block on the backside linebacker.

C: The center will use the left guard's help on the initial combo block, before taking the block over on his own and continuing to protect the 'A' gap.

RG: The right guard will scoop block to the playside.

RT: The right tackle will scoop block inside, making sure to get the backside end down on the ground and unable to pursue.

TE: The tight end will scoop block inside, taking out the Sam backer and working up to the backside linebacker if able.

FB: After selling the dive fake initially, the fullback will widen out and come around the edge, laying a block down on playside linebacker.

HB: The halfback will work hard to get out wide as quickly as possible, giving his quarterback a good pitch angle.

QB: The quarterback will sell the initial playfake to the fullback, then flatten out and get around the edge, reading the play side end on the pitch out.

Coaching Keys

While we do like using the cut block on the backside, it's important that you remember to teach your players proper technique, as blocking low can be dangerous for the other players as well as your offense – if you do it wrong, it's an illegal block and a quick way to pick up an offensive penalty.

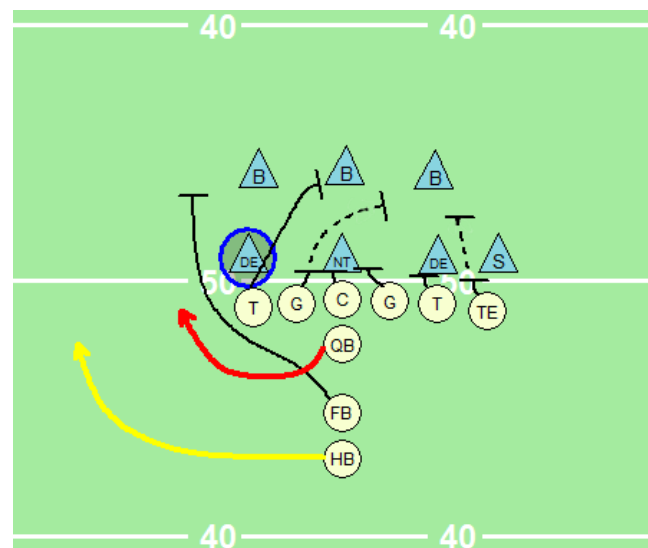


Diagram 4: Option against a 3-3 Defensive Stack.

Play Name

Speed Option

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

With 4 linebackers out, we need to again create a support blocker, either through motion or by the use of a different formation. We also are still without a 3 technique tackle, lined up over the 'A' gap against a 3-4, so the priority becomes blocking the nose tackle and preventing him from working over to the play side.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will again release inside, blocking down on the backside linebacker.

LG: The left guard will help the center secure the 'A' gap, then move up to the 2nd level to take on a backside linebacker.

C: Will use the help of the left guard to secure the 'A' gap, before taking over the block on his own.

RG: The right guard will scoop over to the playside.

RT: The right tackle will scoop inside, looking to cut block the backside defensive end.

TE: The tight end will also scoop inside, cutting the Sam backer before moving up to the 2nd level to lay another block if he can.

FB: Will step up, as if about to run a dive, then flatten out and get around the line of scrimmage, and take the first linebacker to come across onto the playside.

HB: The halfback will sprint out wide, stretching the defense horizontally and giving his quarterback a good angle for the possible pitch.

QB: After selling the fake to the halfback, the quarterback will sprint parallel to the line of scrimmage, with his eyes on the defensive end, pitching to the halfback or keeping it himself based on where the defensive end goes.

WR: Blocks down on the weak side linebacker.

Coaching Keys

The chemistry between the quarterback and halfback is very important here – make sure you get a chance to let them drill the pitch out – with and without defense – plenty of times.

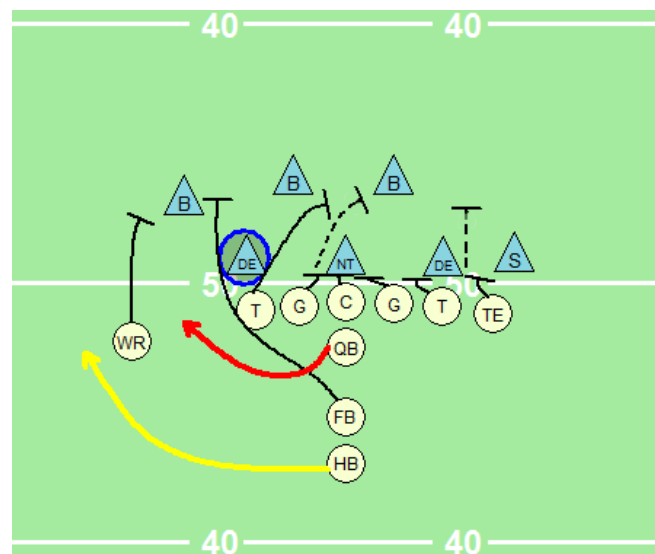


Diagram 5: Option against a 3-2 Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

The biggest different between the speed option and power option is the personnel. With the wingback there to block the playside end, the man to read becomes the strong safety instead of the defensive end. Other than that, it is very similar to the speed option – our first priority is blocking the ‘A’ gap defender, and we want to have the backside get those backside players down on the ground and out of the play.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release to the inside, hitting the Mike linebacker with a block

LG: The left guard will combo block the playside tackle, securing the ‘A’ gap then moving up to the 2nd level to block the Mike linebacker.

C: The center will use the left guard’s help to secure the ‘A’ gap, taking the block over on his own once he moves up to the next level.

RG: The right guard will execute a scoop block, getting playside of the defensive tackle, and using a cut block if possible to put him on the ground.

RT: Will scoop inside, helping to get the two backside linemen on the ground and out of the play.

TE: The tight end will also scoop playside, performing a cut block on the backside end to prevent him from chasing the play down from the back.

FB: The full back will step up, then flatten out and get around the edge, taking on the first playside linebacker he sees.

HB: The halfback will sprint way out wide, looking to receive the pitch from the quarterback.

QB: After faking the dive, the quarterback will sprint out wide. The defensive player he’s reading on the pitch is the strong safety, so the read will come a bit later than the speed option.

WB: Will sprint up to the line to lay a block down on the playside defensive end.

Coaching Keys

This is a great play to run against a squeezing defensive end, as it makes it a very easy block for the wingback to make to immediately take him out of the play.

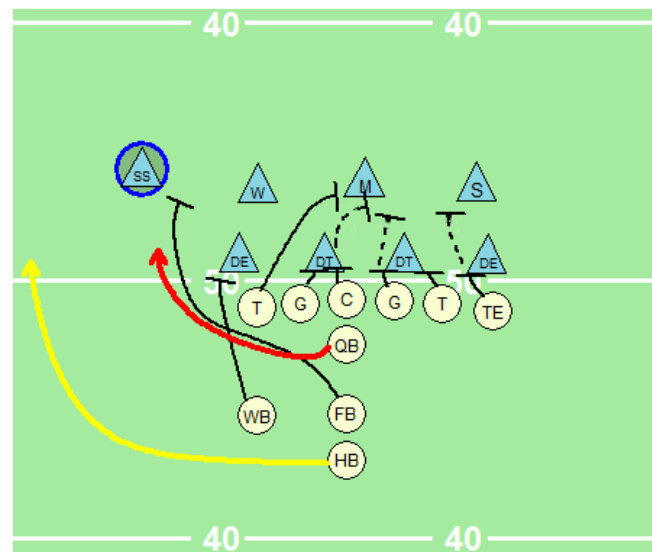


Diagram 6: Load Option against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

Versus an 8 man box, the strong safety will likely be on the strong side of the formation, so the quarterback's read will not be the playside end, or the strong safety, but rather the Will linebacker, positioned as the run support player for the weak side of the defense.

Player Assignments

LT: Ignores the playside end, releasing up to the second level to block the first backside linebacker he sees.

LG: The left guard will chip in on the defensive tackle, helping the center to secure the 'A' gap, before moving up to the 2nd level to block a backside linebacker.

C: The center will use the left guard's help to secure the 'A' gap against the playside tackle, before sliding over and taking the block on his own.

RG: The right guard will scoop inside, getting the backside tackle on the ground before moving up to the 2nd level to block a linebacker.

RT: The right tackle will scoop block over to the playside as well.

TE: The tight end will scoop inside and cut the backside end if possible, before working up to the next level to lay a block down on one of the backside linebackers.

FB: The fullback will step up as if running up the middle, then flatten out, get around the edge, and lay a block on the Mike linebacker as he works over to the playside.

HB: The halfback will sprint out to the sideline as fast as he can, giving his quarterback a good angle for the pitch should he so choose.

QB: The quarterback will take the snap, momentarily fake as if about to hand the ball to the fullback, then sprint out, reading the Will linebacker on whether to pitch, or keep the football.

WB: Will step up to block playside end.

Coaching Keys

The quarterback needs to be prepared for the possibility that the wing back may not meet the defensive end until he gets a yard or two past the line of scrimmage, so he needs to bend, running more of a loop than a direct parallel line to the line of scrimmage.

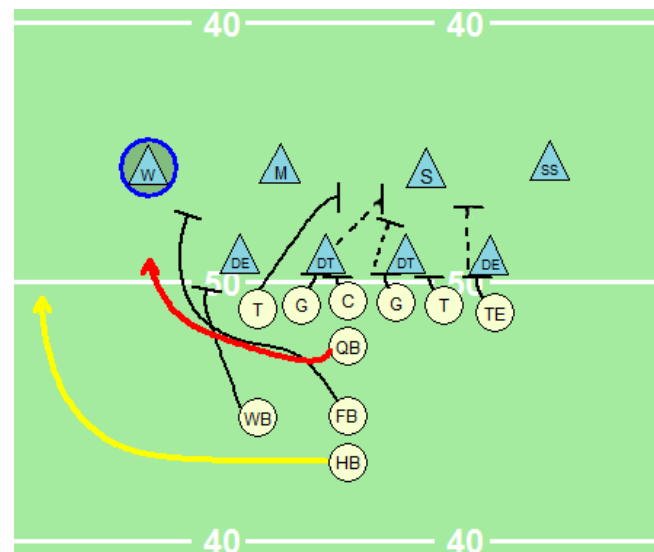


Diagram 7: Load Option against an 8 Man Box

Play Name

Power Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

The support player here will be either the free or strong safety, and that is who the quarterback will be reading on his pitch out.

The backside of the line will continue to scoop block, and it will be the left tackle's job to combo over on the playside tackle, making sure he isn't able to penetrate into the 'B' or a 'A' gaps.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will block down on the playside tackle, before moving up to the 2nd level to block a backside linebacker.

LG: The left guard will use the combo block from the left tackle to secure the 'B' gap, getting outside leverage and working the block on his own after.

C: The center will combo block the backside tackle, then work up to the next level to block a backside linebacker.

RG: Will use the initial help from the center, then slide over and block the defensive tackle,

RT: The right tackle will cut block the backside defensive end.

TE: Will use a cut block to take the Sam linebacker out of the play.

FB: Will step up, then flatten out, get around the end of the line, and lay a block on the first playside linebacker he sees.

HB: Sprints out to the sideline as fast he can to give his quarterback an easy angle on the pitch.

QB: Takes the snap, momentarily fakes the dive to the fullback, then sprints out wide, reading the strong safety on the pitch out.

WB: Steps up to lay a block down on the playside end, pushing him over to the backside.

Coaching Keys

Regardless of the front we go up against, we are always going to run the power option to the split side, as it forces the defense to load up on the strong side, and with the use of the option to eliminate a defender, this gives us an advantage at the point of attack.

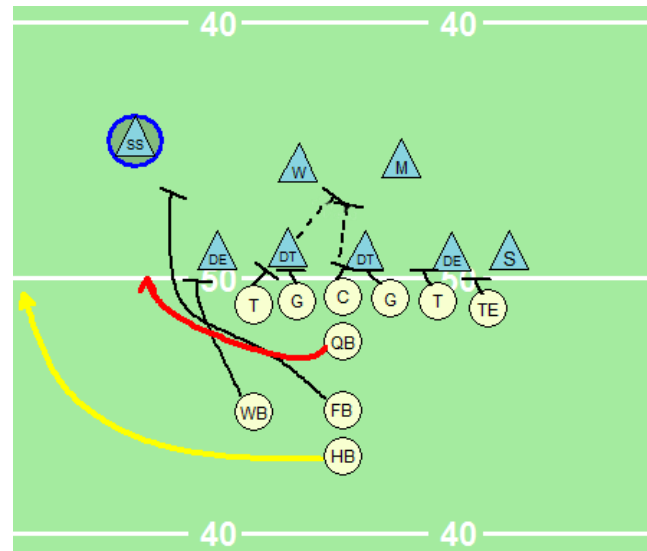


Diagram 8: Load Option against a 4-3 Under Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power Option

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

The three most important blocks here are the wingback, fullback, and the combo block on the nose. If any of those 3 blocks aren't delivered correctly, the defense will most likely win this play.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release inside of the playside end, blocking the Mike linebacker at the next level.

LG: The left guard will combo block the nose tackle, before moving up to the 2nd level and laying a block on the backside linebacker.

C: The center will use the help of the left guard initially, to secure the playside 'A' gap from any penetration, before taking over the block on his own.

RG: The right guard will scoop to the playside, making sure no backside players are able to come and chase down from the behind the play.

RT: The right tackle will cut block the backside defensive end, getting him on the ground and unable to pursue to the playside.

TE: The tight end will scoop block, pushing the Sam linebacker to the backside and then working up to the 2nd level to lay a block on any players trying to work there way over to the playside.

FB: After selling the initial dive fake, the fullback will flatten out, coming around the edge of the line to block the first linebacker to work his way over to the playside.

HB: The halfback will work to get as wide as possible as quickly as possible, to stretch the defense out and make the pitch out read easier on his quarterback.

QB: The quarterback will sell the fake to the fullback first, then sprint to the edge, with the strong safety being his pitch out read.

WB: Will sprint up to the line of scrimmage to lay a block down on the playside defensive end.

Coaching Keys

Once the defense has seen the option a couple times, they may begin to pick up on the quarterback's tendencies on the pitch vs. keep. One great way to throw them for a loop is to teach the quarterback the fake pitch – a hard bite can mean a huge gain for the offense.

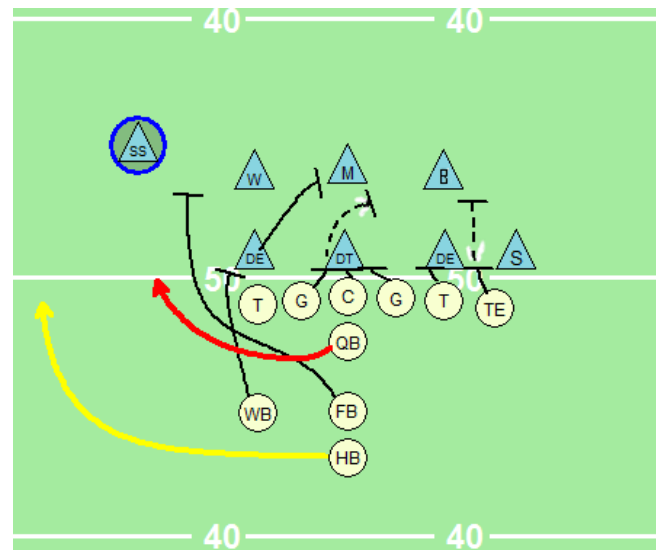


Diagram 9: Load Option against a 3-3 Defensive Front.

Play Name

Power Option

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

Very similar to the 3-3 stack, except that instead of the read on the pitchout being made on the safety coming up to support the run, it is instead the playside linebacker the quarterback will be keying in on.

Player Assignments

LT: After releasing inside, the left tackle will lay a block on the first backside linebacker he sees.

LG: The left guard will combo block the nose tackle before working up to the 2nd level to block a backside linebacker.

C: The center will secure the playside 'A' gap with the help of the left guard, taking the block over on his own once the guard moves up to the 2nd level.

RG: The right guard will scoop block playside, cleaning up any potential pursuit from the Sam backer and backside end.

RT: The right tackle will cut block the backside end, getting him on the ground and out of the play.

TE: The tight end will scoop inside, cut blocking the Sam backer and moving up to the 2nd level to lay another block on any backside pursuit if possible.

FB: The fullback will step up as if running the dive, before flattening out behind the line of scrimmage and laying a block on any linebackers working over from the middle/backside.

HB: The halfback will sprint out wide, making himself available for the pitch out from the quarterback.

QB: The quarterback will take the snap, fake to the fullback, then sprint wide, reading the playside linebacker on the pitch out.

WB: Will step up, laying a block down on the playside defensive end.

Coaching Keys

It can be a bit unorthodox, but make sure to try and work the playaction into your option as well. If the defense begins to cheat up, have the fullback run out as if he is going to block, then run a corner route, as the defense will be so worried about getting upfield for the option that he might be able to gouge them for a long gain.

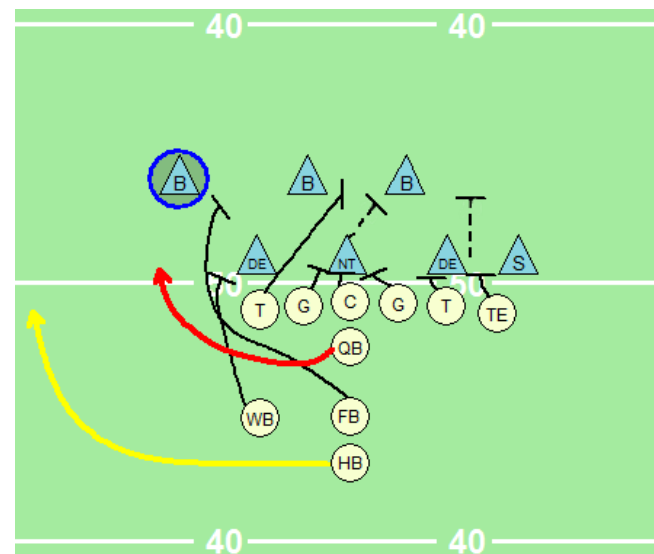


Diagram 10: Load Option against a 3-2 Defensive Front.

Play Name

Zone Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

This is the option that we like to run to the tight end side. To do so, we need to secure the edge with what we call zone combo block, at which point the tight end is free to release to the 2nd level, ignoring the playside linebacker and blocking a backside linebacker.

Player Assignments

LT: Will scoop to the playside, ignoring the weak side end and working up through his zone to the 2nd level, blocking the Will linebacker.

LG: Will also scoop, with the center using a zone combo to allow the left guard to get playside leverage, which will then allow him to continue the block on his own.

C: The center will run a zone combo on the weak side end, helping the left guard get position before working up through his zone to the 2nd level and blocking the Mike linebacker.

RG: The right guard will block the playside tackle, preventing him from crashing through the 'A'/'B' gap and disrupting the option.

RT: Will execute a zone combo block with the tight end, taking over the block for himself once the tight end leaves to the 2nd level.

TE: The tight end will combo block the playside end with the right tackle, before working up to the 2nd level, ignoring the playside linebacker to go block the Mike backer.

FB: Will step up, then flatten out around the edge, with his responsibility being to block the playside linebacker one on one.

HB: Will sprint out wide, giving his quarterback a good angle on the potential pitch.

QB: Will take the snap, then come around the edge, using a bit more of a hump in his line, since we don't have the wingback to clean up the edge. He will then read the strong safety on the pitch out.

Coaching Keys

Since we've got such a strong block on the corner, we don't need to have our quarterback hump or loop around – he can take the most direct, flat line to get to the edge of the line of scrimmage.

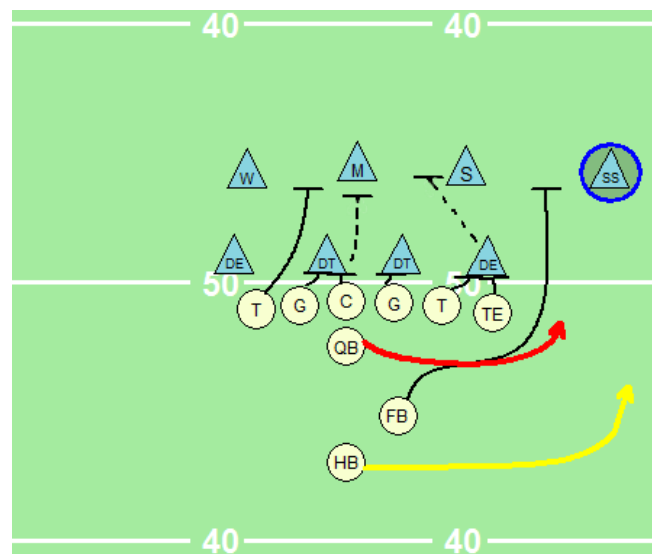


Diagram 11: Zone Option against a 4-3 Over.

Play Name

Zone Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

In general, we don't like to run this play against a really wide defensive end. The key to this play is securing that edge, and we would only run this play when we are confident that we can do so.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release inside, picking up the Mike linebacker.

LG: The left guard will scoop over to the playside, using the center's help on the combo block before taking over on the backside tackle on his own.

C: Will combo block initially with the left guard, before working up to the 2nd level

RG: Zone blocking, will engage his man as he works over to the playside

RT: The right tackle will execute a zone combo block with the tight end before taking over on his own.

TE: Will combo block the playside end, securing that edge and then working up to lay a block on any backside linebackers coming across to the playside.

FB: The fullback will come up around the edge, laying a block down on the playside linebacker.

HB: The halfback will work hard to get outside as quickly as possible, stretching out the strong safety and making the quarterback's read easy.

QB: The quarterback will take the snap, then come around the edge, reading the strong safety on the pitch out.

Coaching Keys

Depending on the alignment of the Sam linebacker – for example if he is very tight inside, almost stacked for the playside tackle – we may have the right tackle combo and move up to block the Sam backer, allowing our tight end to get downfield and help out on the Sam linebacker or any other players coming for run support.

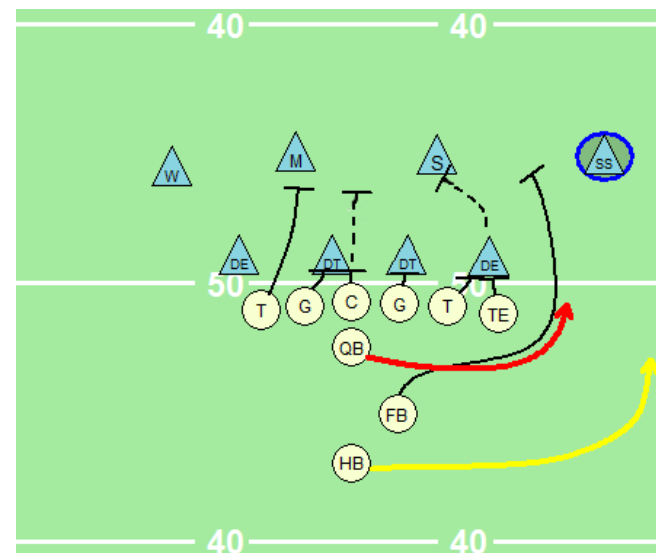


Diagram 12: Zone Option against an 8 Man Defensive Box.

Play Name

Zone Option

Defensive Front

4-3 Under

Strategy

Against the 4-3 under, the Sam backer again becomes the read on the pitch out. This means though that with the fullback blocking the Mike backer, if the defense sends an extra support player – a corner, or safety – we must counter somehow, either by bringing an extra player over or motioning a receiver pre-snap.

Player Assignments

LT: Will ignore the backside end, scoop blocking the backside tackle instead.

LG: Will scoop, working up to the 2nd level to block a linebacker if there are no linemen that work into his zone.

C: Will double team the play side tackle, using his help to secure the 'A' gap.

RG: Once his combo block with the center has secured the 'A' gap, will work up to the 2nd level to block the Will linebacker.

RT: Will zone combo the defensive end, securing the all too important edge.

TE: Will combo the playside end, before working up to the 2nd level to block a backside linebacker.

FB: In charge of getting around the edge and laying a block down on the playside linebacker.

HB: Sprints out wide, to make sure his quarterback has a quick pitch option if the Sam backer crashes in early.

QB: Takes the snap, and sprints out, flat behind the line, reading the Sam backer on the pitch out.

Coaching Keys

We can handle one extra support player, but if the defense brings a second player over – change the play. The numbers disadvantage is too big to overcome at that point – and there is likely a hole somewhere else on the field.

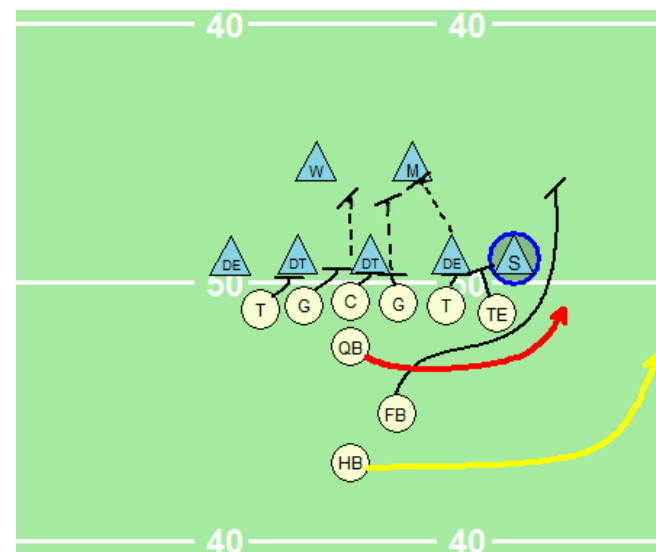


Diagram 13: Zone Option against a 4-3 Under Defensive Front.

Play Name

Zone Option

Defensive Front

3-3 Stack

Strategy

With the Sam backer lined up right on the line of scrimmage like this, we will end up blocking and running this play much like we would if it were a speed option – the quarterback will stay flat, and the fullback must make sure to get a good block on the playside linebacker.

Player Assignments

LT: Will scoop playside, ignoring the backside end and working up to block a backside linebacker at the next level.

LG: Will scoop inside as well, helping out on the nose tackle.

C: Will use the zone combo block from the right guard to secure the playside 'A' gap.

RG: Will combo the nose tackle with the center initially, then move up to the second level to block the Mike backer.

RT: The right tackle will zone combo the defensive end, working hard to secure the edge with the help of the tight end.

TE: After helping the tackle secure the edge with a zone combo block, the tight end will work up to the 2nd level, past the playside linebacker to lay a block on any backside linebackers working over to the playside.

FB: The full back will get up and around the edge to block the playside linebacker.

HB: The halfback will sprint out, giving his quarterback a good angle on the pitchout.

QB: Will take the snap, then sprint out wide, keeping his eyes on the Sam backer, reading on whether to keep and turn upfield, or pitch out to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

We're comfortable ignoring the backside end here, because if our quarterback and halfback are running hard, they should be around the edge much quicker than the defensive end could possibly get into the backfield.

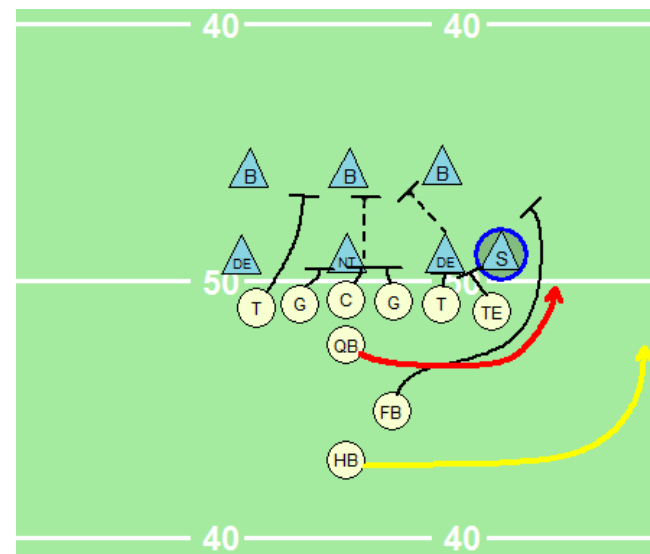


Diagram 14: Zone Option against a 3-3 Stack Defensive Front.

Play Name

Zone Option

Defensive Front

3-4

Strategy

With the extra linebacker coming up for the 3-4 way over on the backside, the way we run this play will not change at all versus how we run it against the 3-3 stack. We will still treat the Sam backer like the end man on the line of scrimmage, and we will actually just completely ignore the Will backer.

Player Assignments

LT: Left tackle will release inside to the 2nd level, blocking a backside linebacker.

LG: The left guard will scoop middle, helping out on the nose.

C: The center will zone combo the nose with the help of the right guard.

RG: After helping to secure the playside 'A' gap by combo blocking the nose tackle, the right guard will slide up to the 2nd level and block the first backside linebacker he sees.

RT: The right tackle will execute a zone combo of his own, using the help of the tight end to secure the edge.

TE: Will combo block the playside end, working up to block a backside linebacker after the edge has been secured.

FB: Will get out wide, ignoring the Sam backer, blocking the first linebacker to work over to the playside.

HB: The halfback will sprint out wide, making himself available for the pitch from the quarterback.

QB: The quarterback will sprint out, reading the Sam backer on whether to pitch out to the halfback or not.

Coaching Keys

With the edge safely secured by the combo block, the blocking matchups that are most important for this play to be successful are almost all happening at the 2nd level – if the left tackle, right guard, and tight end are able to get good blocks on the backside backers, as long as the quarterback makes the correct read, there is a great chance for a big gain here.

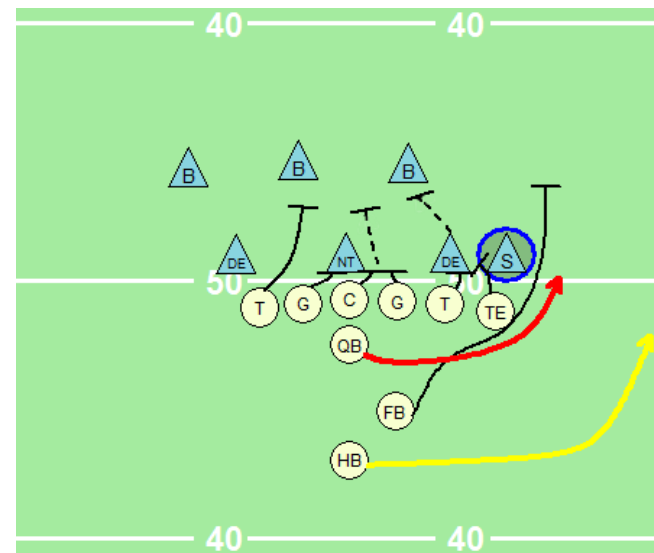


Diagram 15: Zone Option against a 3-2 Defensive Front.

Play Name

Outside Zone

Defensive Front

4-3 Over

Strategy

If you want to run a play to the outside, but you don't want to run the risk of a failed pitch – say at the end of a game when possession and running clock are of the utmost importance – the outside zone is a great call.

For it to be successful, we will only run it against defenses that give us the strong side edge, like 4-3 over, or 4-3 over with an 8 man front. If they give us the edge, we are going to take it – if they don't we'll simply run a different play.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will scoop inside, ignoring the backside end and working up to a backside linebacker at the next level.

LG: The left guard will reach block the backside tackle.

C: Will chip on the backside tackle, then work up to the next level to block the middle linebacker.

RG: The right guard will base block the playside tackle, taking him where he wants to go.

RT: Will combo block the playside end, working hard to secure the edge.

TE: Will help out on the strong side end, combo blocking the strong side end before working up to block the playside linebacker.

FB: Will get out side around the edge, blocking the first support player to come in from the secondary.

HB: The half back will take the handoff, trying to get outside, but staying aware that a seam could open up around the 'B' gap that he can get north/south on, as there is the potential for a large gain right up the middle if the defense over pursues to the outside.

QB: Will open up, hand the ball off to the halfback and get out of the way.

Coaching Keys

When many teams run the outside zone, it's a full flow, with the whole team moving out and the halfback then reading and cutting north south. We run it a bit differently – we want to have the halfback come up, and press. He'll step up to the handoff, pressing the defense inside, and then work to the outside. But he also will keep his eyes on the 'B' gap, as over pursuit by the playside tackle can leave a huge seam right down the middle.

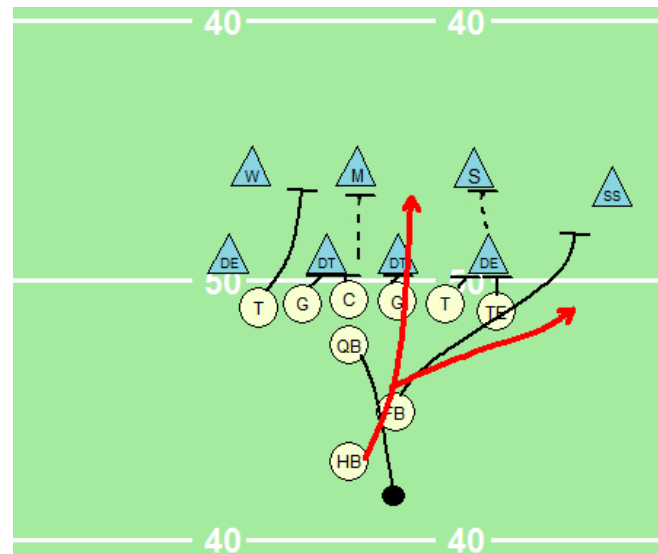


Diagram 16: Outside Zone against a 4-3 Over Defensive Front.

Play Name

Outside Zone

Defensive Front

4-3 Over – 8 Man Box

Strategy

The only real difference between running the outside zone against an 8 man box, is that with the linebackers lined up tighter over the middle, there is much less of a chance that the 'B' gap cutback lane opens up.

Player Assignments

LT: The left tackle will release inside and pick up the Mike backer at the 2nd level.

LG: The left guard will combo block the backside tackle, securing the backside 'A' gap.

C: After chipping on the backside tackle, he will move up to the 2nd level to block an pursuing backside linebackers.

RG: The right guard will base block the defensive tackle, preventing him from penetrating to the playside.

RT: In charge of securing the edge, along with the tight end, combo blocking the playside defensive end.

TE: The tight end will combo block the playside end, securing the edge and then working up to the 2nd level to block Sam backer.

FB: The fullback will get out to the edge and block the strong safety up in the box.

HB: Will take the handoff, pressing middle before flowing outside around the edge, following his fullback.

QB: Will take the snap and hand the ball off to the halfback.

Coaching Keys

The outside zone is blocked very similarly to the zone option – in fact most of the offensive line is doing the exact same thing. The main difference is that since there is no option, the full back must block the player who would normally be getting read by the quarterback – the strong safety. And since the fullback has that responsibility, it becomes the responsibility of the tight end to work up to the Sam linebacker after he has secured the edge.

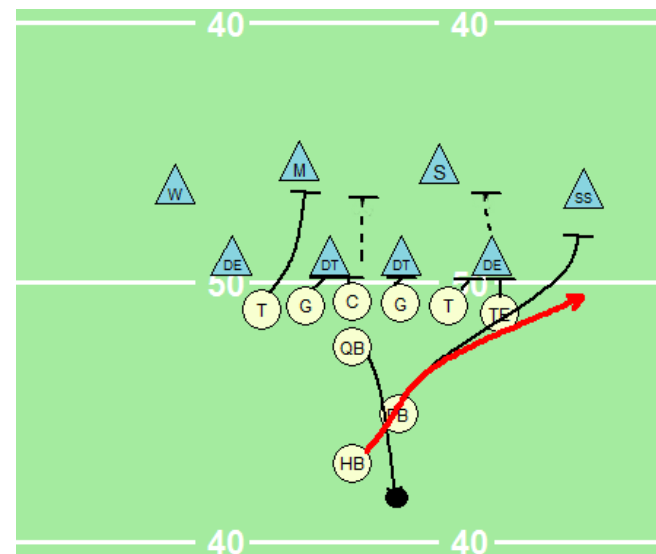


Diagram 17: Outside Zone against an 8 Man Defensive Box.

Recommended Resources

Thanks for checking out this playbook!

If you'd like to see all of these plays demonstrated on video, with live practice and game footage, coaching tips, drills and practice schedules, check out the Dominant Run Game Platinum Video Edition:

<http://footballtutorials.com/up-runplaybook>



More recommended resources:

Our complete set of playbooks → <http://www.football-tutorials.com/playbooks/>

Our complete set of drillbooks → <http://www.football-tutorials.com/drillbooks/>

Our complete set of online video clinics → <http://www.football-tutorials.com/football-coaching-videos/>

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