

# Zone Run Game Adjustments & Tags

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# Thank You!

- Nebraska Coaches Association
- Football coaches in the state of Iowa
- My family
- Our players and their families
- Our assistant coaches and their families
- Grundy Center, for taking a chance on me



# My Background

- 2001-2008 – University of Dubuque - student assistant, graduate assistant, full-time (linebackers, special teams, offensive line)
- 2009-2010 – Wahlert Catholic – linebackers, offensive line, defensive coordinator
- 2011-2012 – University of Dubuque – part-time position coach (running backs)
- 2013-2018 – Wahlert Catholic – head coach
- 2019-present – Grundy Center - head coach

# Coaching the Zone

- Been coaching the zone since 2005
- Learned from guys I coached with, networking, clinics, online, coaching books
- Big-time thank you to Vince Brautigam who gave me my start in the profession.
- Zone run “Master” class in 2011 & 2012 with Stan Zweifel & Drew Nystrom at University of Dubuque
- Most of our zone principles come from Zweifel’s system
- I have made some adjustments over the years
- Not all of those adjustments have worked!



# Grundy Center

- 33-5 record in the last three seasons
- Class A state runner-up in 2019, 2020, and 2021
- Rushing offense
  - 2019 = 2,600 yards, 5.6 YPC, 37 TD's, 13 games
    - \*Year One – three new starters on the offensive line, new starting halfback, limited experience at QB.
  - 2020 = 3,294 yards, 8.3 YPC, 50 TD's, 12 games
    - \*Year Two – returned all starters from 2019; four all-state caliber linemen, all-state halfback, all-state QB.
  - 2021 = 2,074 yards, 4.9 YPC, 28 TD's, 13 games
    - \*Year Three – replaced 4 of 5 starting offensive linemen and halfback
- Zone scheme accounts for 90%+ of this production

# Considering the Zone?

- Best athlete should play QB!
- It takes time
  - \*It's our primary run scheme. We window dress and have some other schemes, but we lean on the zone
  - \*Practice the footwork and aiming points
  - \*Practice the combinations
  - \*Consider adding other elements to protect your runs (RPO, RSO, etc.)

# Considering the Zone?

- Better players certainly help. We have been blessed at Grundy Center
- Undersized linemen?
- You can still pull it off (make the defense respect it) with constant repetition of footwork and combinations
- Easier to carry over from week to week than man schemes or pull schemes
- Can be run out of any personnel grouping with minimal stress on your offensive line

# Consistency for the Offensive Line

- Increases confidence (put it in front of us and we will pound the rock!)
- We have gotten good at teaching, and our players even better at executing, the scheme
- With our success, teams have thrown a ton of different fronts and movements at us
- The zone has given us a chance to get back to the LOS (worst case scenario)
- The zone has given us huge plays against junk defenses (best case scenario)



# Defensive Reactions

- A lot of 2-technique defensive tackles in four-man fronts
- Setting the defensive strength to the H (Under front)
- Backside contain player = dive & backside overhang = QB
- 4i technique defensive ends in three-man fronts
- “Junk” defenses that we didn’t prepare for during the week

# Zone Principles

- Continuation of the previous clinic presentation
- I will use some zone specific terminology in this presentation
- Basics of our scheme first then some adjustments and tags we have used
- I am happy to share more about what we do
- Contact information at the end

# Offensive Line & Zone

- Covered & Uncovered rules
- Footwork
- Hand and facemask aiming points
- “Know where the ball wants to go” versus defensive structures
- Work together as long as you can
- “Distort the gap” by making it move vertically and horizontally



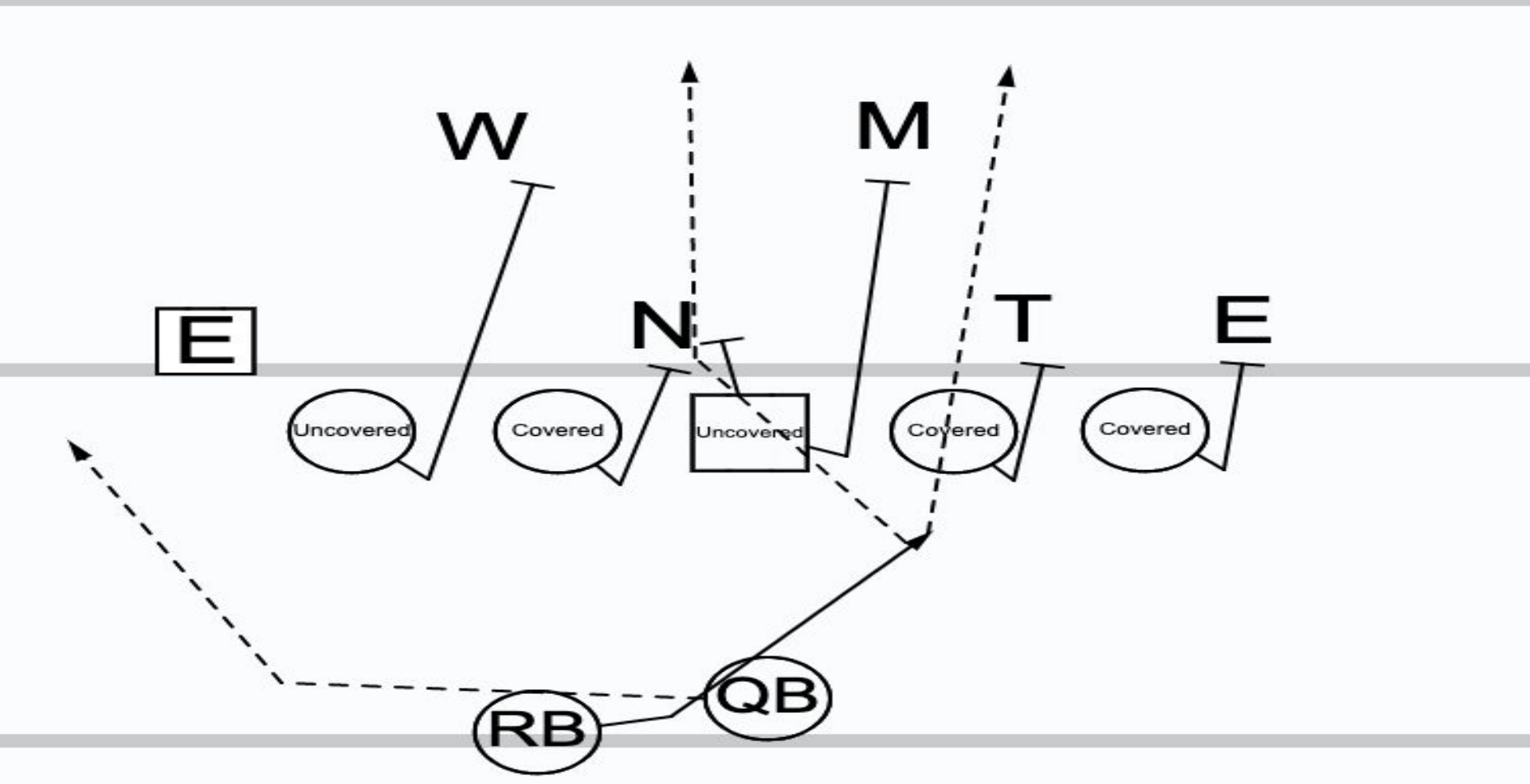
# Halfback & Zone

- Under center (been there, done that, still do some of it)
- Pistol (a little bit, but not great at teaching it yet)
- Offset gun (has been our bread and butter)
  - \*Alignment (H toes even with Q heels; crotch on outside leg of BSG)
  - \*Footwork (open step to inside leg of PST)
  - \*Mesh (large pocket, don't grab at the football)
  - \*Eyes on first DL play side of the Center
  - \*"Bang or Bend" & "Slow to, fast through"

# Quarterback & Zone

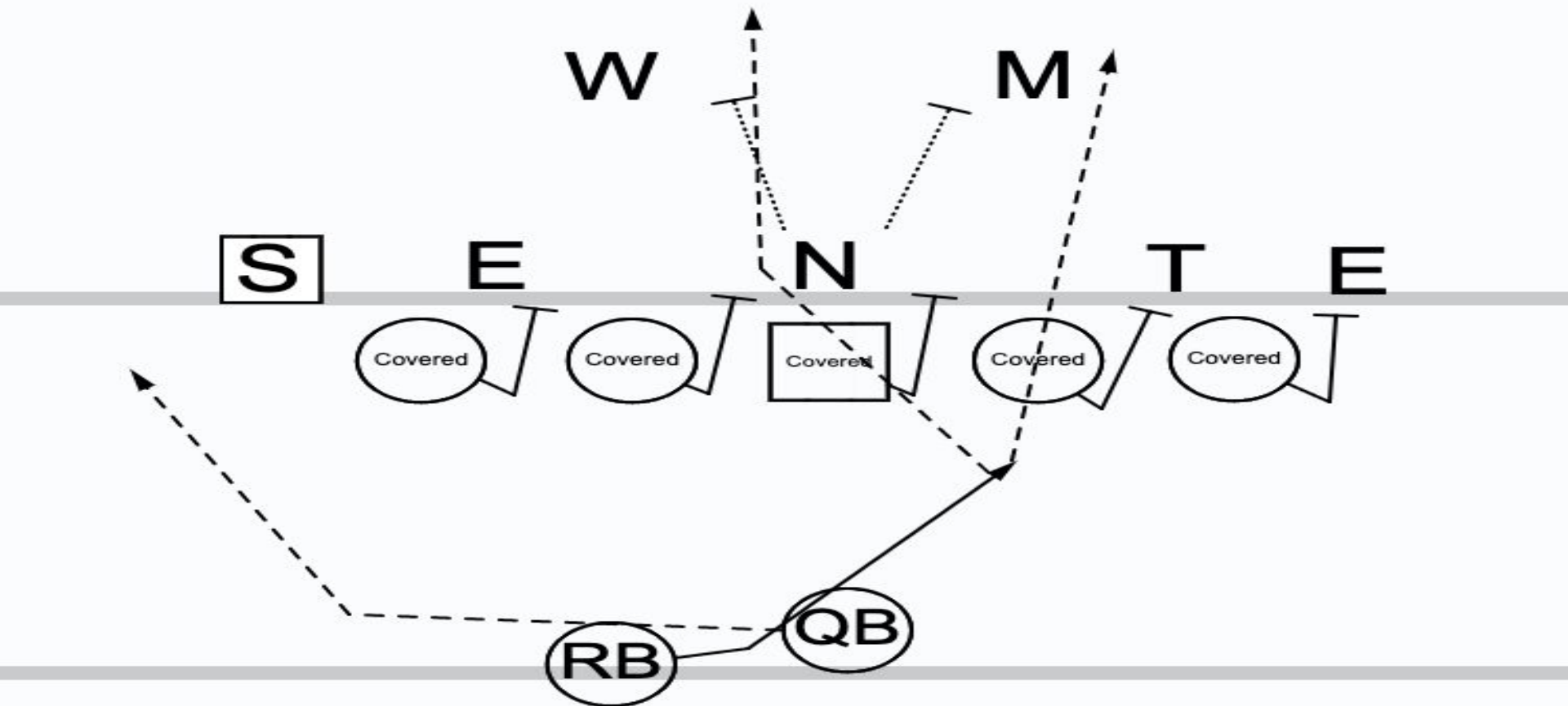
- Under center (been there, done that, still do some of it)
- Pistol (a little bit, but not great at teaching it yet)
- Offset gun (has been our bread and butter)
  - \*Alignment (heels 5 yards behind the center)
  - \*Footwork (slight negative step with backside foot)
  - \*Mesh (give or pull, reps)
  - \*Eyes on backside contain player (shoulders square = give & shoulders turned = pull)
  - \*Give = carry out a fake every time
  - \*Pull = get us back to the LOS

## Zone vs. 4-2 Box

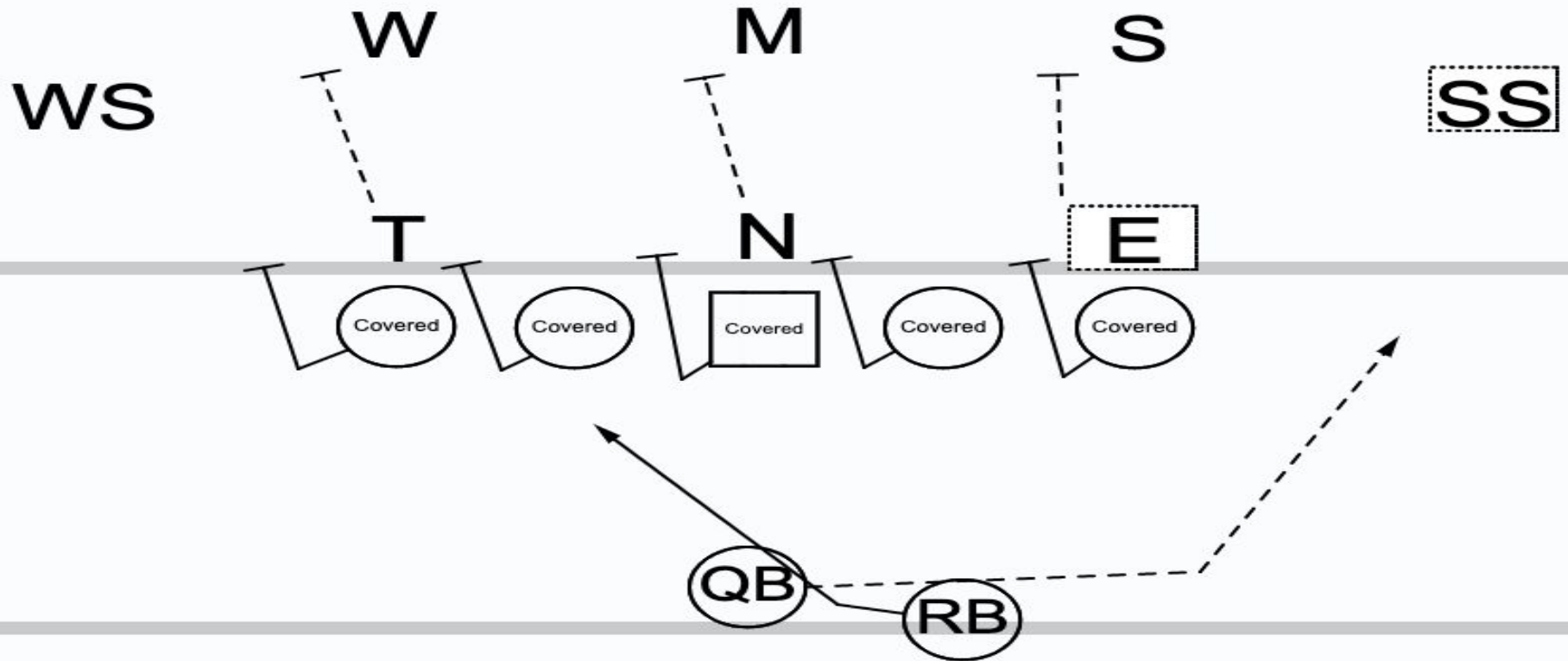




## Zone vs. 5-2 Box



# Zone vs. Okie Stack



# Adjustments & Tags

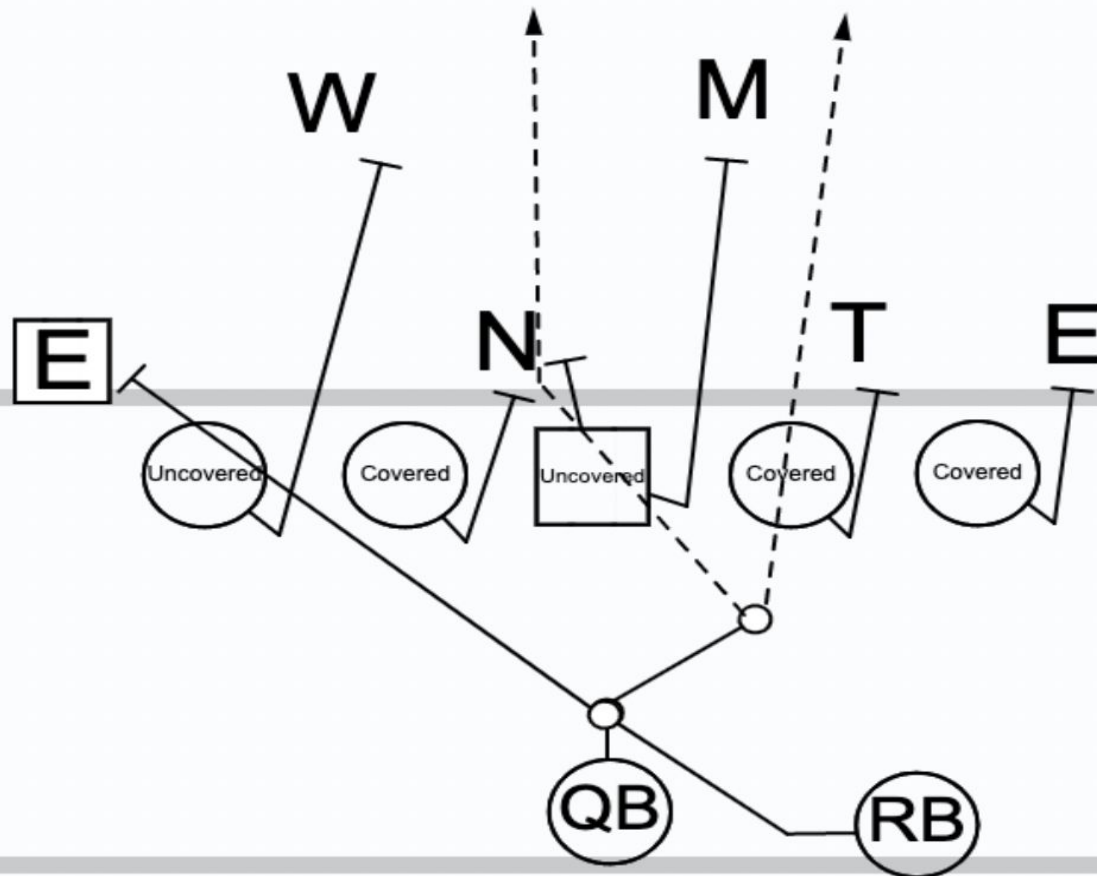
- Adjustments & Tags that have helped us...
- Q
- Back
- Bob
- Boss
- Bash
- Mid



# Adjustments & Tags

- Q
- Who has a change in responsibility?
  - \*QB & H
- Why this tag?
  - \*Teams who want to set their best B gap defender to the H
- What new teaching is involved?
  - \*H needs to learn the angle and aiming point of his block on the backside contain player
  - \*QB needs to learn the path and tempo of the zone (slow to, fast through)

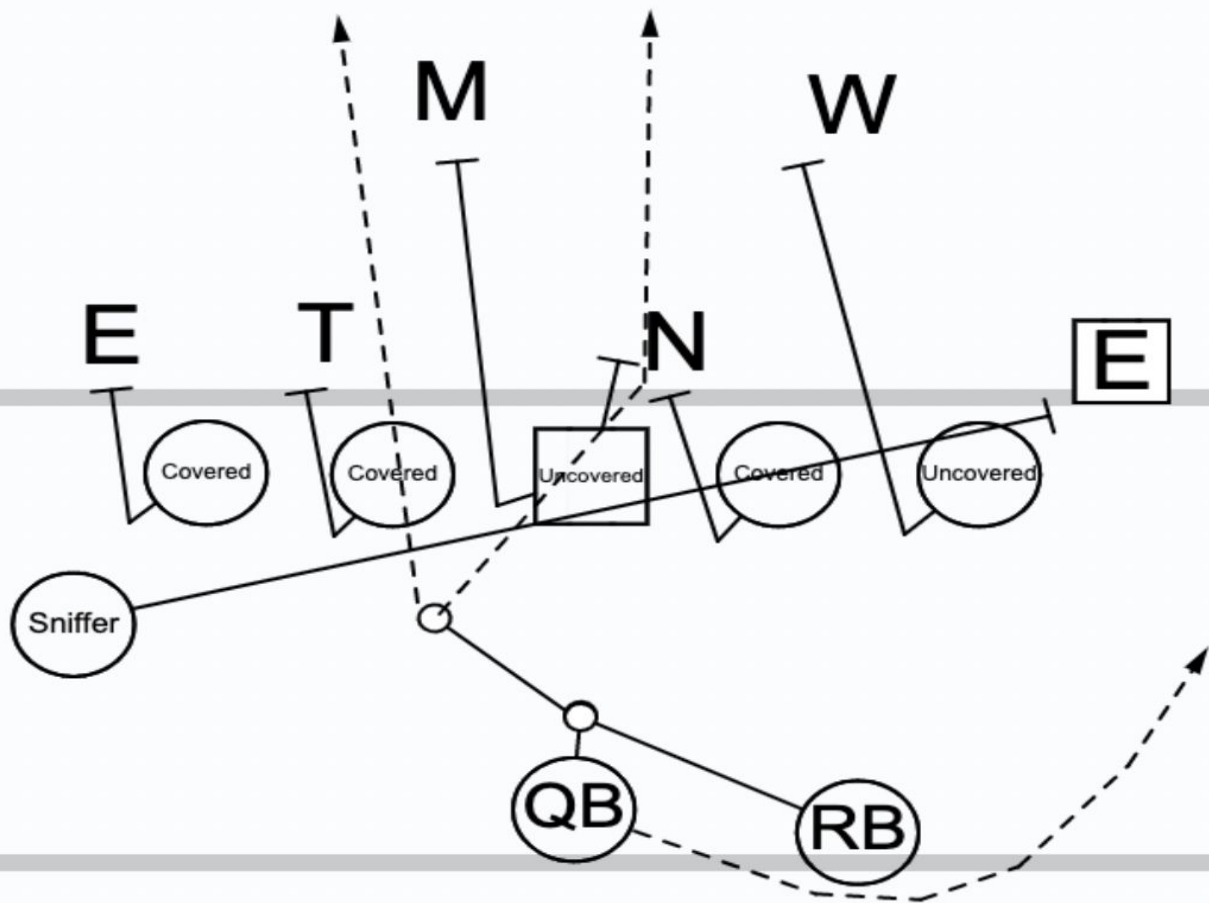
Q = Quarterback is primary ball carrier



# Adjustments & Tags

- Back
- Who has a change in responsibility?
  - \*"Sniffer"
- Why this tag?
  - \*To add another look to our zone scheme and to give the QB a break from having to read a defender
  - \*Can come from anywhere in the formation; can use across formation motion, short motion, split zone action(may cloud the box for your linemen)
- What new teaching is involved?
  - \*"Sniffer" needs to learn the angle and aiming point of his block on the backside contain player. He also needs to understand snap count, timing of QB & H mesh so he doesn't get in the way.

Back = "Sniffer" is blocking back on the backside contain player

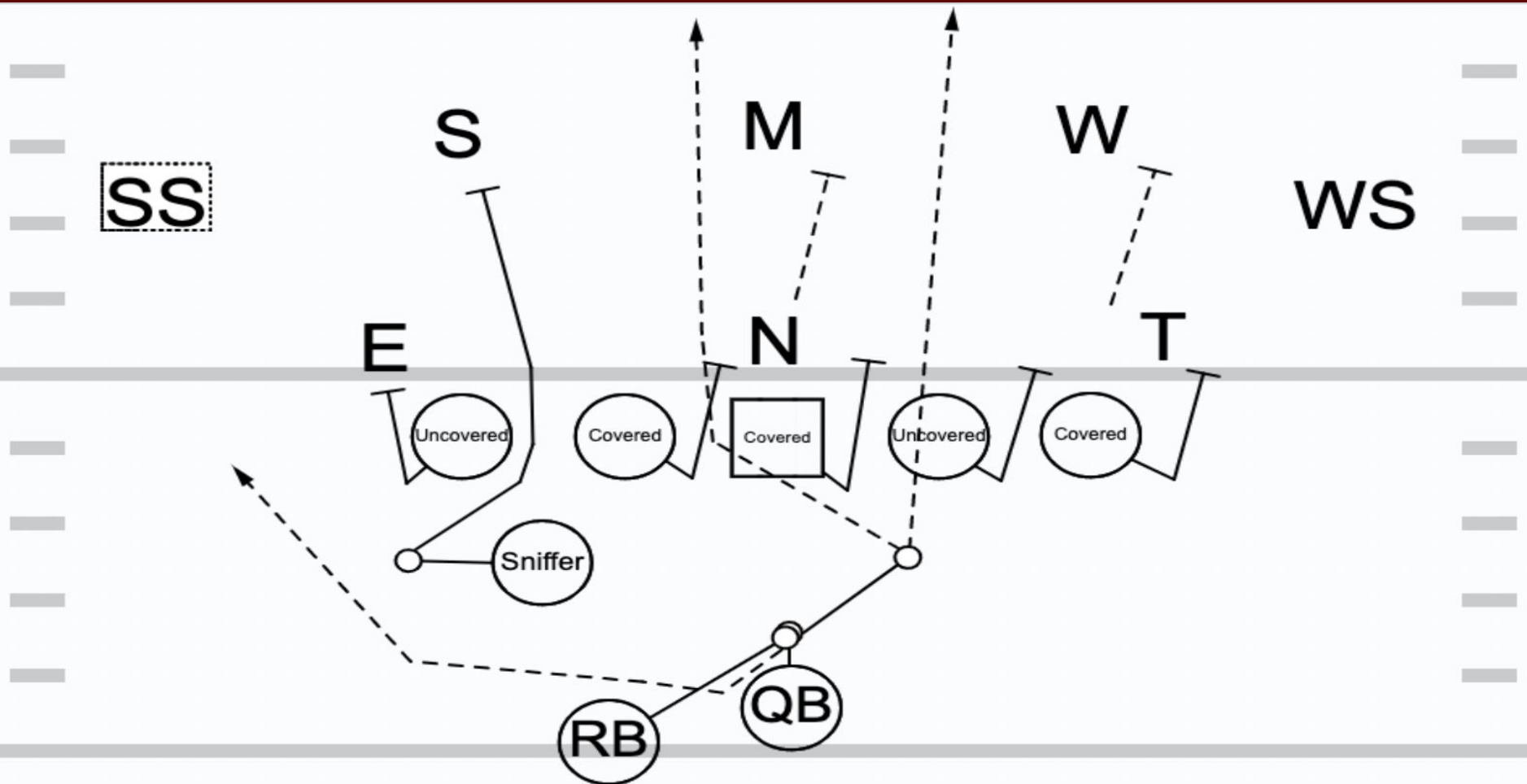




# Adjustments & Tags

- Bob
- Who has a change in responsibility?
  - \*"Sniffer"
- Why this tag?
  - \*Zone scheme with an isolation look
  - \*Can get very creative with different insert points and blocking responsibilities for the "Sniffer"
  - \*We like this against Okie defenses
- What new teaching is involved?
  - \*"Sniffer" needs to learn assignment and insert point ("find green grass").
  - \*May change the base rules for your linemen (be careful here)

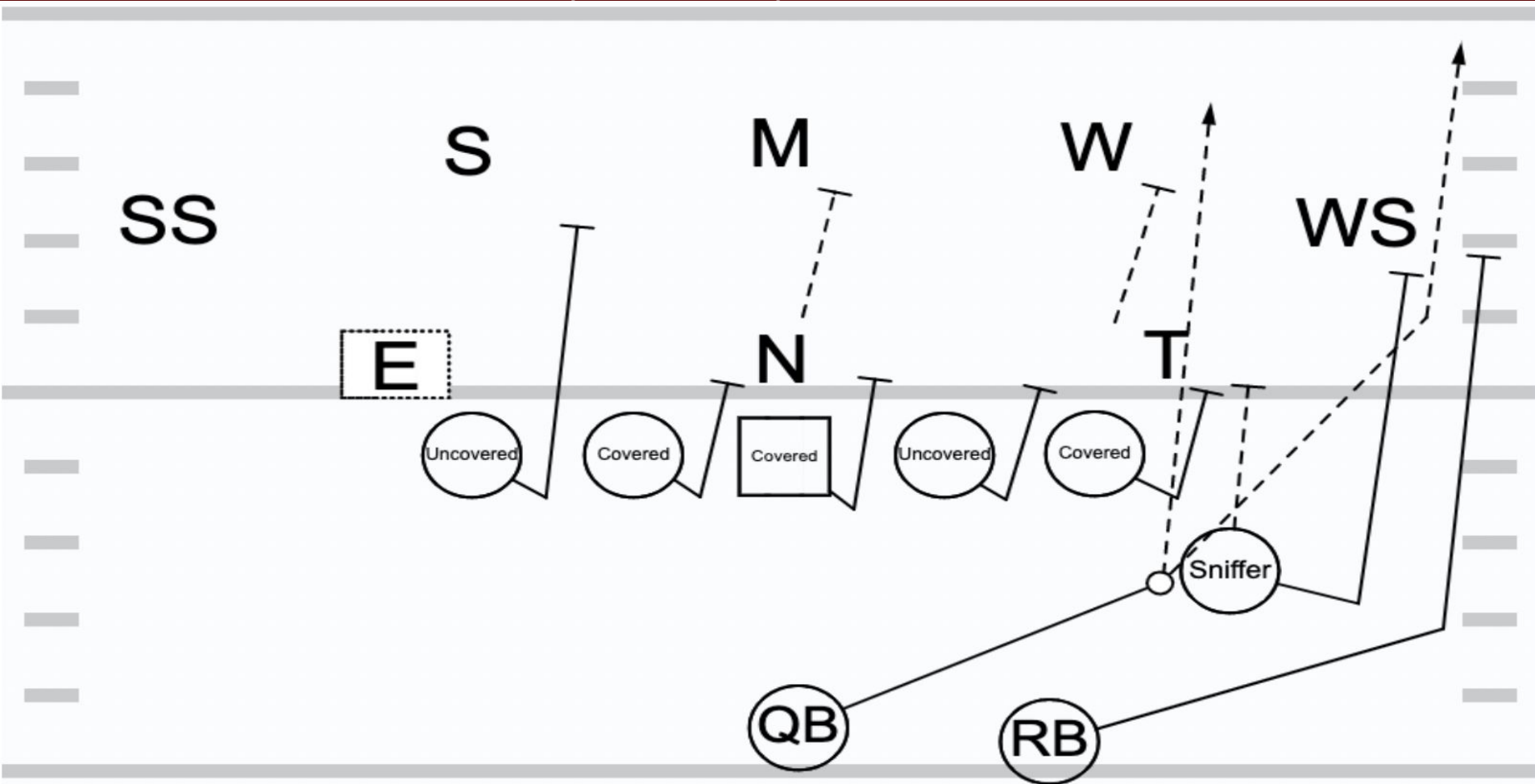
# Bob = Box insert for "Sniffer"



# Adjustments & Tags

- Boss
- Who has a change in responsibility?
  - \*"Sniffer"
- Why this tag?
  - \*Outside/Wide Zone – we like to use Q here as well
  - \*Secure the play side force player
  - \*We like to mess around with this (folds, cracks, etc.)
- What new teaching is involved?
  - \*"Sniffer" needs to learn the angle and aiming point of his block on the force player. We will also have him help secure the block on the play side contain player
  - \*May change the base rules for your linemen (be careful here)

# Boss = Play side alley insert for "Sniffer"



# Adjustments & Tags

- Bash
- Who has a change in responsibility?
  - \*"Sniffer"
- Why this tag?
  - \*We want the QB to pull the ball
  - \*Take advantage of contain player dive/overhang QB defensive schemes
- What new teaching is involved?
  - \*"Sniffer" has to be able to block in space, give the QB a two-way go
  - \*Further diversify with a pitch-man

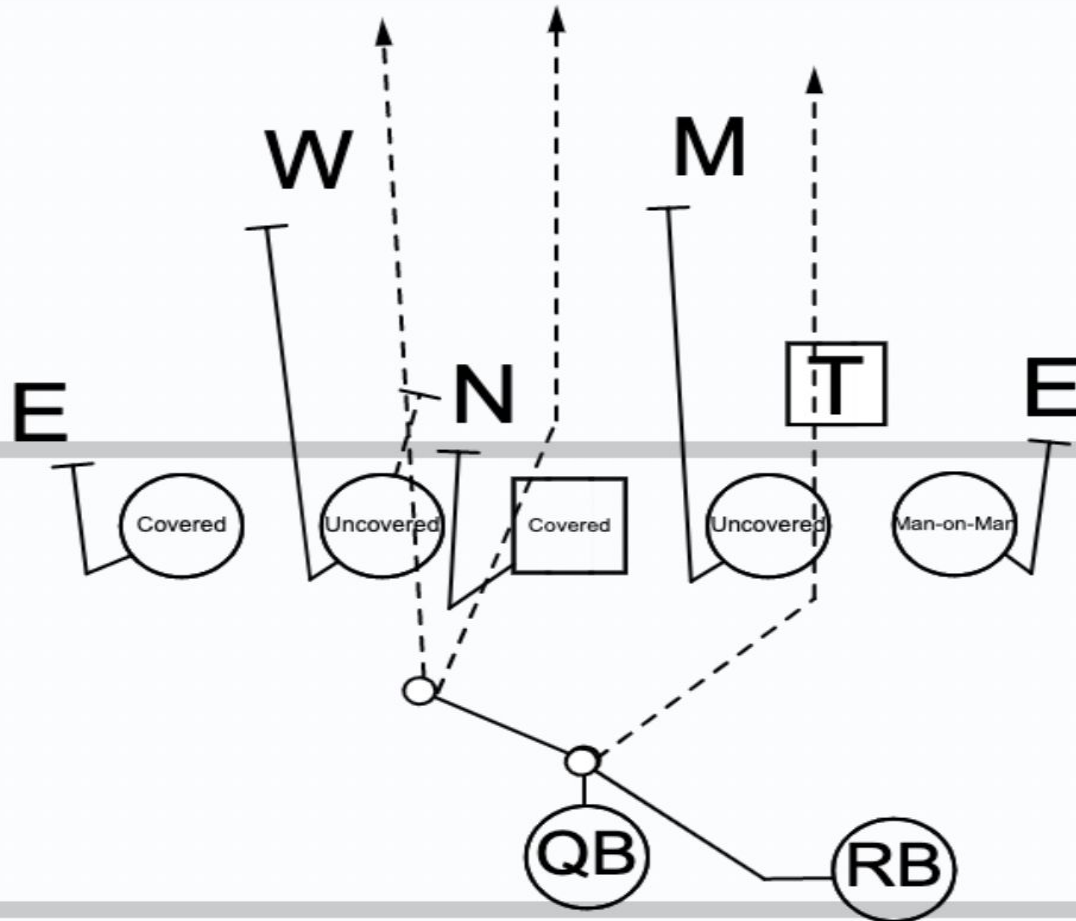




# Adjustments & Tags

- Mid
- Who has a change in responsibility?
  - \*QB has to read backside B gap player; pull means he inserts in the vacated B gap
- Why this tag?
  - \*Teams who want to set their best B gap defender to the H
- What new teaching is involved?
  - \*BST blocks the DE man-on-man
  - \*BSG must rip through backside B gap defender
  - \*QB read and pull path

Mid = QB will read backside B gap defender



# Final Thoughts

- We will find a way to run the football
- Our method is the zone
- Creates consistency for our players
- Use the KISS theory early
- Add wrinkles, such as shared here, as your kids grow in confidence
- Be ready to adjust and have answers
- Please let me know if I can help you

# FOOTBALL

Thank You

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PHOTOGRAPHY