

CHAPTER 10

Stack Versus Common Running Plays

This chapter provides details on the practical application of the Stack 4-4-3 defense versus a cross section of common running plays, including information on each defender's initial read and reaction to various blocking schemes. The plays diagrammed in this chapter will provide you with a basic understanding of how to defend the multitude of offensive plays your defense will encounter during the course of a season.

As you review the diagrammed plays, you should realize that the blocking schemes used in a particular diagram may differ from the blocking schemes you see from the teams you play. Also, the way you choose to defend a particular play—that is, each individual defender's fit within the defense—may vary from my philosophy. That is part of what makes the game of football so interesting. There is more than one way to close gaps and shut down offensive running lanes. All coaches should be strong in their beliefs but also willing to explore new ideas.

Defending the Run

This section details the responsibilities of the front eight defenders versus common running plays. The responsibilities for the corners and the free safety are not described. When playing Cover 3, the free safety and the corners are secondary run support players. The free safety initially takes two steps backward and reads the play. When he reads that the offense is running the football, he fits where needed and puts himself in position to tackle the ballcarrier if the ballcarrier penetrates through the defensive front. Each corner should always be in position to contain the football when it is run to his side. The corner should also be in position to engage in a deep pursuit course when the ball is run away from him.

■ Stack Cover 3 Versus an Isolation Play to the Tight End Side

The **strong safety** is aligned five yards off the line of scrimmage, two yards outside of the rush end. The strong safety's run-pass read is the tight end. The strong safety is responsible for containing the football. When the strong safety recognizes full flow (both running backs at him), he should bounce and stay in a stack position behind the rush end. He will now be in position to make a play in the alley if the ballcarrier bounces the ball outside.

He will also be in position to fit in the 5 gap if the ballcarrier's path takes him through the 5 gap. The strong safety should always keep his outside arm free.

The **rush end** is in a 9 alignment. He is responsible for controlling the alley (the area outside of the rush end and inside of the strong safety). He reads the tight end for his initial run-pass read. The rush end should attack the tight end with his inside foot and should constrict the 5 gap.

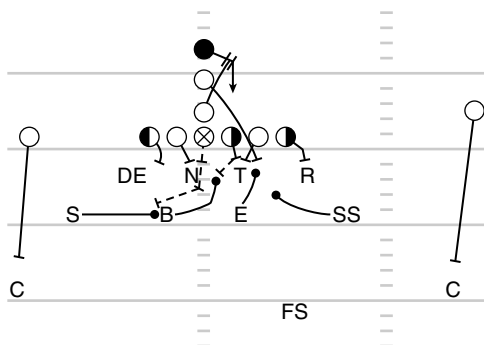
The **defensive tackle** is in a 3 alignment, which is an outside shade on the offensive guard. He is responsible for controlling the 3 gap. As the defensive tackle attacks the offensive guard and feels a double team by the offensive guard and tackle, the defensive tackle should attack the base block of the guard, stopping his charge. He should then grab the guard and execute a seat roll into the offensive tackle's legs, creating a pile in the 3 gap.

The **eagle linebacker** is in a 3 alignment. On this play, the eagle linebacker will read the offensive guard's helmet attacking the outside shoulder of the defensive tackle, and he will feel full flow to his side of the ball. When this occurs, the eagle linebacker should quickly check the path of the backs. If both backs are on a course toward the 1 gap, the eagle linebacker should attack the 1 gap and take on the fullback with his inside leg and arm. If both backs are on a course toward the 3 gap (as shown in the diagram), the eagle linebacker should fast flow and press the first open seam tight off of the defensive tackle's butt. His fit should be as tight as possible, and he should take on the fullback with his inside leg and arm.

The **noseguard** is in a 1 alignment. He should attack the center with his inside foot. As the noseguard feels the center attempting to release to the inside linebacker on a scoop block, the noseguard should squeeze the offensive center into the front-side 1 gap for two counts, keeping him off the inside linebacker. The noseguard should then release to the football.

The **inside linebacker** is in a 3 alignment. As the inside linebacker reads the scoop release of the offensive guard and feels full flow away, the inside linebacker should fast flow to the far 1 gap.

The **defensive end** is in a 5 alignment and is responsible for the 5 gap. As he attacks the offensive tackle and reads the offensive tackle releasing inside on a cutoff

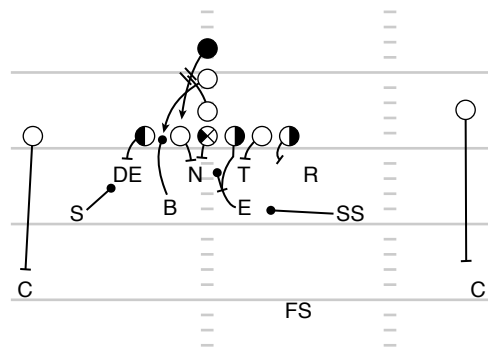


block, the defensive end should squeeze the offensive tackle into the 3 gap. While doing so, the defensive end needs to stay square.

The **Sam linebacker** is in a hip alignment, four yards deep and two yards outside of the defensive end. The Sam linebacker reads the offensive guard for his run-pass key. As he reads the scoop block by the guard, the Sam linebacker should shuffle toward the ball, staying on the back hip of the ballcarrier. He should always clear the bootleg pass, the reverse, and a possible cutback. He should maintain an outside-in relationship on the ballcarrier.

■ Stack Cover 3 Versus an Isolation Play Away From the Tight End Side

The **strong safety** is aligned five yards off the line of scrimmage and two yards outside of the rush end. His run-pass read is the tight end. The strong safety is responsible for containing the football. When the strong safety recognizes that the play is starting away from his alignment, he should shuffle and be in position to tackle the ballcarrier if he cuts back. The strong safety should always clear the bootleg pass and the reverse, and he should maintain an outside-in relationship on the ballcarrier.



The **rush end** is in a 9 alignment, which is an outside shade on the tight end. He is responsible for controlling the alley. His run-pass read is the tight end. As the tight end releases inside on a cutoff block, the rush end should attack the tight end and squeeze him into the 5 gap, staying square and constricting the cutback lane.

The **defensive tackle** is in a 3 alignment, which is an outside shade on the offensive guard. He is responsible for controlling the 3 gap. The defensive tackle will read the guard releasing inside on a scoop course, and he will also feel the offensive tackle on a scoop course. When this occurs, the defensive tackle should squeeze the guard into the 1 gap for two counts before flattening to the ball.

The **eagle linebacker** is in a 3 alignment. He will read the offensive guard's helmet attacking the inside shoulder of the defensive tackle, and he will feel full flow away. The eagle linebacker should attack the 1 gap (with his inside arm across the face of the offensive guard) and should flow to the ball.

The **noseguard** is in a 1 alignment. He should attack the center's base block with his inside foot. As the noseguard feels a down block by the offensive guard, he should grab the center and execute a seat roll into the offensive guard, staying on the line of scrimmage and creating a pile in the 1 gap.

The **inside linebacker** is in a 3 alignment. As the inside linebacker reads the double team by the offensive guard and feels full flow into the 3 gap, he should attack the fullback and meet him on the offensive side of the ball. The inside linebacker