

Implementing The Zone Running Game: The Stretch Play

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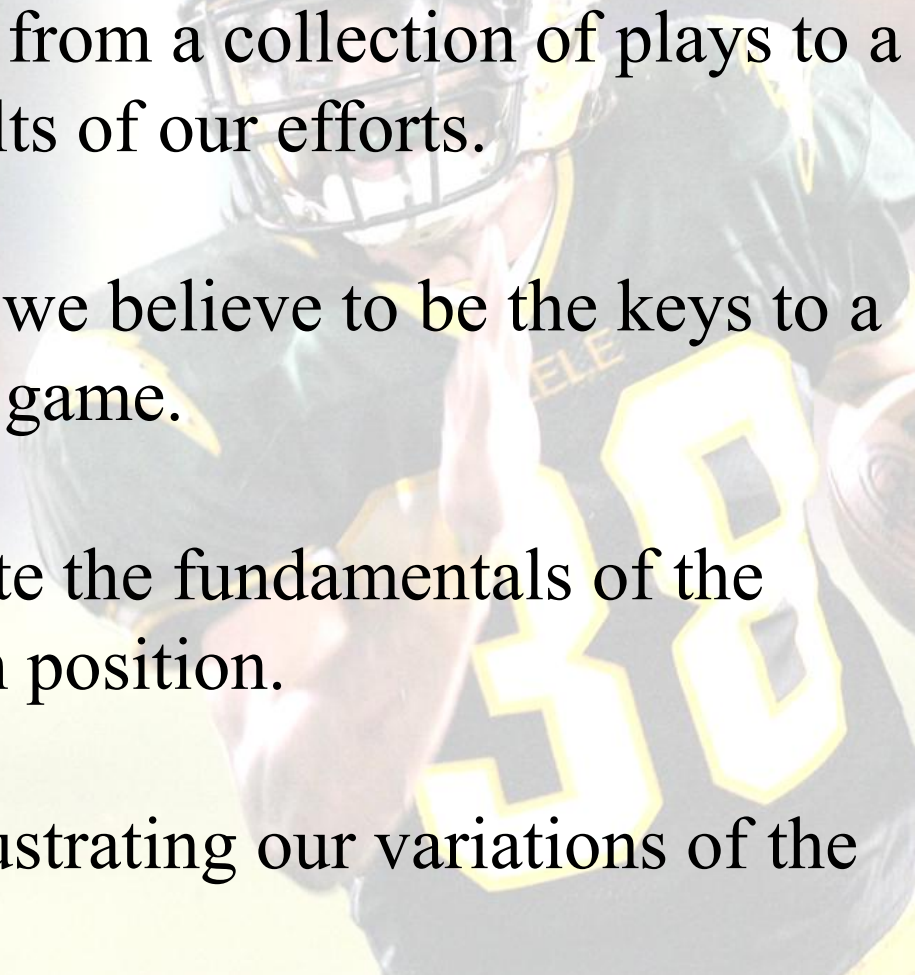
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“The problem with many of us is simply this....
we like this, we like that....
we go to clinics, we talk to coaches....
Ultimately, though, we fail to recognize that
successful offenses are ‘packaged.’ I don’t care
if you run wishbone, the wing-t, or the I.
YOU MUST HAVE A SYSTEM.
Ask yourself this question:
DO I HAVE A SYSTEM...
OR JUST A COLLECTION OF PLAYS?”

Jerry Hanlon, Former Offensive Line Coach
The University of Michigan

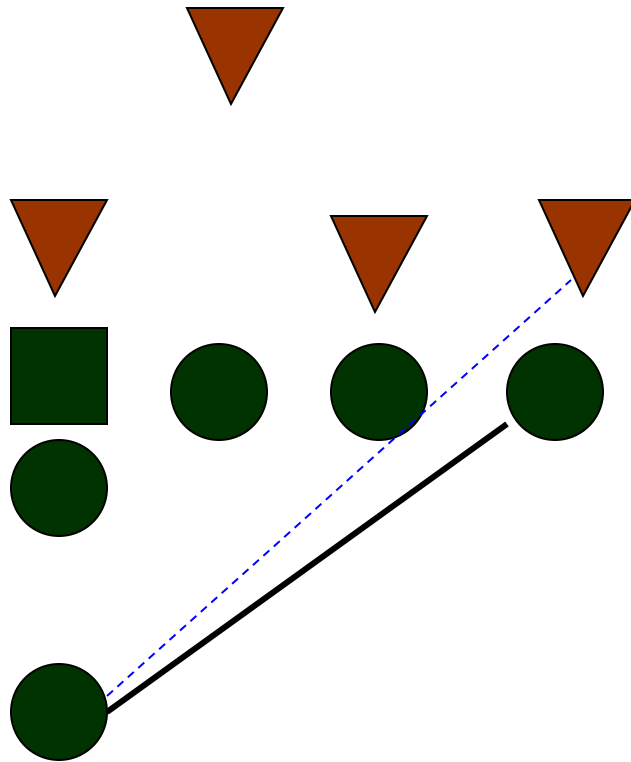
Presentation Goals:

1. Share how we went from a collection of plays to a system and the results of our efforts.
 2. Communicate what we believe to be the keys to a successful zone run game.
 3. Identify and illustrate the fundamentals of the stretch play for each position.
 4. Show video cuts illustrating our variations of the play.
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- A football player in a black and yellow uniform, wearing a helmet with 'COMETS' on it, holding a football. The player is wearing a black jersey with yellow numbers '38' and yellow pants. The helmet is yellow with black and white stripes. The player is holding a brown football in his left hand. The background is a blurred stadium setting.

Our Zone Running Game

- 3 Distinct Zone Plays:
 - Inside Zone - Read the 1st Covered Down Lineman.
 - Outside Zone - Read the End Man on the Line of Scrimmage
 - Stretch - Read Force Player-Get it Outside!
- 

Difference in Zone, OZ & Stretch Aim Points & Primary Reads: OZ

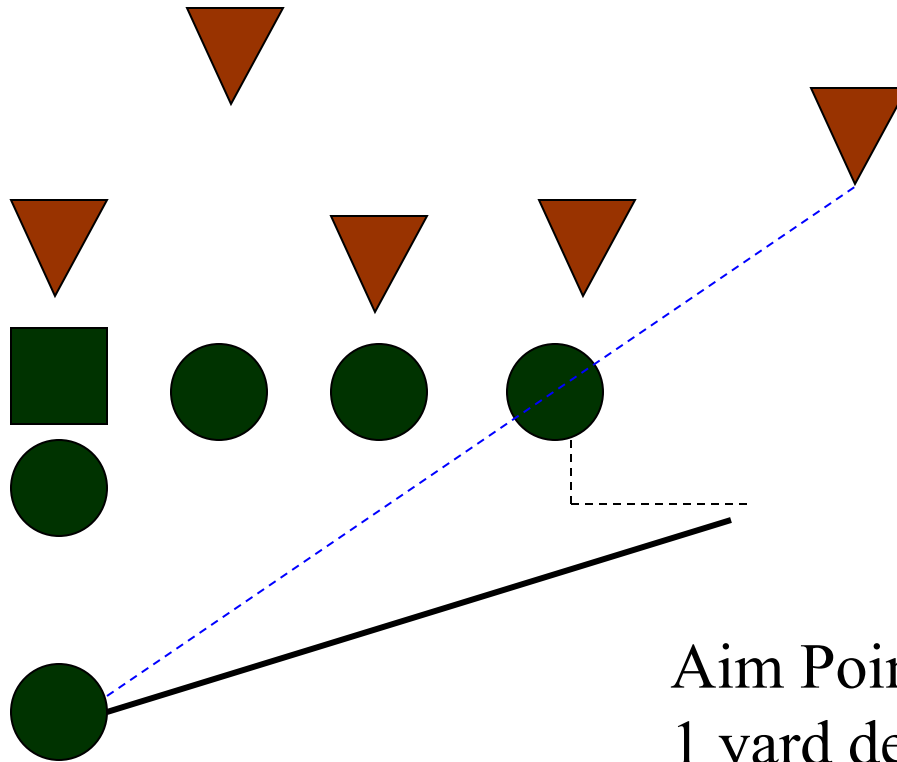


Read is the block on the
End Man on the Lin of
Scrimmage(EMOL).

Aim Point is inside foot of the
TE or ghost TE

Difference in Zone, OZ & Stretch

Aim Points & Primary Reads: STRETCH



Read is the block on force defender:
He can be outside and off the LOS, coming from the alley, coming from the corner, or up on the LOS. He can be blocked by FB or WR.

Aim Point on Stretch is 1 yard deep by 3 yards outside a TE or “ghost” TE.

The Stretch Play 2004-2005

- 178 carries for 1,840 yards
- 21% of our offense attempts in 2004-2005
- 10.3 yards per carry
- 73% efficient (+4) yards
- 53 explosives(+12 yard runs)
- 17 TD's



The Stretch Play 2006



- 68 carries for 409 yards
- 11% of our offense attempts in 2006
- 6.0 yards per carry
- 62% efficient (+4) yards
- 12 explosives(+12 yard runs)
- 4 TD's
- Starting TE injured for 6 games/FB was converted TB-175 LBS
- Needed to be creative with how we blocked the edge.
- Still a good play for us. Became better as the game wore on.

The Stretch Play Sets Up Our Entire Offense!

A football player in a black and yellow uniform, number 38, is shown in a dynamic pose, holding a football in his left hand and pointing upwards with his right hand. The background is a blurred stadium scene.

- 2004-2005
- 22 games - Opened with Stretch 16 times
- 19.9 Yard average on opener
- 88% efficient (+4) yards
- 11 explosives(+12 yard runs)
- 1 TD
- 2006: Play we would run early in 1st series: avg. 5.1 yds per carry & 70% efficient, 2 explosives

How we switched to the Zone Running Game

- Discovered we had a problem against odd fronts



2003 Run Efficiency vs. Even Fronts

opponent(8-3) 71%

opponent(1-9) 67%

opponent(4-6) 62%

opponent(3-7) 62%

opponent(6-4) 58%

2003 Run Efficiency vs. Odd Fronts

opponent(0-10) 53%

opponent(7-4) 50%

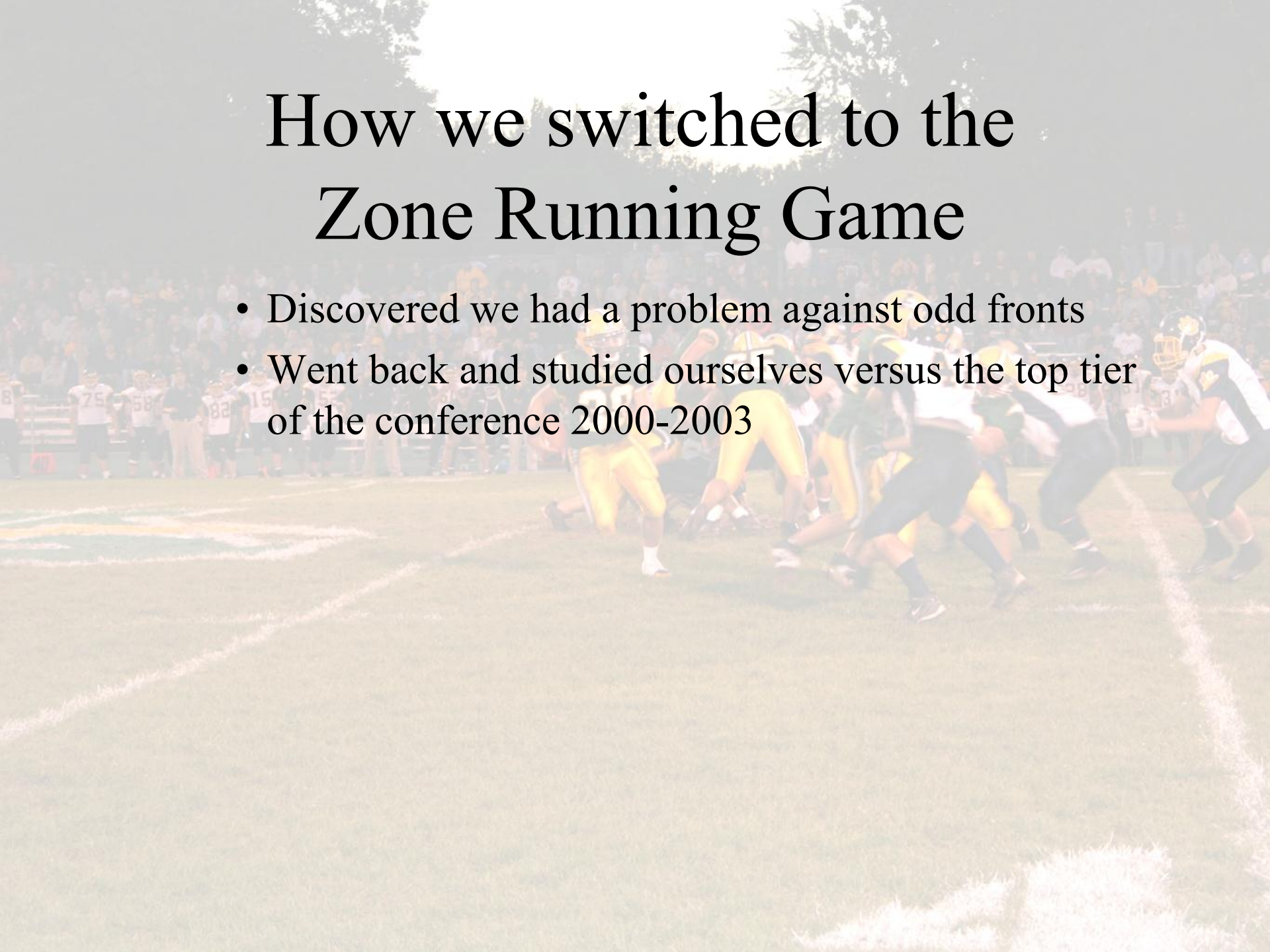
opponent(7-3) 44%

opponent(2-8) 38%

opponent(15-0) 33%

How we switched to the Zone Running Game

- Discovered we had a problem against odd fronts
- Went back and studied ourselves versus the top tier of the conference 2000-2003

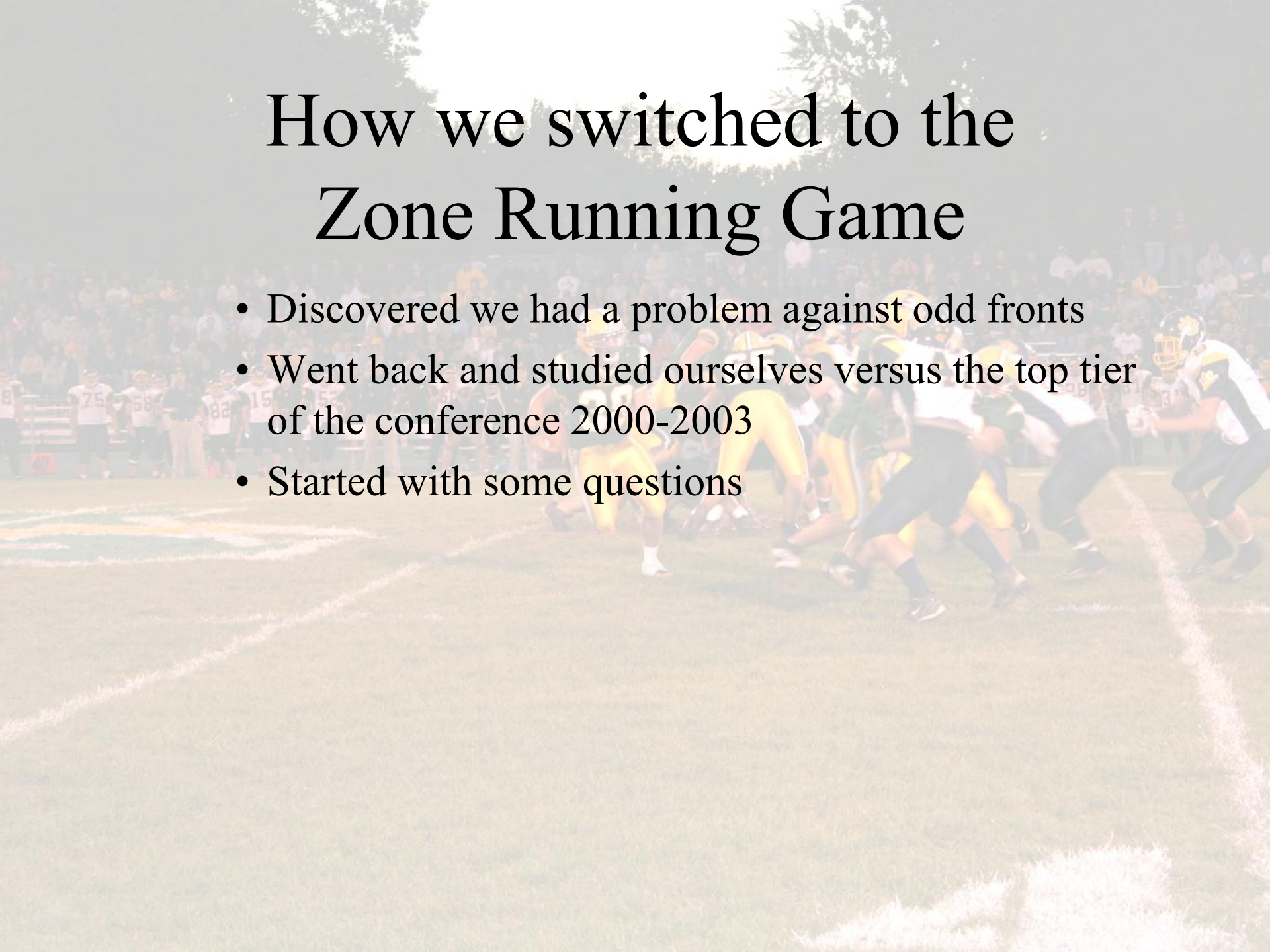


Opponent Study 2000-2003

- Record 1-7 versus opponents studied
- 40% run efficient
- 3.44 yards per carry
- Only 8 total +12 yard runs in 8 games
- 32 different run calls used
- Could not identify a “base offense” from what was called

How we switched to the Zone Running Game

- Discovered we had a problem against odd fronts
- Went back and studied ourselves versus the top tier of the conference 2000-2003
- Started with some questions



Conclusions about our run game('03):

- We have become scheme heavy while sacrificing being fundamentally sound
- Our schemes do not provide us with a sequence of problems for a defense.
- There is not a logical progression for us. When one scheme does not work we just try something else.
- We cannot effectively practice all of the schemes we have.

Conclusions about our run game('03):

- Our man scheme blocking causes our linemen to become tentative if the defense presents a new look or movement.
- We must simplify our offense by cutting down our schemes, but make it appear more complicated to the defense by presenting more looks (formations, shifts, motion).
- What we have been using has not allowed us success against the top tier of our conference.

How we switched to the Zone Running Game

- Discovered we had a problem against odd fronts
- Went back and studied ourselves versus the top tier of the conference 2000-2003
- Started with some questions
- Decided what our philosophy would be

Offense Philosophy

- 1. Attitude - We will attack with a punishing running game that destroys the defensive line.
- 2. We will use spread formations to open up the run & pass.
- 3. We will use a base offense week after week.
- 4. We will adjust with formations, not by adding new plays.
- 5. We will take advantage of our abilities with personnel packages

How we switched to the Zone Running Game

- Discovered we had a problem against odd fronts
- Went back and studied ourselves versus the top tier of the conference 2000-2003
- Started with some questions
- Decided what our philosophy would be
- Decided to change to zone
- Researched the zone run game

Why we use zone run

- Can be run versus any defensive alignment.
- Minimizes effectiveness of a defense that moves by slanting and angling.
- Allows emphasis on the **aggressive and intense execution** of fundamentals and techniques.
- **Allows us to block the line of scrimmage, deny penetration, and secure movement by using double-team combination schemes. Distorts and displaces the defensive front.**

Why we use zone run

- Can be used in a variety of personnel groups:
 - Tight End/Split End
 - Two Back-Two Receiver/Two Back-Three Receiver
 - One Back
 - Shotgun Spread
- Allows for personnel match-ups in game plan.

Why we use zone run

- Run game **allows toughness to permeate the team.**
- High percentage passing game can be built off the run.
- Provides split end and tight end attack. Do not need separate schemes for tight side or split side.

Why we use zone run

- Simple scheme-allows players to be **aggressive.**
- Many different looks by using the same scheme allows for many repetitions for linemen and backs.
- Do not have to be overpowering to have success.
- Limits the blitz.
- **Wears down the opponent.**

Primary Objectives of the Stretch Play

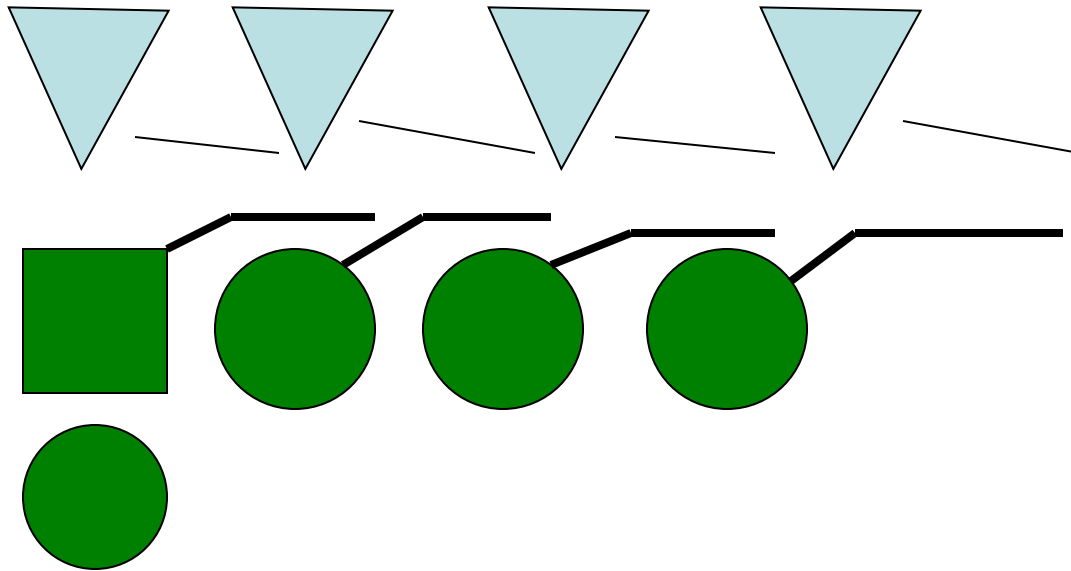
- To get the entire backfield and line on a wide “railroad” track
- To force the defense to stretch quickly.
- To beat them to the corner with a show of force.
- to cut up in a lane they open by pursuing incorrectly.

Technique - Stretch the Defense

- Flatter on initial step than inside zone.
- Philosophy is not to knock them off the ball-goal is to stretch the defense.
- First step is flat but don't allow penetration.
- Second step must be quick
- Linemen don't turn shoulders unless they hook DL.
- Think overtake, stay on a flat course to LB & have eyes for the run thru

Worst Case Scenario:

All linemen running parallel with the line of scrimmage



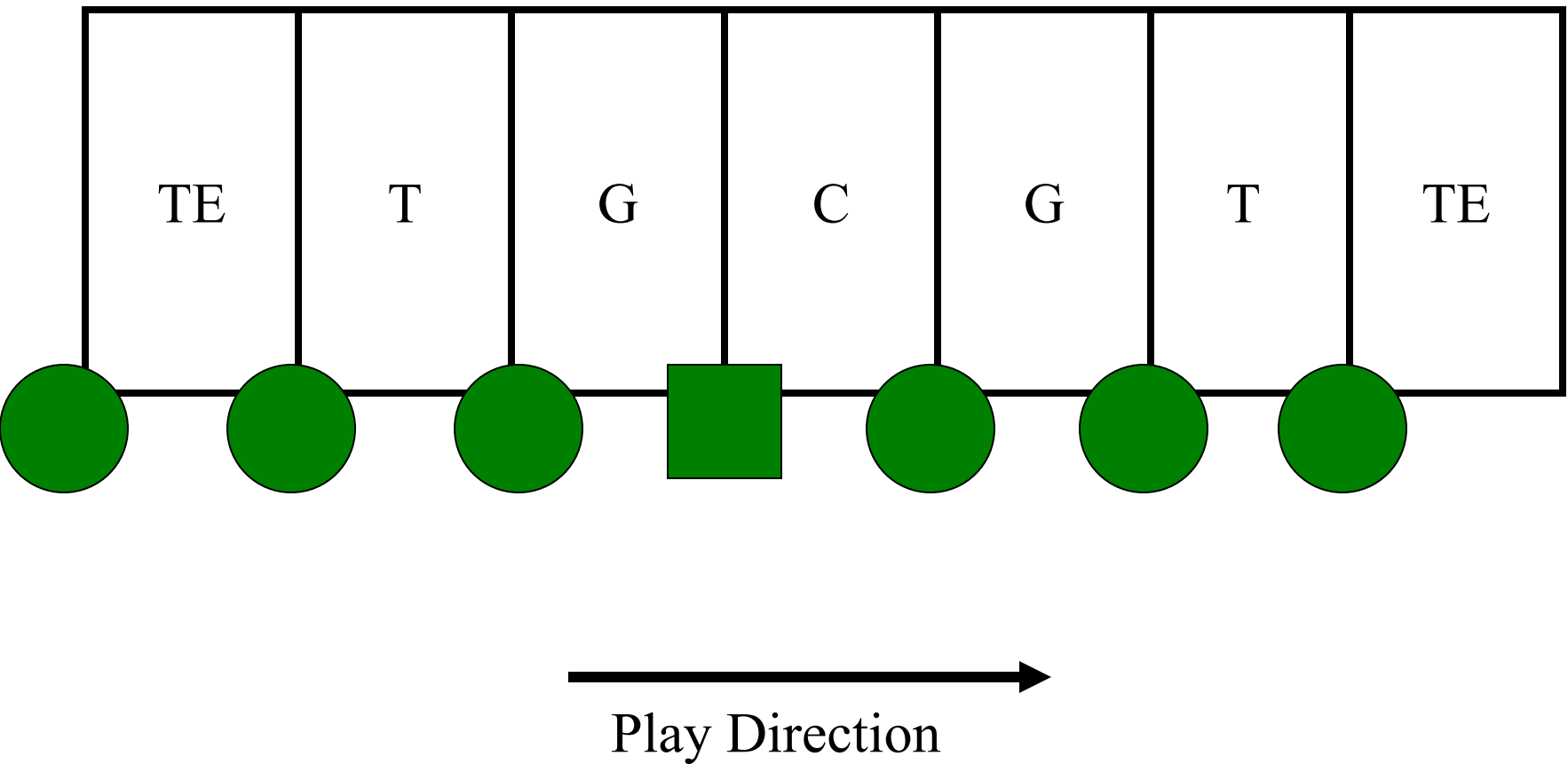
Cut-up lanes will open for the Back.

Our Teaching Progression

- Gap responsibility



Gap Responsibility

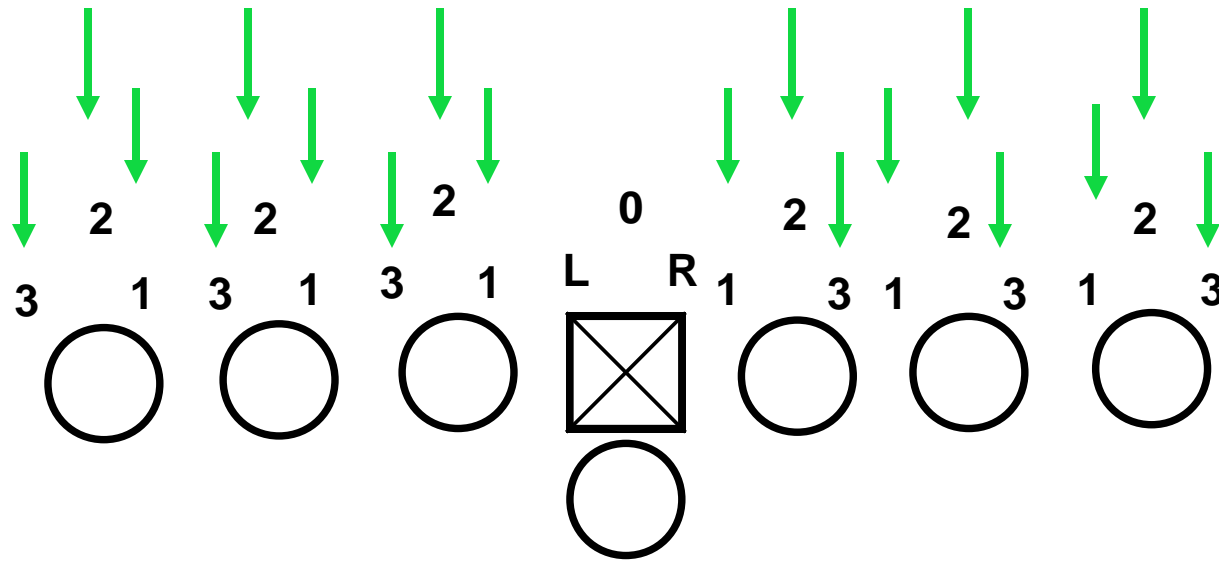


Our Teaching Progression

- Gap responsibility
- Defensive Technique Identification



Defensive Technique Identification



1 = inside technique
2 = head up technique
3 = outside technique

Center has 0 head up,
Right & Left

Our Teaching Progression

- Gap responsibility
- Defensive Technique Identification
- Technique versus different alignments

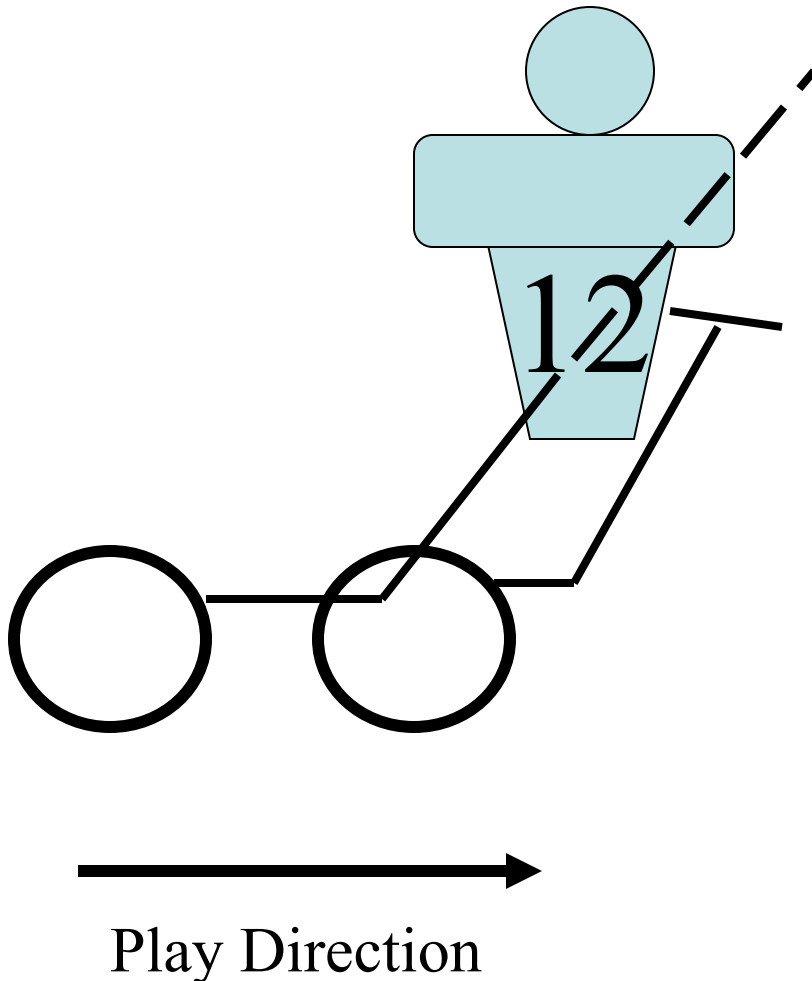


Outside Technique

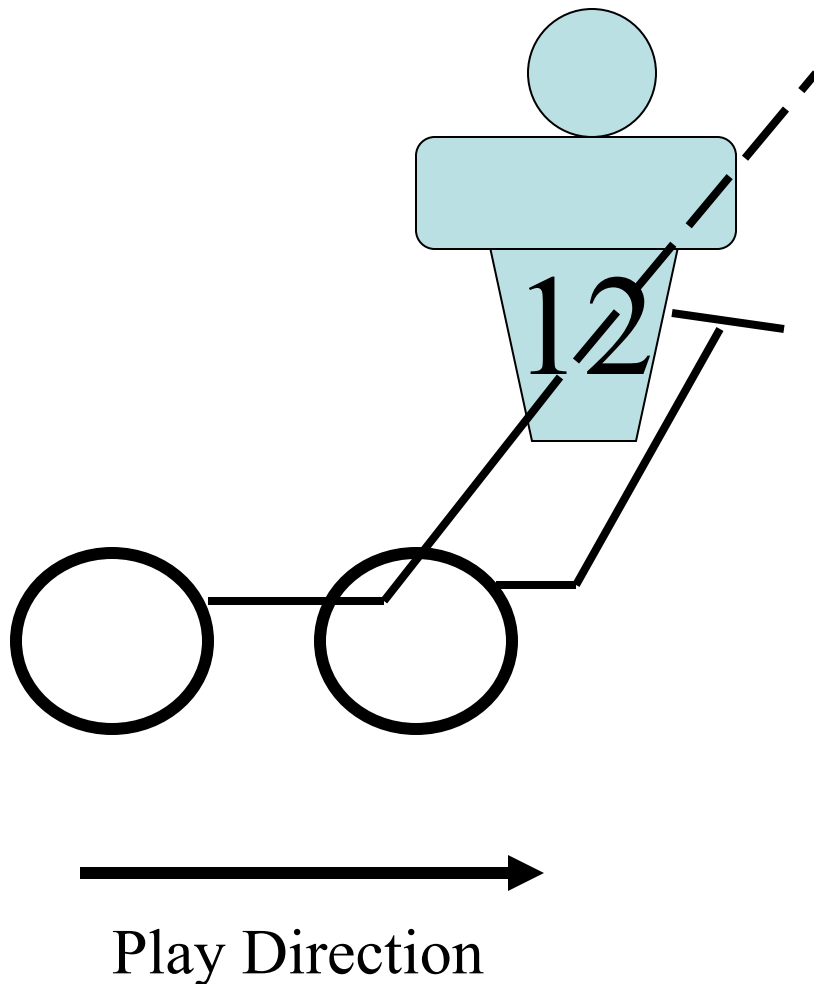
Both Linemen step laterally

The outside OL is going at the outside bicep; inside OL is going at inside #.

If the inside # disappears, the inside OL should stay flat and climb to level 2. He should NOT climb straight upfield



Outside Technique



Coaching Points:

OL going to 2nd level should flatten and let the LB come to him. NEVER turn back on zone plays.

He should stay on his tracks and continue on past level 2 to the safety.

When blocking a LB he should try to run him over. At the very worst he will get in the way.

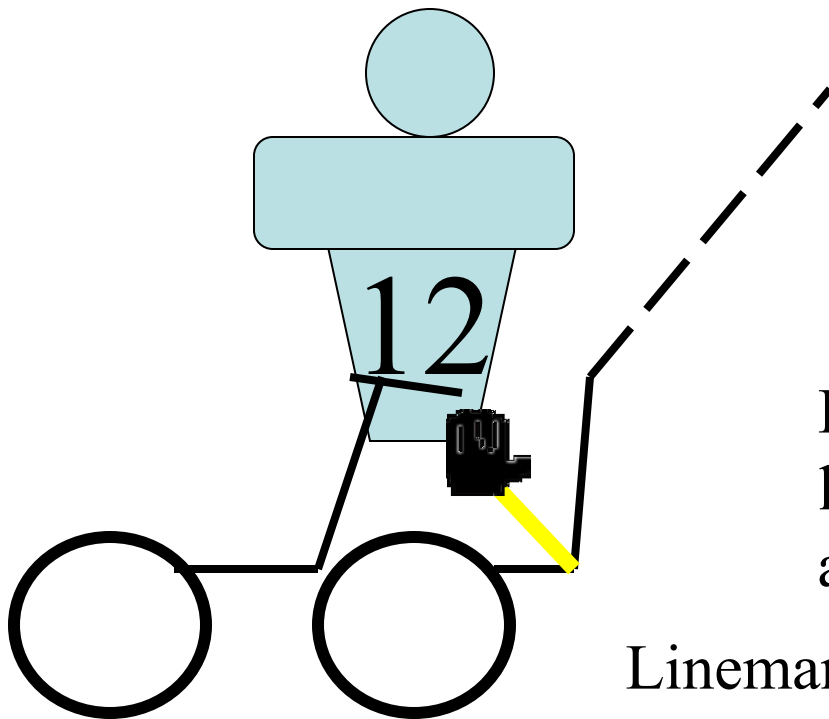
Head-up Technique

OL should know the % of him coming inside is now greater.

Outside OL will step with outside foot and punch with inside hand.

Inside OL aims for inside # landmark. He should attempt to overtake.

Lineman who comes off should come off flat and let LB come to him.

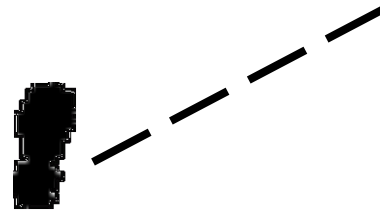
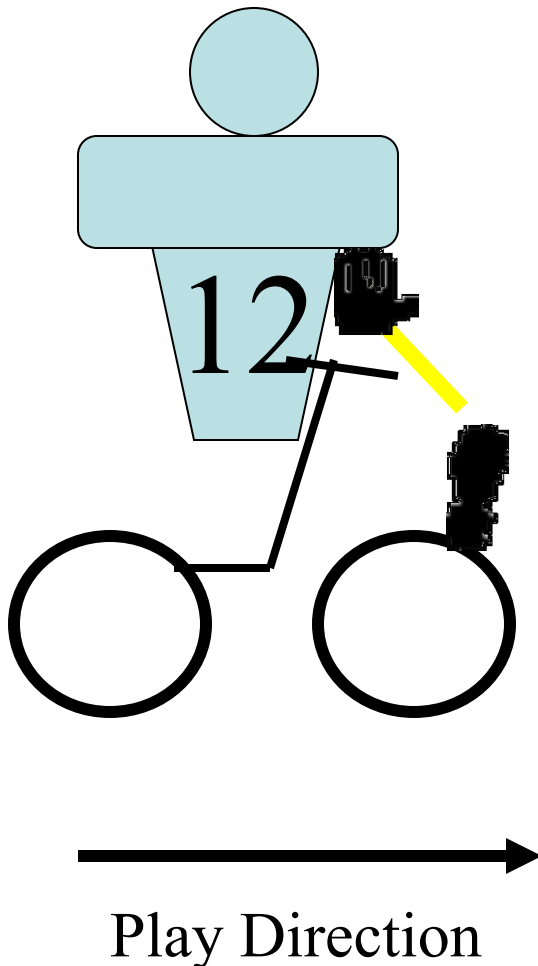


Play Direction

Inside Technique(uncovered)

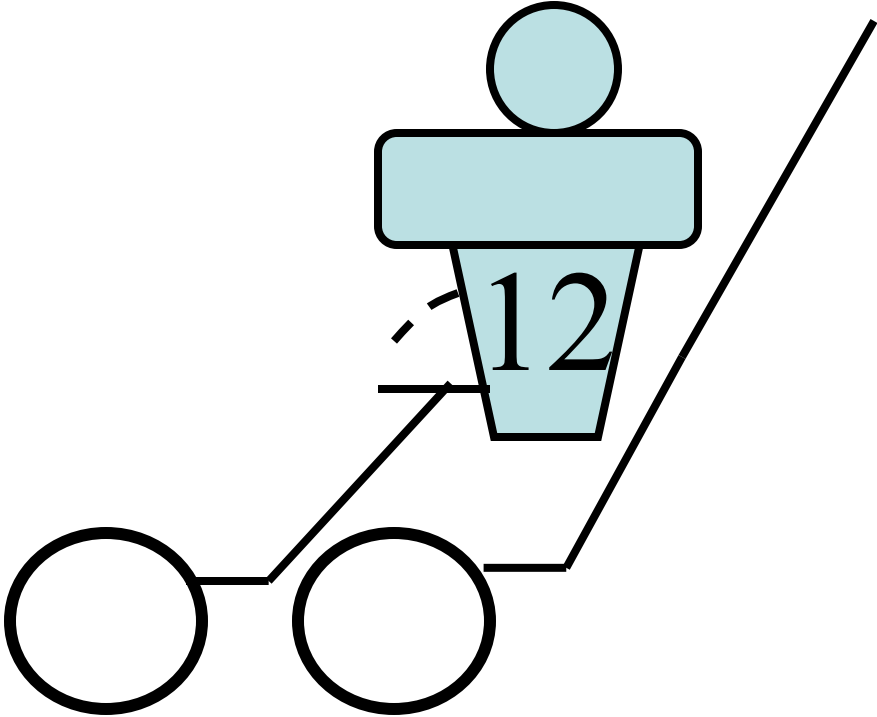
This is not the outside OL's gap responsibility.

Outside OL will step with outside foot and punch with inside hand to help stop penetration. He should get the 2nd step down quickly.



He should attempt to overtake the next adjacent DL or flatten and let the LB come to him.

movement by DL to inside



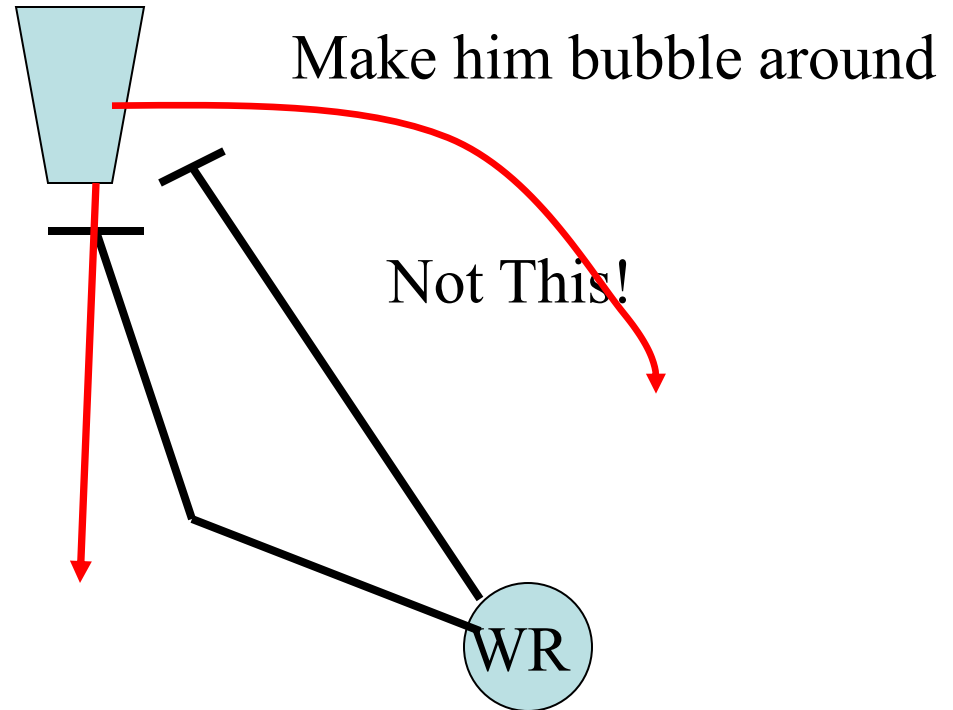
Receiver Blocking

- Playside - Block Man On. Drive him out of bounds.
- Backside - Block Near Safety.
- Maintain blocks until whistle.
- WR Blocks turn a big gain into a TD.
- Backside block is just as important; play may cut up.

Receiver Blocking

Never allow this path by the defender!

Receiver needs to gain leverage and “dig him out”

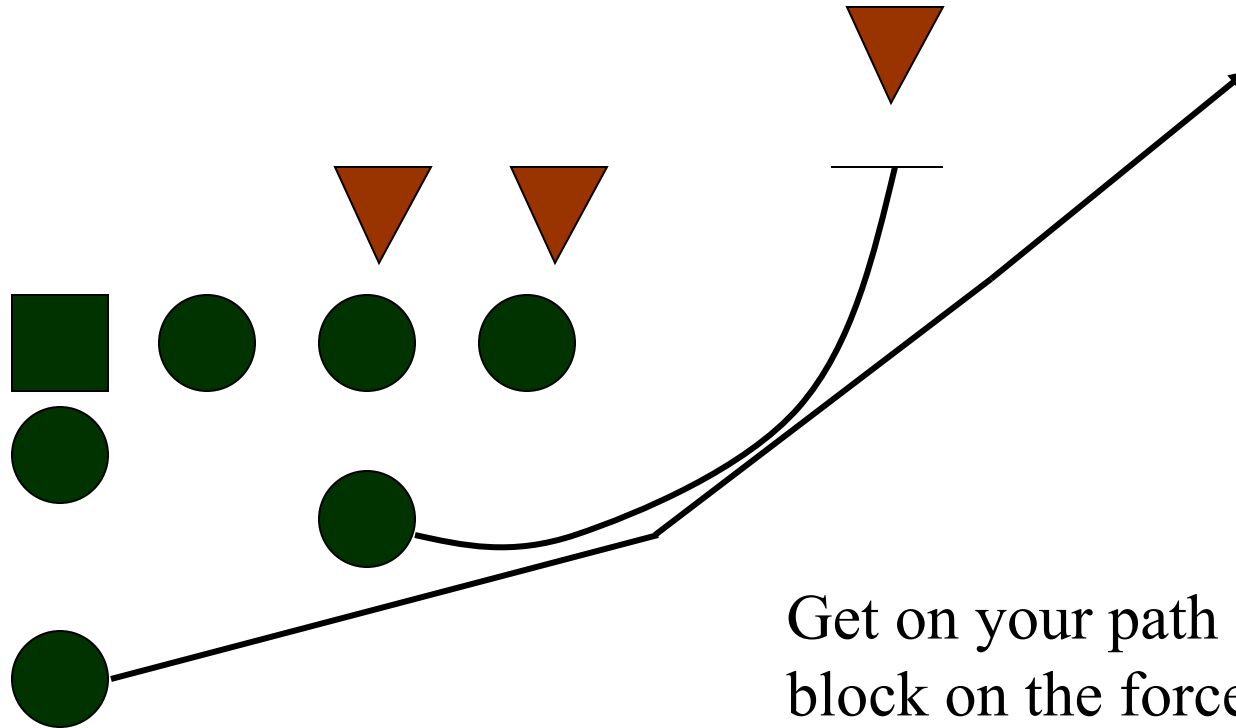


Angle & # of steps
depends on depth and
distance(applies to both
stalk & crack blocks)

Stretch TB Coaching Points

- Distinct Read especially on down & distance situations(know how much you need)
- 1st step is open and 2nd is at landmark. Get Shoulders pointed to sideline. Make the LB's move.
- You will have a primary read and adjustments to what happens on your track
- Track adjustment: you read the blockers numbers and opposite color is showing outside-cut up.
- Unblocked opposite color flashes on your track-cut up.
- Goal is to get to the perimeter quickly(climb your track) and take advantage of improper pursuit.
- Dip your shoulder inside to set up your blocks.
- If you cut up, get back outside after the cut.

Primary TB Read: Force



Get on your path and read the block on the force player. Keep climbing on your track to the outside!

Tailback 6 Second Rule-Stretch

- Identify your Read: Force player.
- Based on his alignment how quickly will he force?
- Check alignment of DE on TE. Potential problem or adjustment?

Tailback Climbing Levels on Stretch

In this example the TB has 3 blockers on the edge.

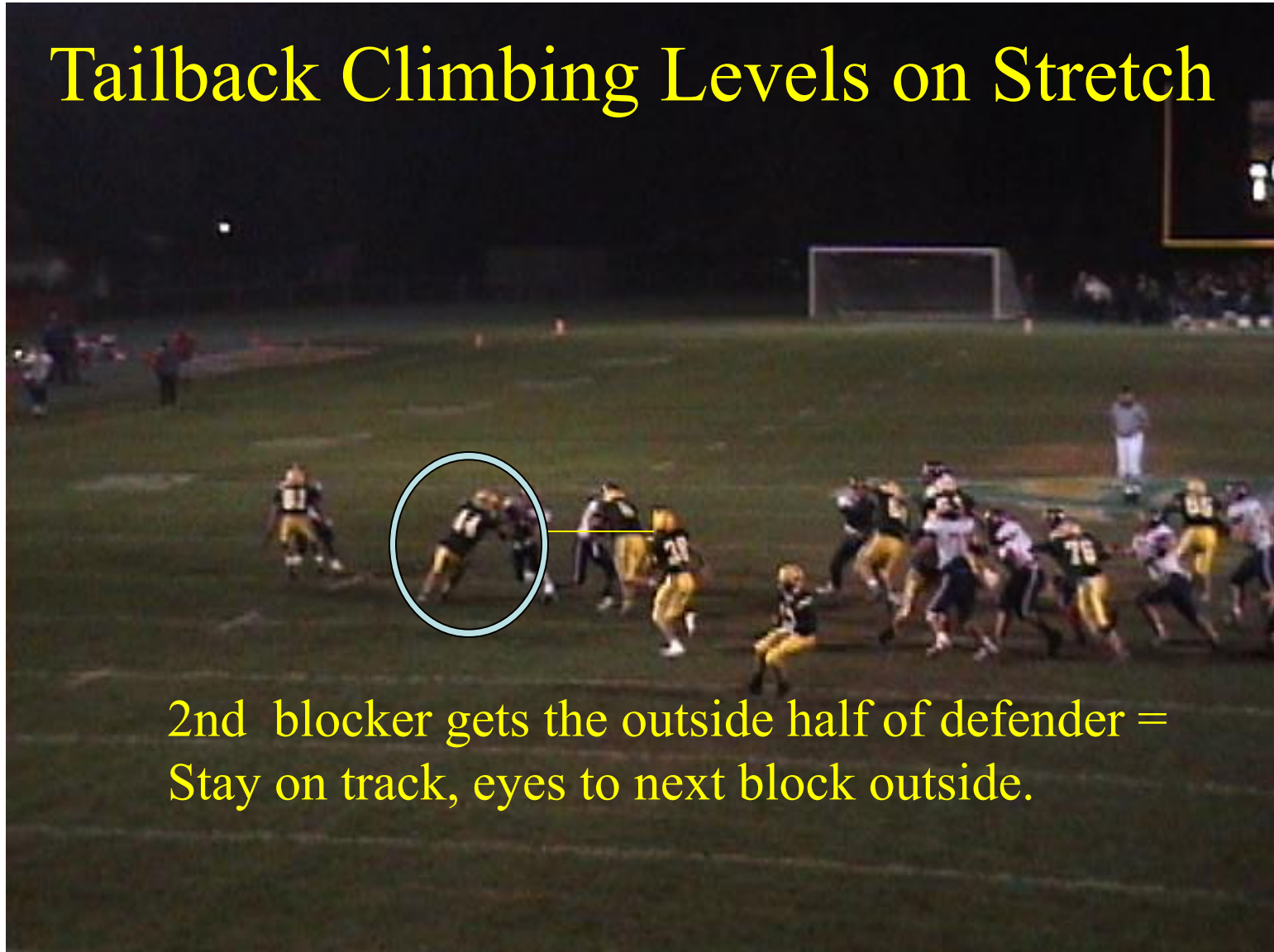
His progression should be to read each as he stays on his track toward sideline.



1st blocker gets the outside half of defender =
Stay on track, eyes to next block outside.

To make blockers commit, dip your inside shoulder.
This will help your blocker get outside leverage.

Tailback Climbing Levels on Stretch



2nd blocker gets the outside half of defender =
Stay on track, eyes to next block outside.

Tailback Climbing Levels on Stretch



3rd blocker fights to get the outside half of defender
=Stay on track and continue to run towards sideline.
If you are gaining ground do not cut up because pursuit
from the inside will get you. The result is +12 yards.

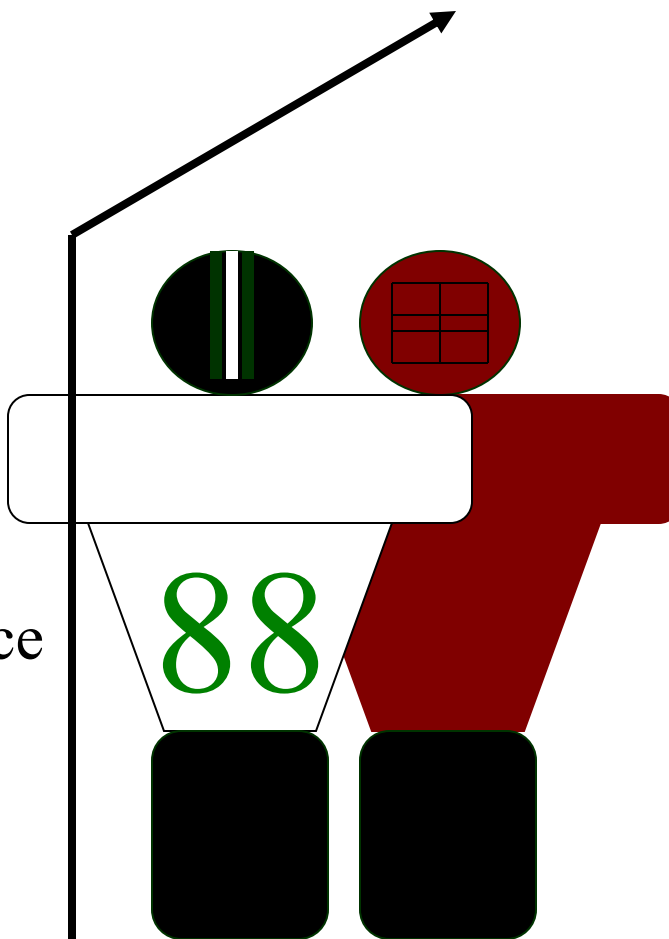
Stretch Reads and Adjustments: Blockers on your path

On your path, you see the TE's numbers facing you.

Opposite Color shows on his outside half.

Cut up North-South

Get back outside & read force



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Tailback Stretch Reads:

As you are on your track you read your blockers numbers.

If opposite color is showing on the blockers outside half, this means the defender has aggressively run out and upfield.

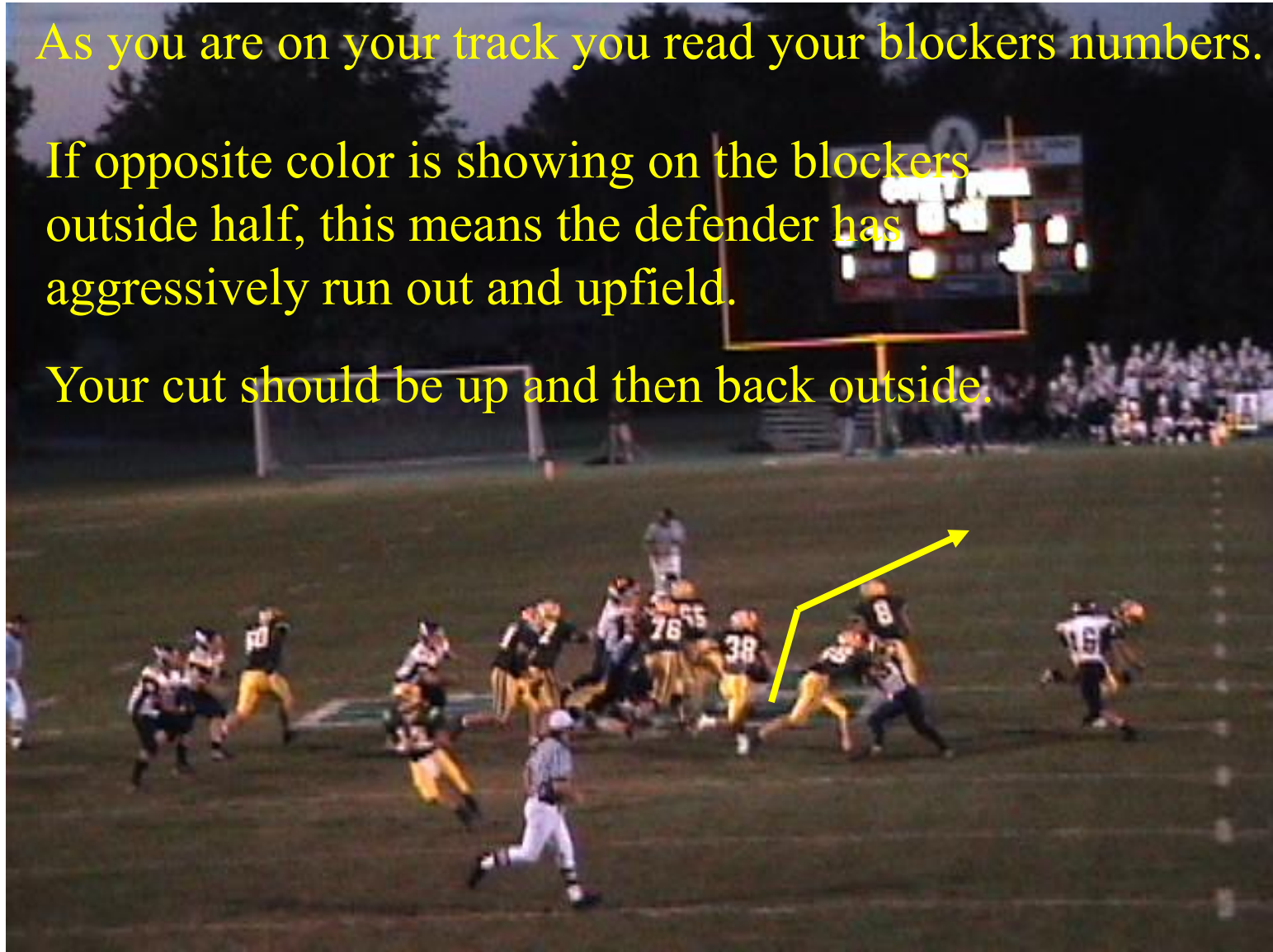


Tailback Stretch Reads:

As you are on your track you read your blockers numbers.

If opposite color is showing on the blockers outside half, this means the defender has aggressively run out and upfield.

Your cut should be up and then back outside.

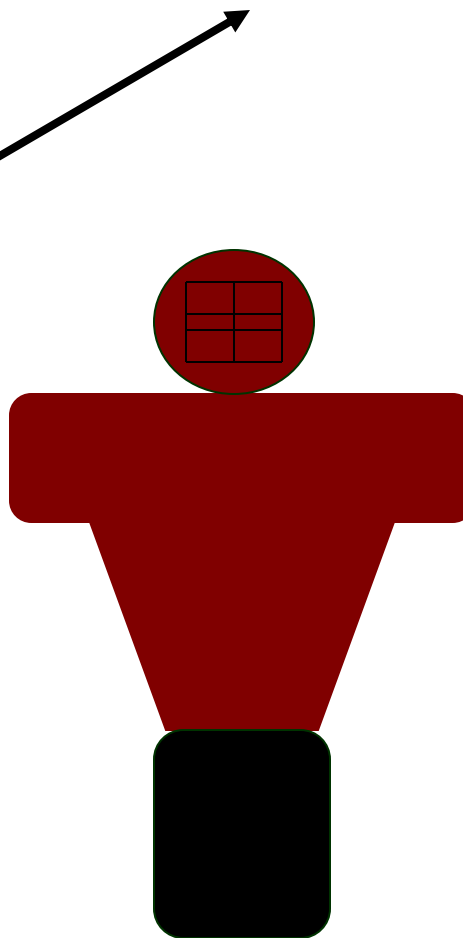


Stretch Reads and Adjustments: Unblocked defender on your path.

Unblocked Opposite Color
flashes in your path.

Immediately cut North &
South and get yards.

If you get into open
space, look to get back
outside



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Tailback Stretch Reads:

As you are on your track opposite color jersey flashes in your path.



Tailback Stretch Reads:

As you are on your track opposite color jersey flashes in your path.

You must plant and cut N-S to get yards.

Your cut may bring you back into open field.

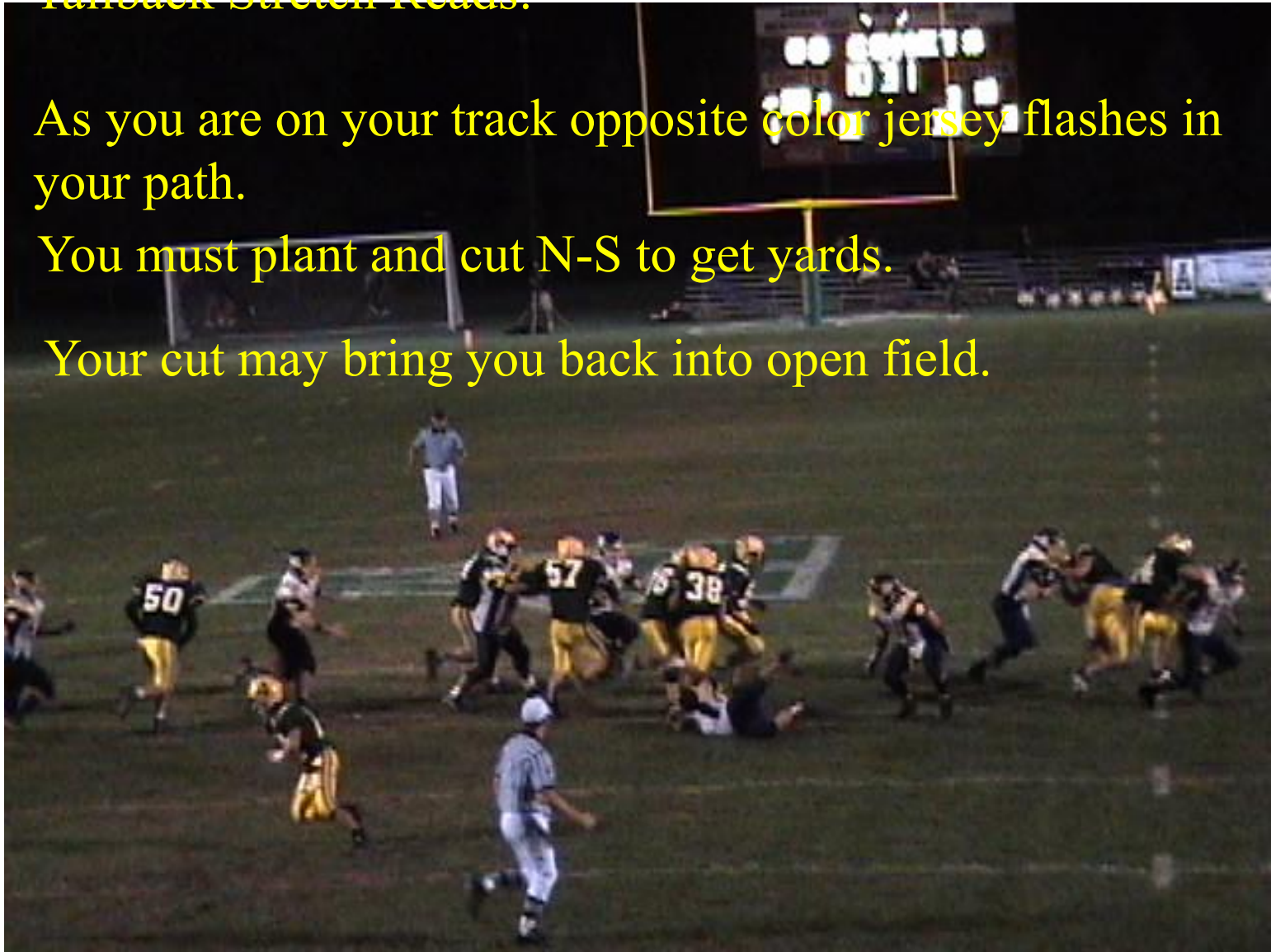


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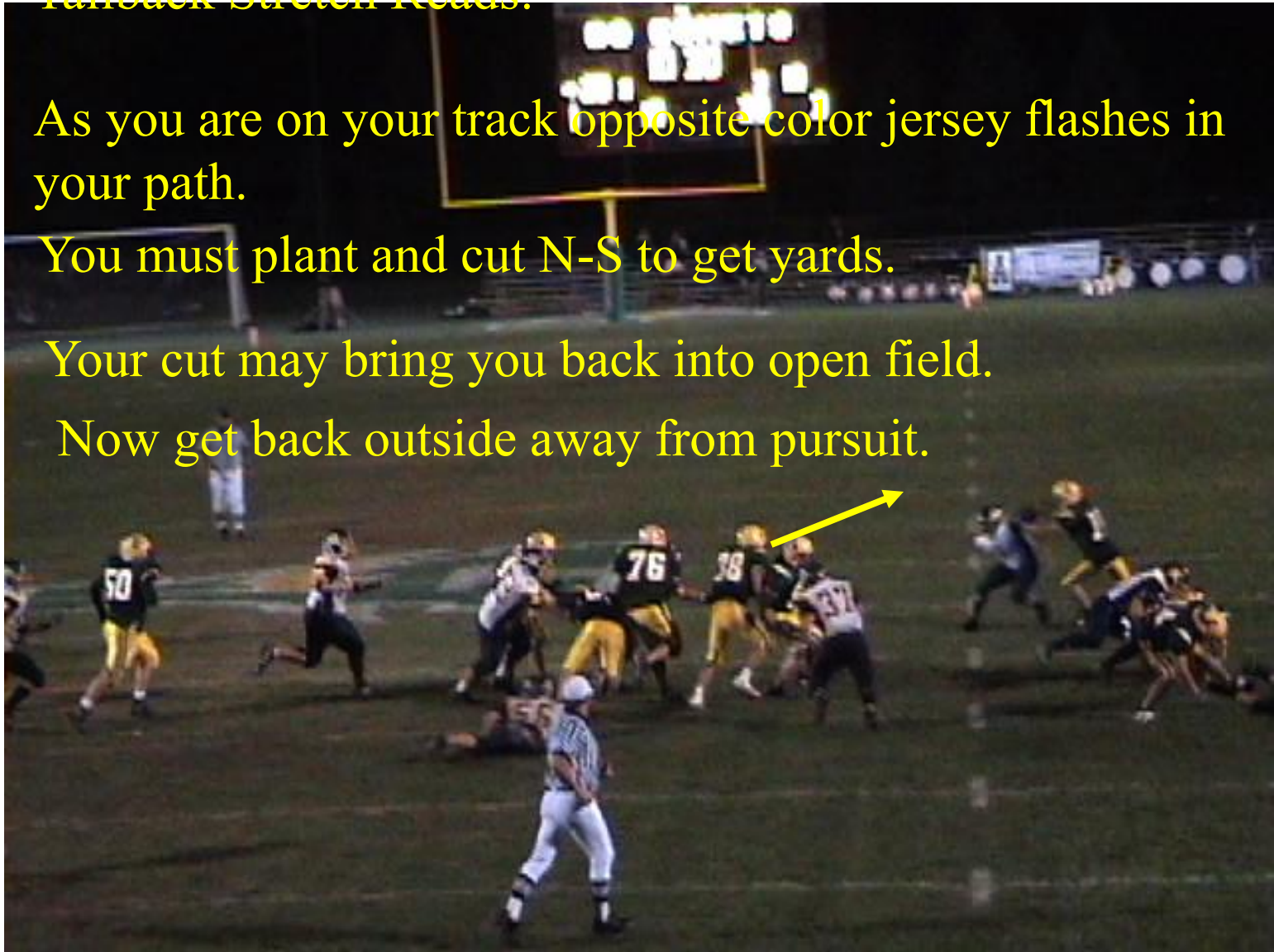
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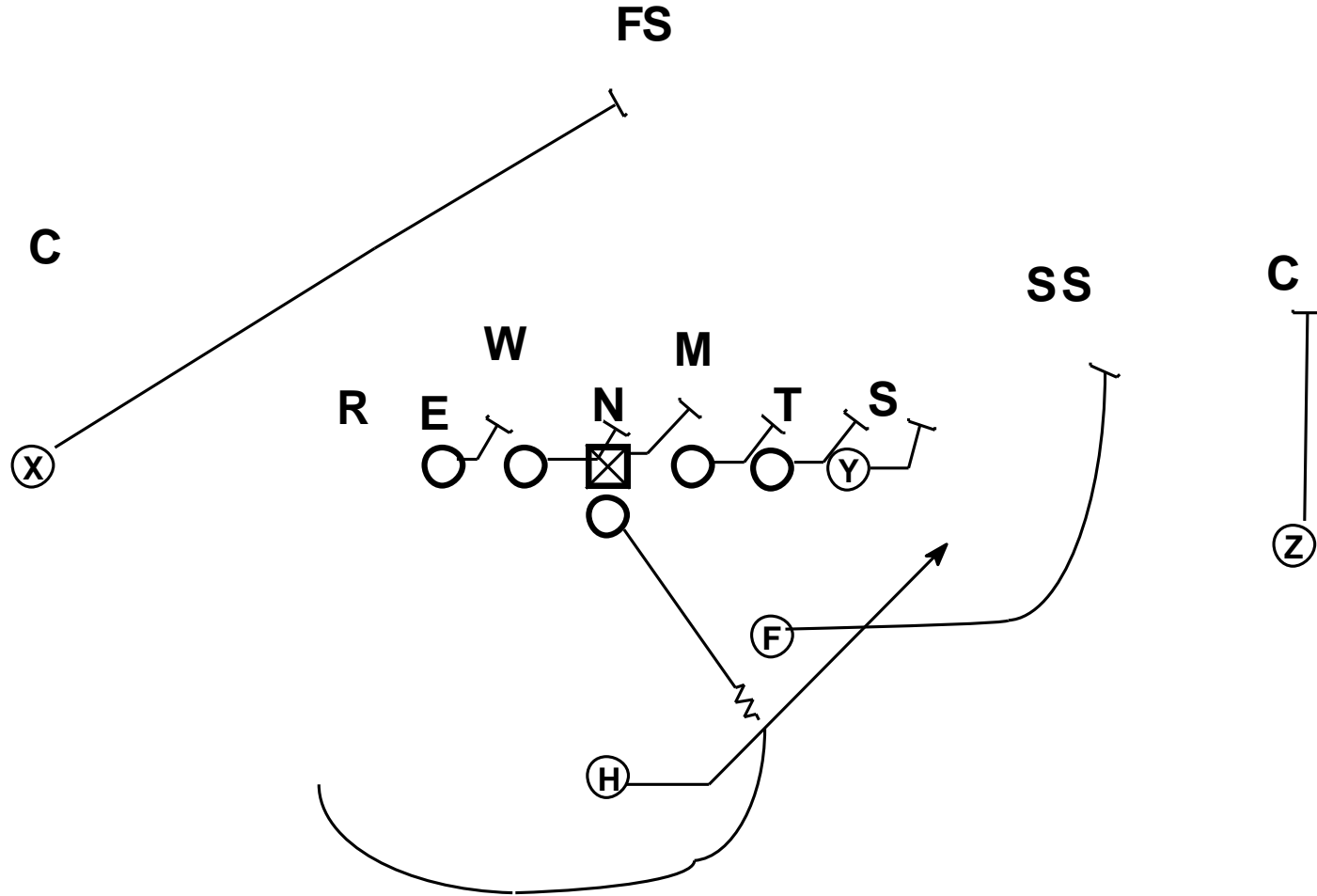
You must plant and cut N-S to get yards.

Your cut may bring you back into open field.

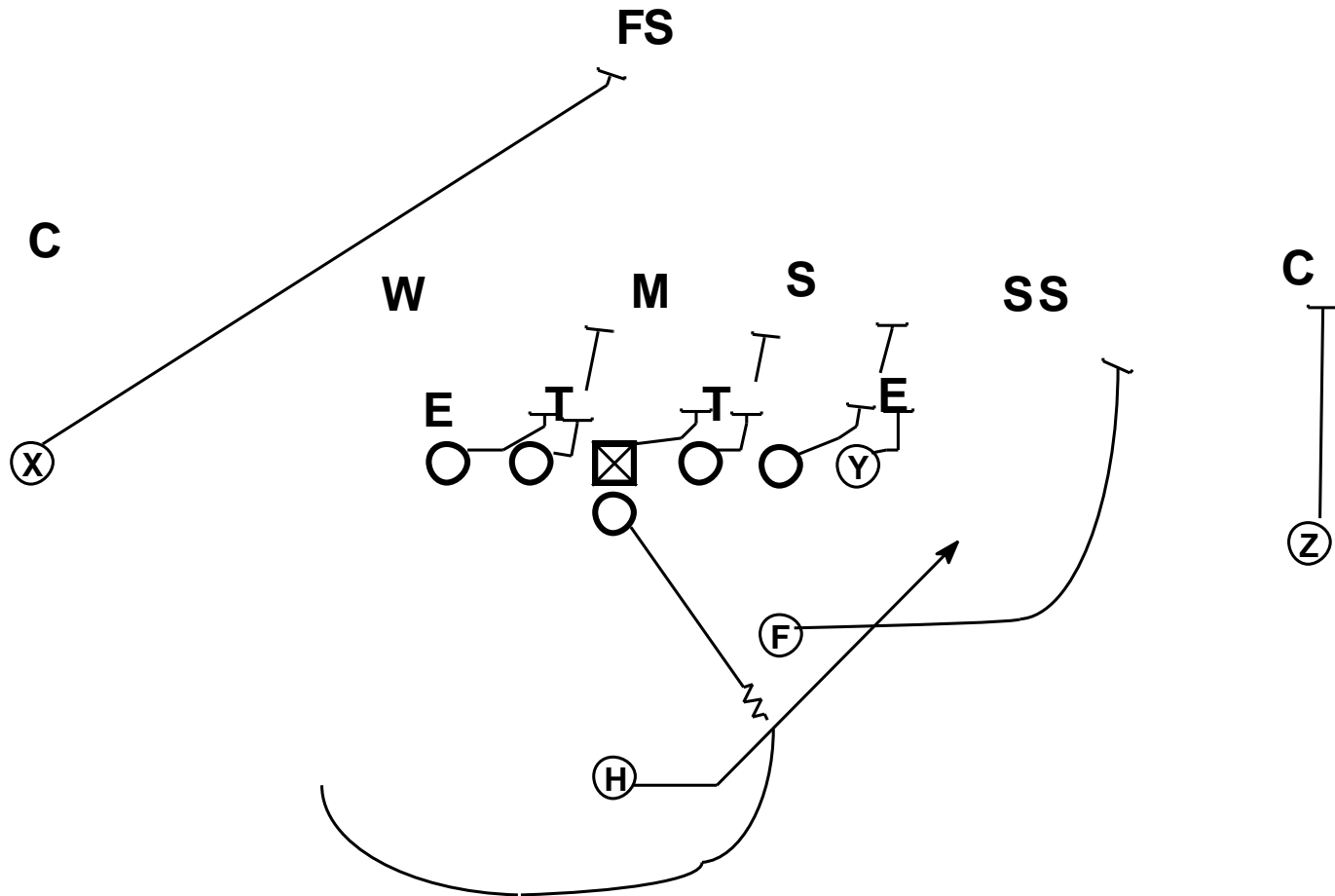
Now get back outside away from pursuit.



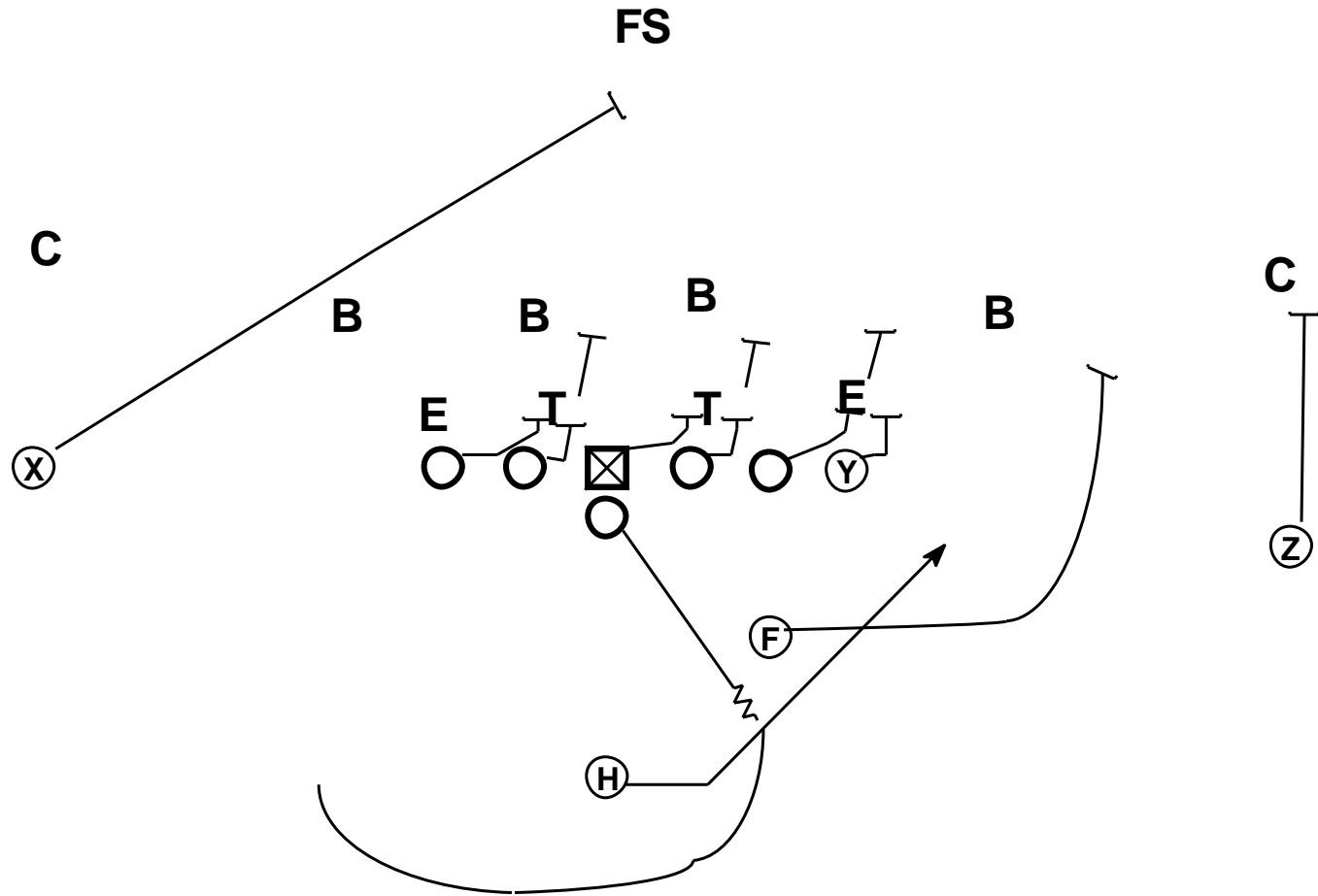
Stretch TE Side vs. 5-2



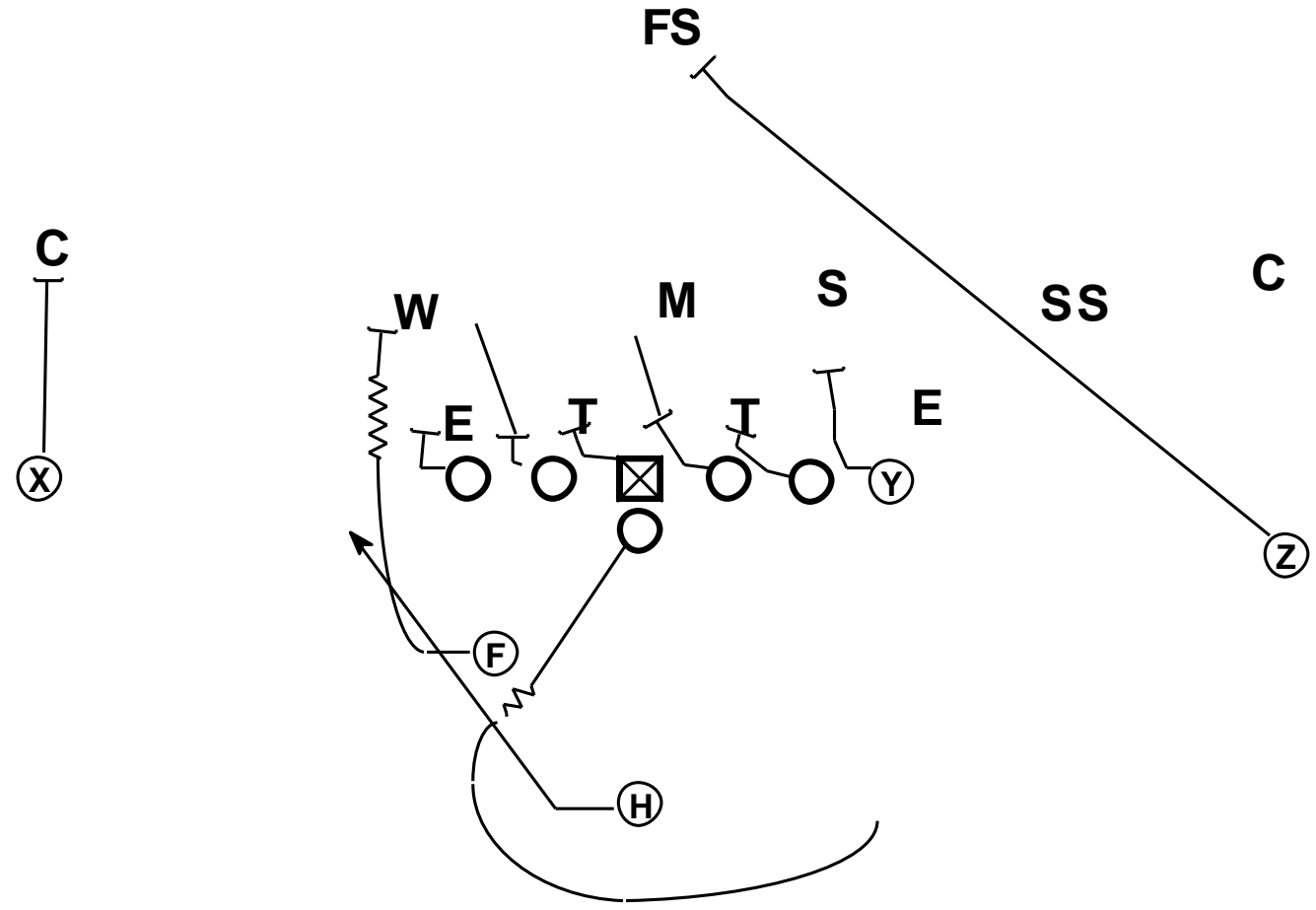
Stretch TE Side vs. 4-3



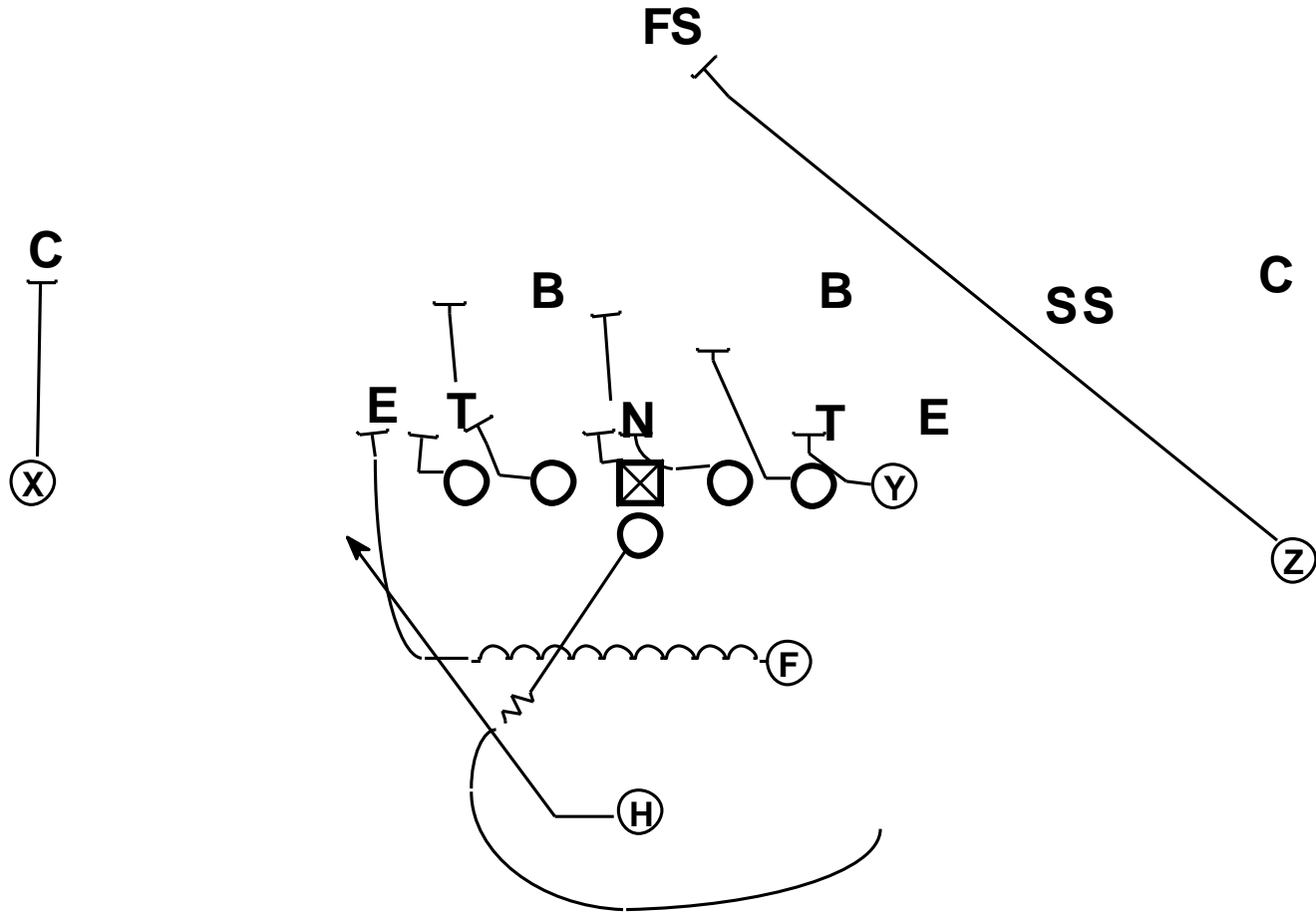
Stretch TE Side vs. 4-4



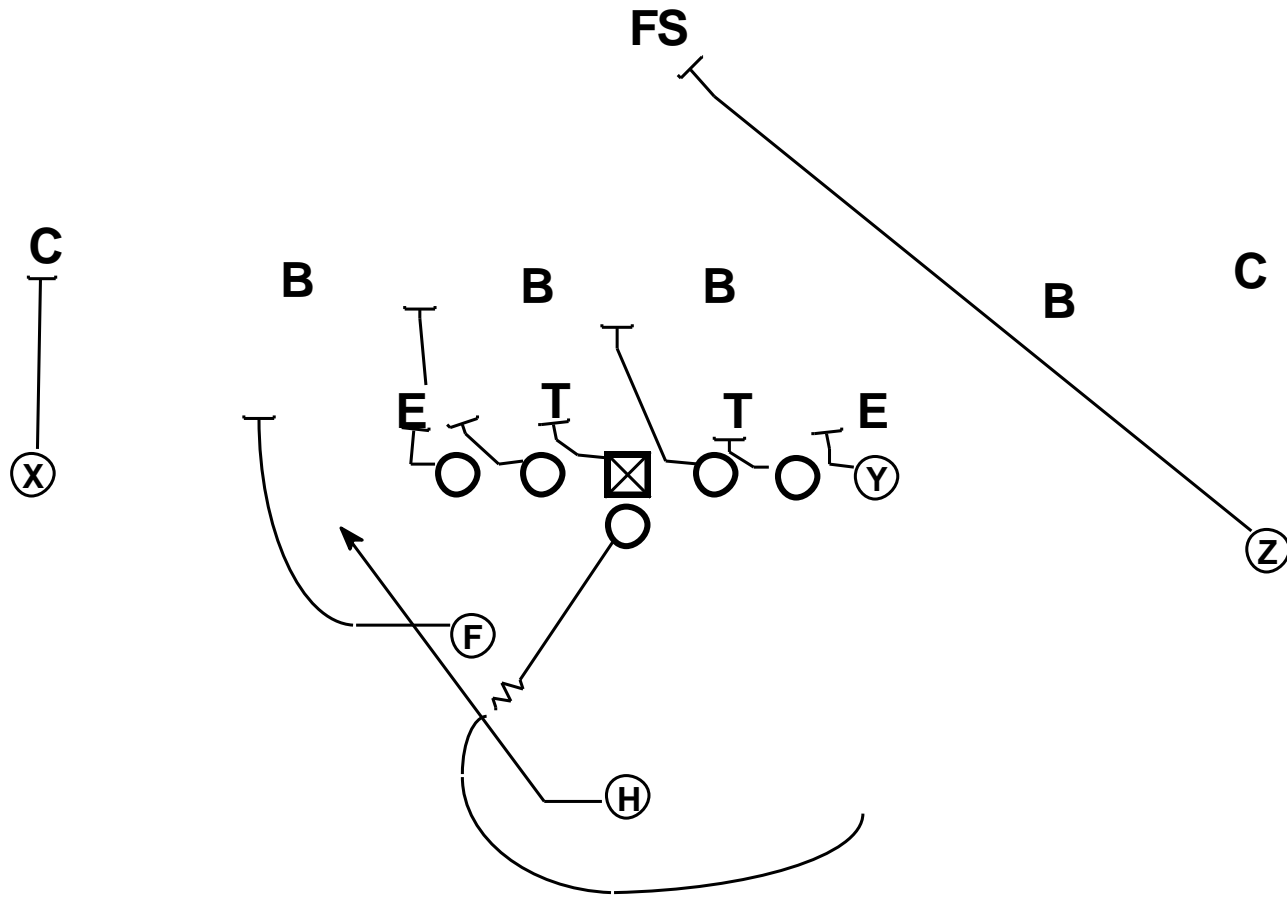
Stretch SE Side vs. 4-3



Stretch SE Side vs. 5-2



Stretch SE Side vs. 4-4



RESULTS 2004- Run Efficiency Improved in *Almost* Every Game

2003	2004	Improvement
71%L	67%W	-4%
67%W	86%W	+19%
62%W	68%W	+6%
62%W	56%W	-6%
58%W	60%W	+2%
53%W	78%W	+25%
50%L	58%W	+8%
44%W	55%W	+11%
38%W	73%W	+35%
33%L	47%L	+14%

Avg. 10 Games +11.0% per game

RESULTS 2004-2006

- Broke every school rushing category record in 2004. (records held since 1980's)
- Then, broke them again in 2005.
- County's 1st back-to-back 2,000 yard rusher.
- Led the county in rushing.
- Ohio Div. I Rushing & Scoring Leader
- 2006-Replaced 2x All-Ohio TB with a sophomore-he had 1,300 yards (3rd best season in school history, and was the lead rusher in the conference.

