



Zone Run Game Foundation

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Head Football Coach

Grundy Center (Iowa) High School

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?

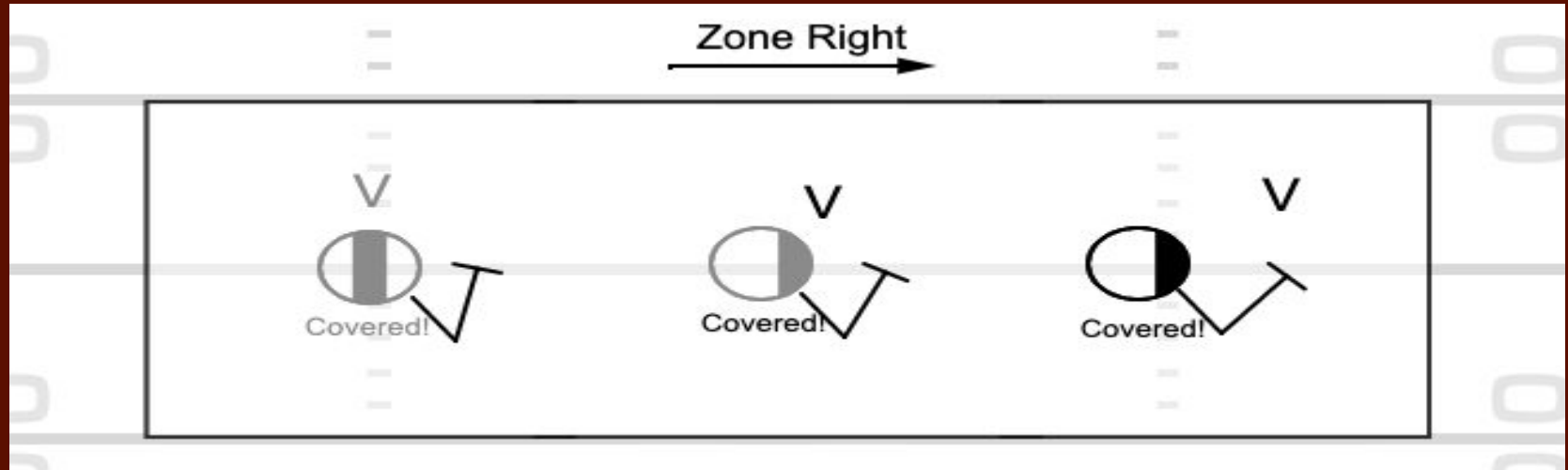
- Better players certainly help
- All-state caliber players on the offensive line, quarterback, and halfback
- Undersized linemen?
- You can still pull it off (make the defense respect it) with constant repetition of footwork and combinations
- Easier to carry over from week to week than man schemes or pull schemes

Inside Zone/Zone Read – Offensive Line

- All things considered, I want to keep things as consistent as possible for these guys
- 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)

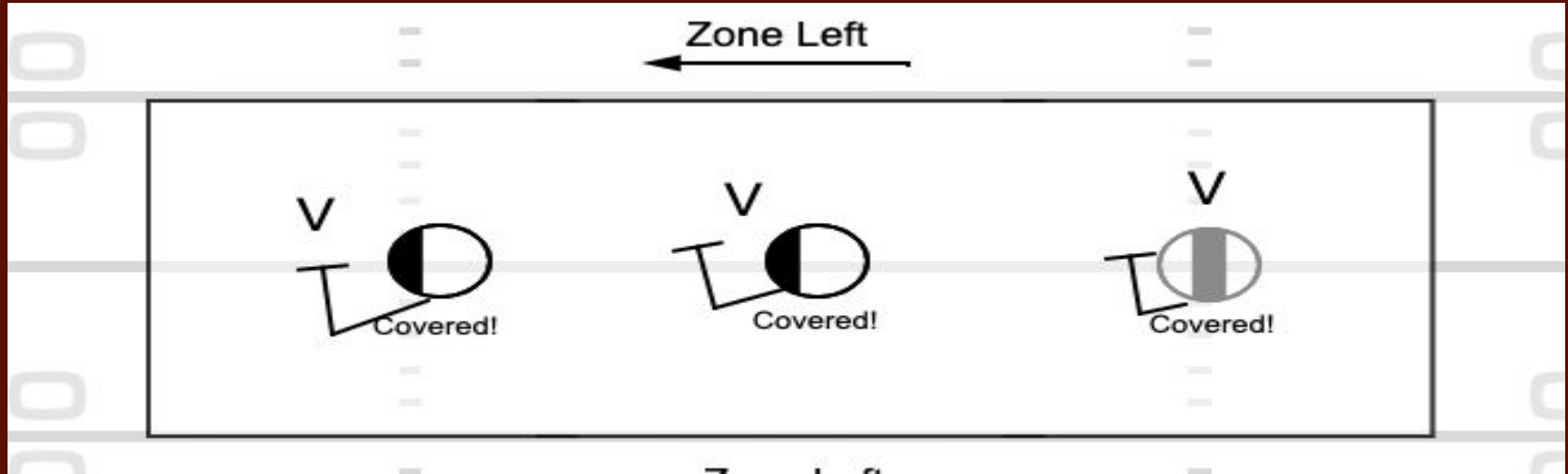
Offensive Line – Covered & Uncovered Rules

- “My nose to next man’s nose play side”
- Covered...



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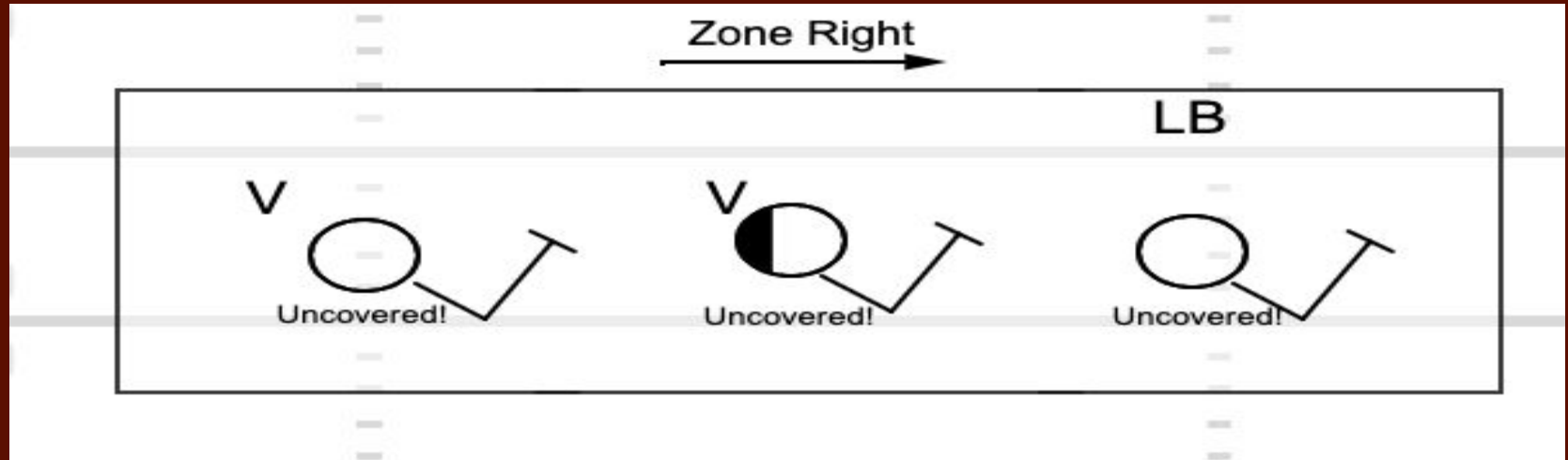


Offensive Line – Covered & Uncovered Rules

- “My nose to next man’s nose play side”
- Covered...
- “Zone reach and undertake”
 - *Q-step (play side foot) for depth and width to set up power step (back side foot) to the crotch
 - *Vertical & horizontal movement
 - *Facemask inside
 - *“Distort the gap”
 - *“Make him wrong”

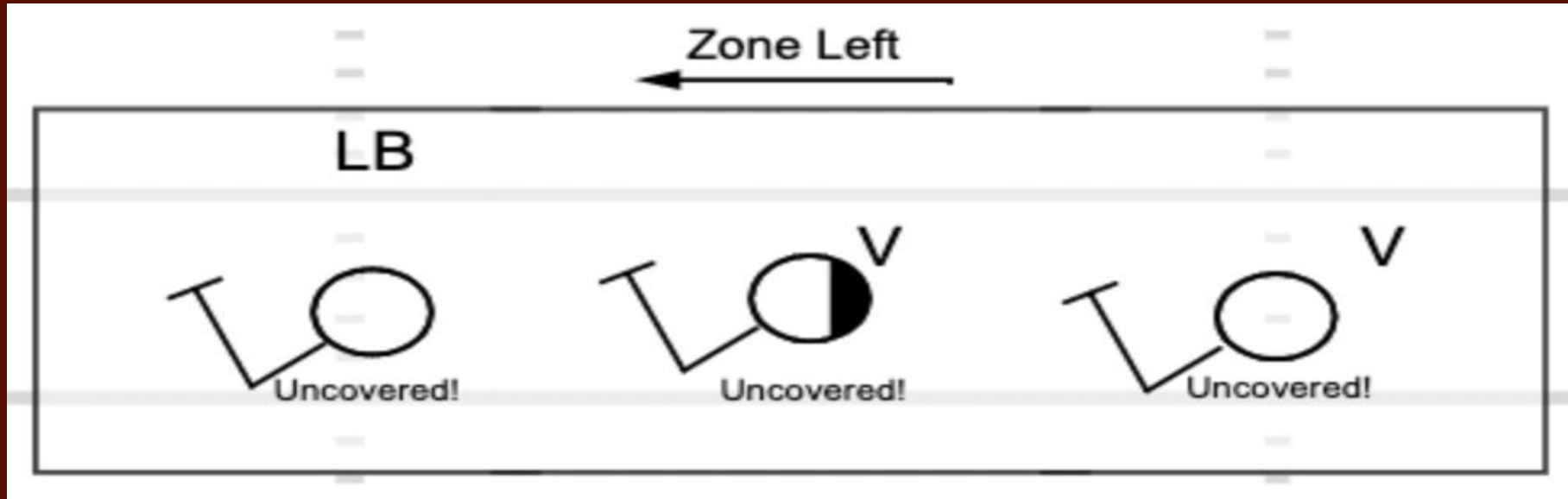
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Offensive Line – Covered & Uncovered Rules

- “My nose to next man’s nose play side”
- Uncovered...
- “Zone reach your gap and climb”
 - *Q step with play side foot
 - *Climb through people; help your covered buddy
 - *”Don’t sprint to the 2nd level...slow to, fast through”
 - *”Uncovered pre-snap will probably mean covered post-snap”

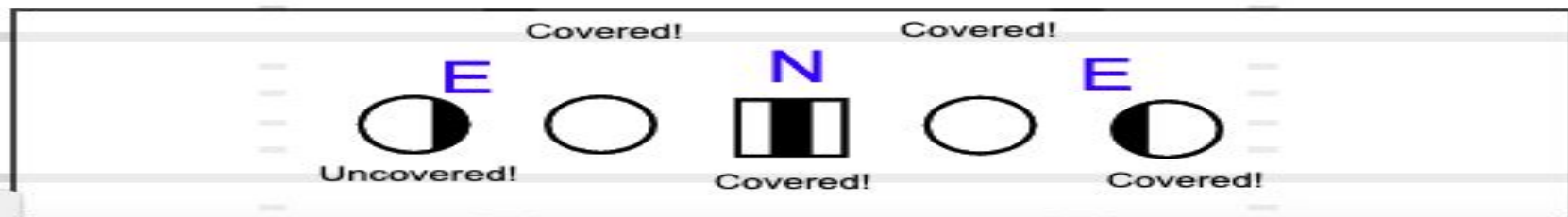
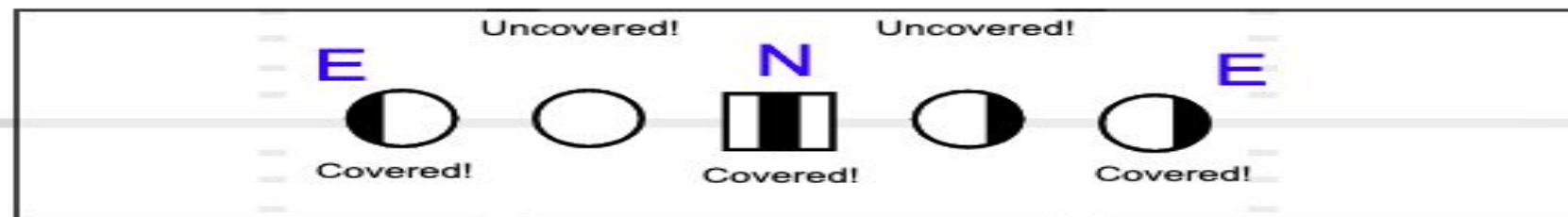
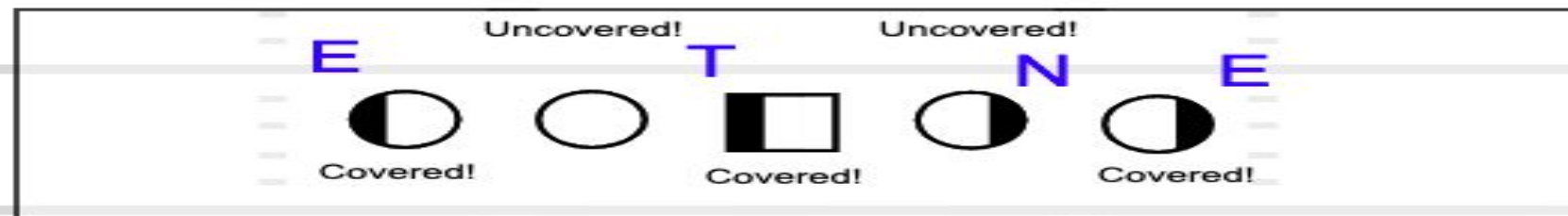
Offensive Line – Covered & Uncovered Rules

- “My nose to next man’s nose play side”
- Uncovered...
- “Zone reach your gap and climb”
 - * Make the linebacker wrong with your angle
 - * 12:30 to 1 o’clock when climbing right
 - * 11:30 to 11 o’clock when climbing left
 - * Never chase a linebacker who wants to get over the top!

Zone Right!



Zone Left!



Practice

- Footwork (Q step & Power step)
- Hand placement (leverage, advantage, disadvantage)
- Facemask placement (advantage, disadvantage)
- Covered becomes uncovered (don't chase)
- Uncovered becomes covered (don't be in a hurry)
- Center snap, under center or gun/pistol (footwork, O technique, backside help)
- 1 on 1, 2 on 1, 2 on 2, 2 on 3

Halfback

- We are predominantly in offset gun.
- Sometimes under center.
- Don't overcoach the back!
- Toes at quarterbacks heels.
- Crotch is lined up with outside leg of backside guard.
- Don't move until the ball is in the quarterback's hands.
- Open with play side foot, toes pointed to the inside leg of the play side tackle.

Halfback

- Crossover to the mesh point.
- Inside arm up, outside arm down.
- Feel the give. Don't take the ball from the quarterback.
- Read is the first defensive lineman play side of the center.
- "Bang" or "Bend" play
 - *"Bang" = if we are getting movement on the read key
 - *"Bend" = stalemate with read key, great weakside movement, weakside over pursuit

Halfback

- “Slow to, fast through”
- “Take a picture”
- “Don’t predetermine the bend”
- “Should look like synchronized swimming”

Quarterback

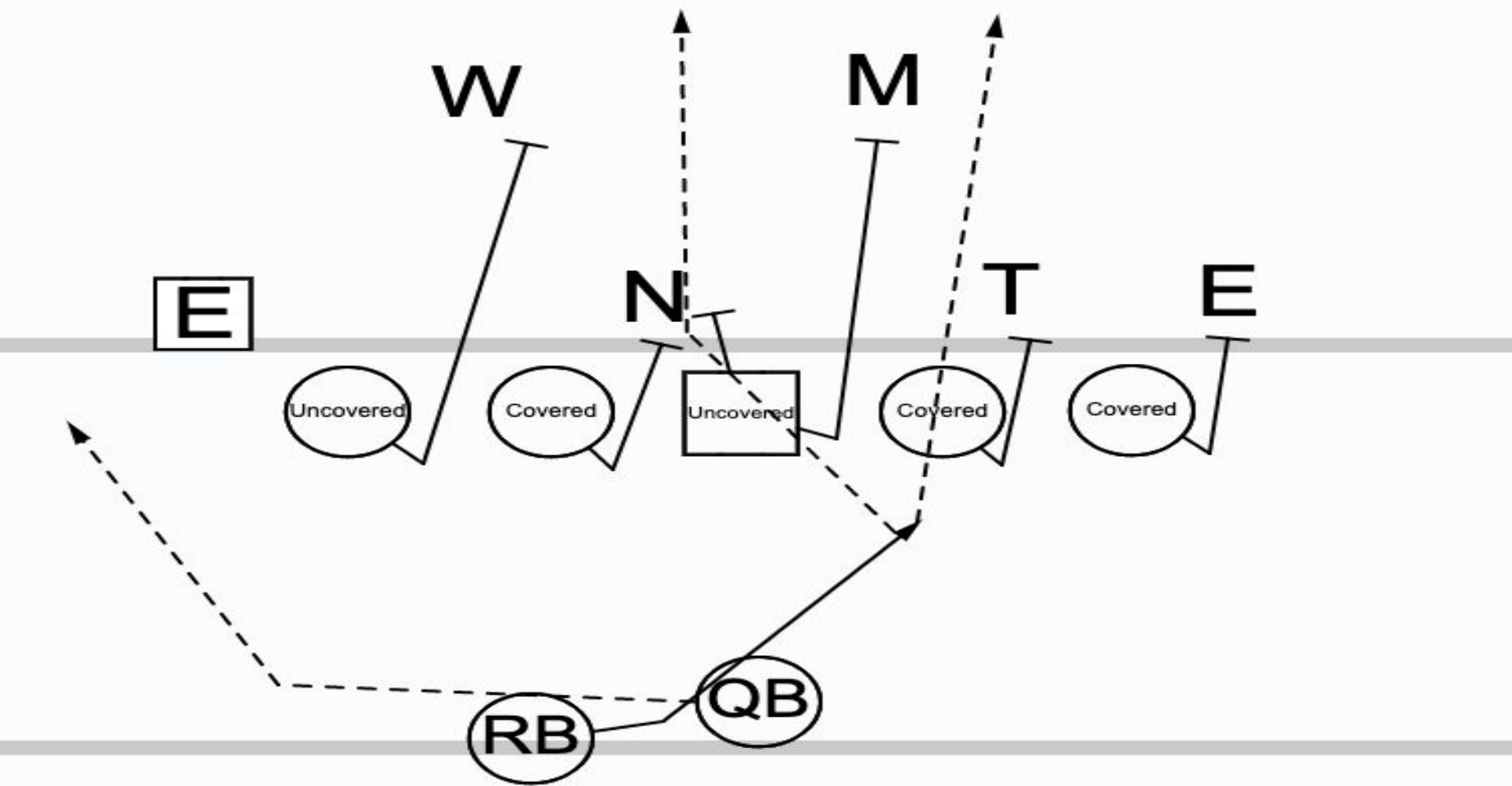
- Coached very athletic kids (gun, zone read)
- Coached some not as athletic kids (under center, sniffer, split zone)
- Zone read... "when in doubt, give it!"
- Backside contain player (don't get in the habit of saying the defensive end) is "the quarterback's man" or who we are reading for give/pull.
 - *Don't waste time blocking a DUDE. Read him.
- Shoulders square = give
- Shoulders turn = pull

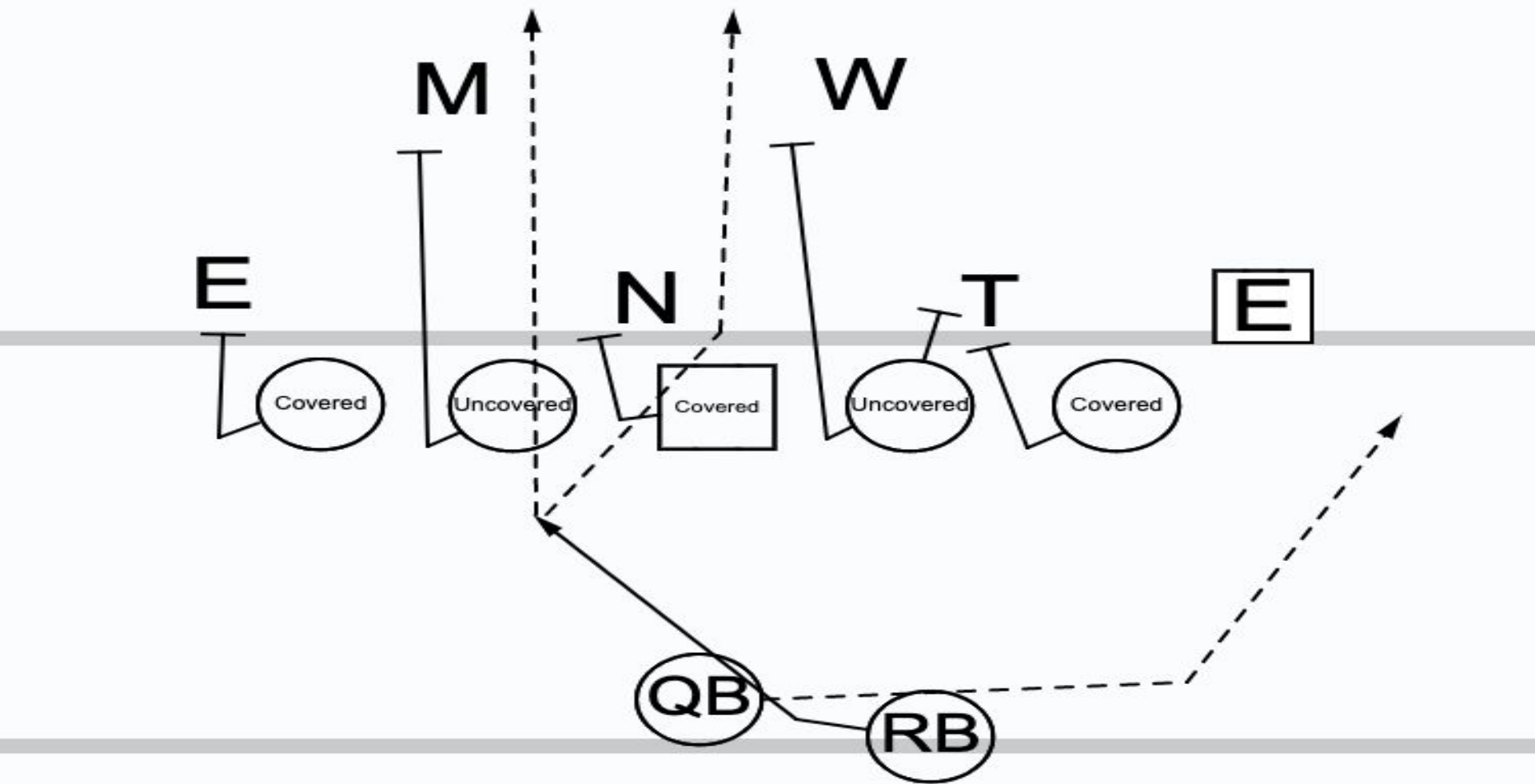
Quarterback

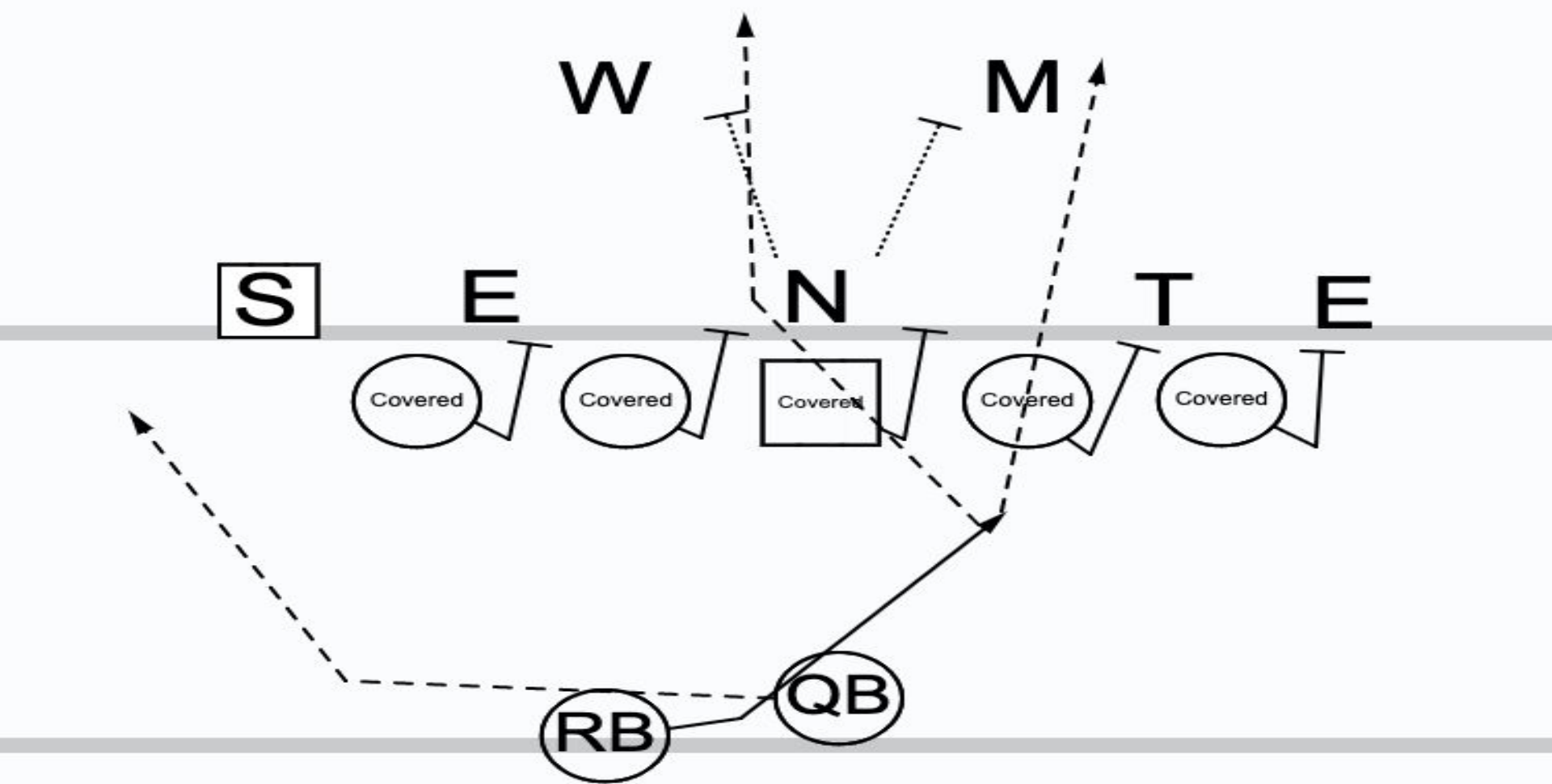
- Pull it a couple of times, just to keep the defense honest.
- If you make them pay for being too aggressive...
 - *Other defenders will start to play with an eye on the QB
 - *The structure will start to change
 - *Defenders will start breaking rules
 - *Gap responsibilities get jacked up
 - *YOU GOT 'EM!

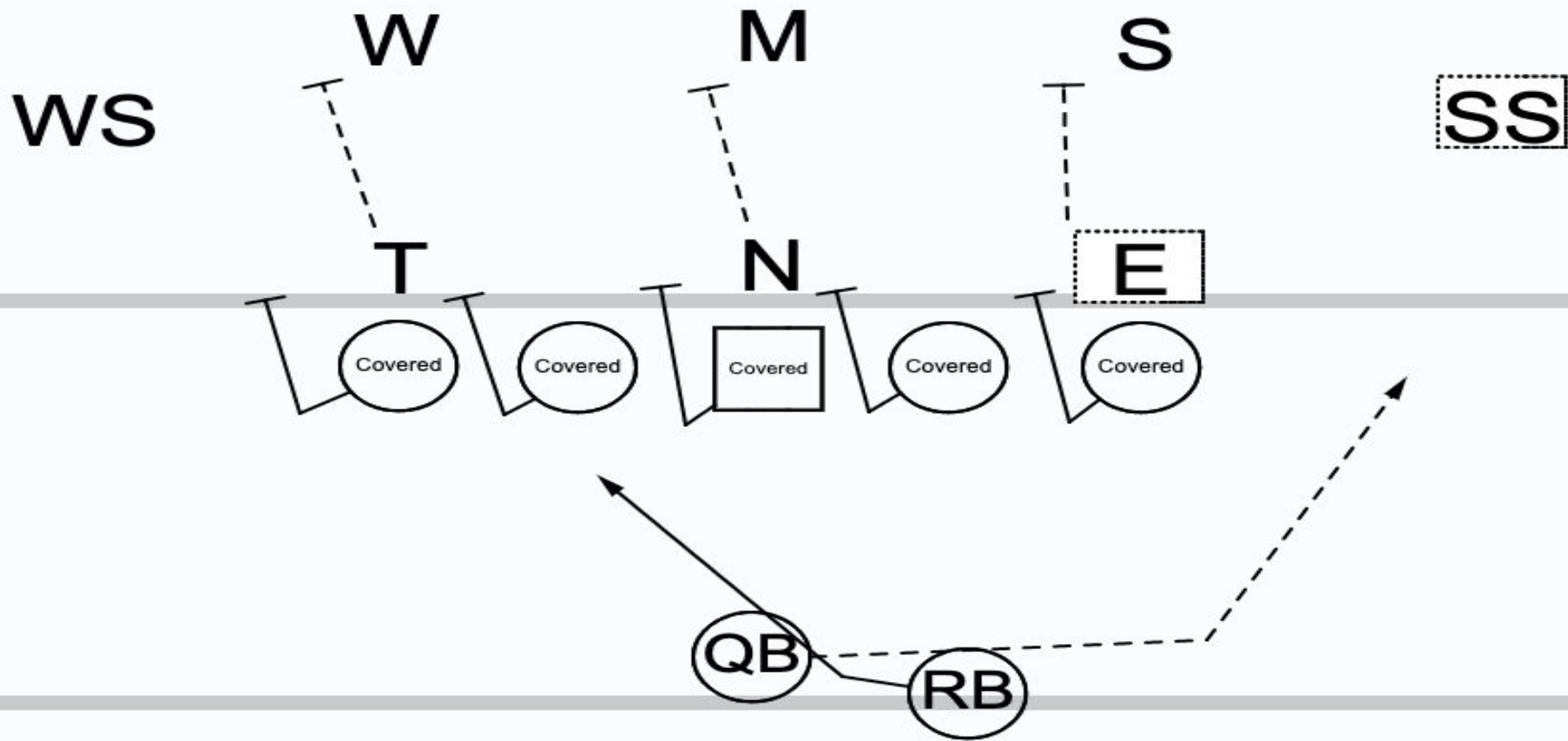
Perimeter Players

- We don't ask them to block in the inside run game.
- Use your creativity, but don't try to pencil whip your kids.









Potential Issues

- Teams have gotten really creative against us
- Be ready to have answers to some of the following:
 - *Even defensive line techniques
 - *Contain player crash to halfback, overhang or backside linebacker run to quarterback
 - *Defense setting strength to or away from halfback
 - *7-man box versus spread formations

Potential Issues

- Undersized linemen?
 - * Are they smart kids?
 - * Do you have at least one smart kid?
 - * Can they understand where the ball wants to go against defensive structures?
 - * Can you get them to cover up three defensive linemen?
 - * Can you use motion, split flow, designed QB runs, etc. to help them out?

FOOTBALL

Thank You

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PHOTOGRAPHY