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## GENERAL FORMATION & PLAY SETUP COACHING NOTES:

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**BASE FORMATION:** This play can be effectively run from any formation, though a balanced formation (2 TE or a FB offset weak) is best for the full cutback effect (it allows the backside TE or FB to really seal the BS DE/OLB) and provides a balanced formation for the passing game. Running inside zone from a straight I formation can allow too much penetration by the BS DE/OLB as the FB has much more ground to cover before engaging him on the block.

**MOTION:** By using WR motion to both lead playside on the EMLOS and seal backside on the EMLOS, we can overload one side of the formation and also setup the toss, power and pass to the flat to the weak side of the formation. This will also enable a team to avoid formation tendencies as regards running to or away from strength (as determined by TE's alignment)

**COMPLIMENTARY PLAY SETUP:** The footwork is the same for the counter to the opposite side and is great play action for the backside play action bootleg, especially the FB or Z pass to the flat (after their backside seal fake off the zone away play action).

## INSIDE ZONE: BALL HANDLING COACHING POINTS

**GENERAL NOTES:** Inside Zone is designed to be a no loss play. If the back hits the hole with conviction, the number of double teams on the LOS should result in vertical running lanes and a consistent running game. Depending on the defensive stunts, the inside zone will often end up being a cut-back play.

**QB:** Open playside, either 5 (right) or 7 (left) o'clock depending on which direction inside zone is going. After handoff, run **FULL SPEED** bootleg action away from direction of zone. This keeper fake will help hold the BS DE and/or Safety, and set up our bootleg play action pass game.

**TB:** Take PSL (pre-snap look) to locate "bubble" (gap which is NOT defended by a DLM...down lineman) in the defensive front.

**1st step** is flat & lateral with playside foot. **2nd step** must crossover & slightly gain ground. **3rd step** squares you up to start upfield. Aiming point depends on where "bubble" is located (which gap is defended by LB or S). If bubble is over OG aim for inside hip of OT. If bubble is over OT or C, aim for outside hip of OG. -

**TB READS:** Read the block on the 1st down linemen OUTSIDE the center and make your cut on THEIR side of the L.O.S. . If his helmet goes inside, cram the ball upfield just outside of him. If his helmet goes outside, you cut the ball upfield inside of him. If there is daylight in the B gap – cram the B gap – otherwise, if DLM goes out you cut inside (& vice versa).

**TB...One Cut Rule:** You are only allowed to make one cut and then you **MUST** get upfield at full speed. Do **NOT** cut until you have reached the LOS and do NOT **"dance"** in the hole. By not making your cut until you replace the heels of the offensive lineman, you force the LB'ers to commit to a gap and the offensive lineman can seal them away from the cutback lane.

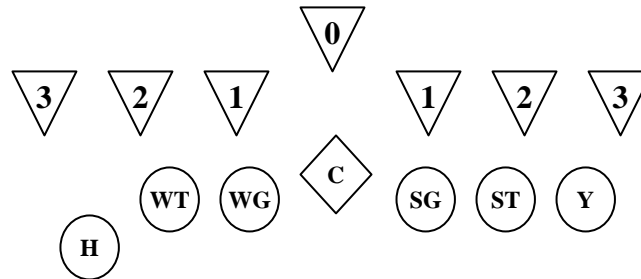
Always press (attack) the B gap if there is any daylight (even inches). If B gap is closed, look for cutback to backside, **but only make one cut !!**

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# INSIDE ZONE: OFFENSIVE LINE BLOCKING RULES

**1. DETERMINE YOUR ASSIGNMENT:** Zone blocking BEGINS with assigning everyone a MAN. (Many times in zone blocking everybody MAN blocks except Center & On Guard as in the example below-the old Tom Landry "PRO 4-3").

C responsibility # 0  
OG's responsibility # 1  
OT's responsibility # 2  
Y & H responsibility # 3



**2. DETERMINE WHETHER YOU ARE COVERED OR UNCOVERED:** (covered means a defender is on the LOS on any part of your body! If there is a question, clarify with blocking call)\_.

- If you are **UNCOVERED** – ZONE WITH YOUR TEAMMATE TO PLAYSIDE.
- If you are **COVERED**, look at your backside teammate
  - If backside teammate is **UNCOVERED**, zone with him (he will combo with you to LB)
  - If backside teammate is **COVERED**, man block (no help from him)

**In the example above, since Center is uncovered he ZONES with RG. Since RG is covered & inside teammate (Center) is uncovered by a DLM - he knows he will zone with Center.**

## IMPORTANCE OF PRESNAP LOOK AND UNDERSTANDING TECHNIQUE OF DEFENDER:

A CRUCIAL phase of teaching zone blocking is for the uncovered man to know the TECHNIQUE of the DLM on his covered playside teammate (covered man can use CALLS to indicate this).

EXAMPLE (I'm the RG & uncovered): If my P/S teammate has a man on his INSIDE SHOULDER - it is 90% certain that I will END up on him. If there is a man HEAD UP on him - it is 50% (or better) that I will END up on him. If there is a man on his OUTSIDE SHOULDER - odds are only about 10% that I might END up on him. (NOTE: "END UP" meaning that the other man comes off on LB).

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## INSIDE ZONE: OFFENSIVE LINE TECHNIQUE COACHING POINTS

**UNCOVERED O-LINEMAN:** (Responsibility is for inside half of down lineman over playside team mate). Take a lead step playside (roughly 45 degree angle) and catch up with your covered teammate. As you work through your playside gap, **READ THE NEAR KNEE** of the down lineman on him

- if the near knee comes towards you block his inside number & fit him up sliding in the direction he is going (keep eyes on Lb'er in case he comes inside)
- if near knee doesn't come towards you work up onto LB'er. 3 situations can occur (see COVERED MAN).

**COVERED MAN:** (Responsibility is for outside half of down lineman **IF** inside team mate is uncovered). 1<sup>st</sup> step is a lead step with your outside foot eyeballing outside number of down lineman on you – 2<sup>nd</sup> step with inside foot thru crotch of opponent. You must think man block and only go to Lber when wiped off by uncovered teammate. Three situations usually occur:

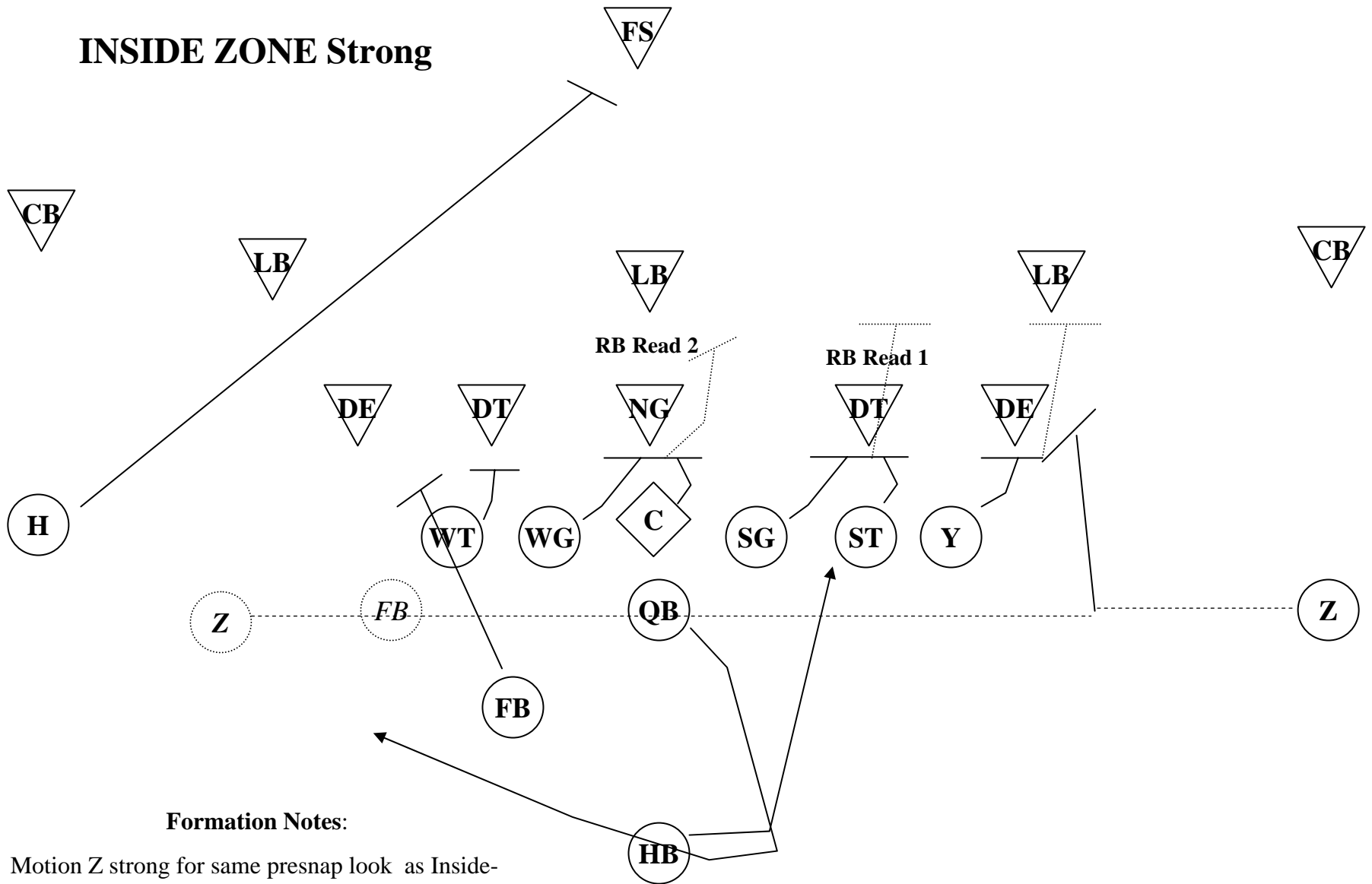
1. Down lineman is in an outside shade & stretches outside– you stay on him and uncovered teammate works through to LB'er.
2. Down lineman is head up & anchors on you – use double team technique driving him into Lber. Stay on him until wiped off by uncovered teammate then work straight up onto the LBber.
3. Down lineman head up or inside shade & slants inside – force him to flatten his slant & stay on him until wiped off by uncovered teammate then work straight up on Lber.

**LINEMEN NOT ZONING USE “DRIVE” (MAN) BLOCKS.** Don't worry as much about getting position on defender as you do about blow delivery and finishing your block. When coming off the ball, guide with your eyes (aim with your face), which will take you to the aiming point or landmark, the defender's playside #.

1. Your first step is a short directional step and you throw your arms out of the socket (wind up **MUCH** farther than “shooting from the holster”).
2. On the second step, your power foot must be on the ground and you arm thrust (100% blow delivery) with your fists into the defender's short ribs (below the pads), tucking your tail and “lifting him out of his socks”. **DON'T** put your face or shoulder in, because you will be overextended and your head will be down.

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# INSIDE ZONE Strong



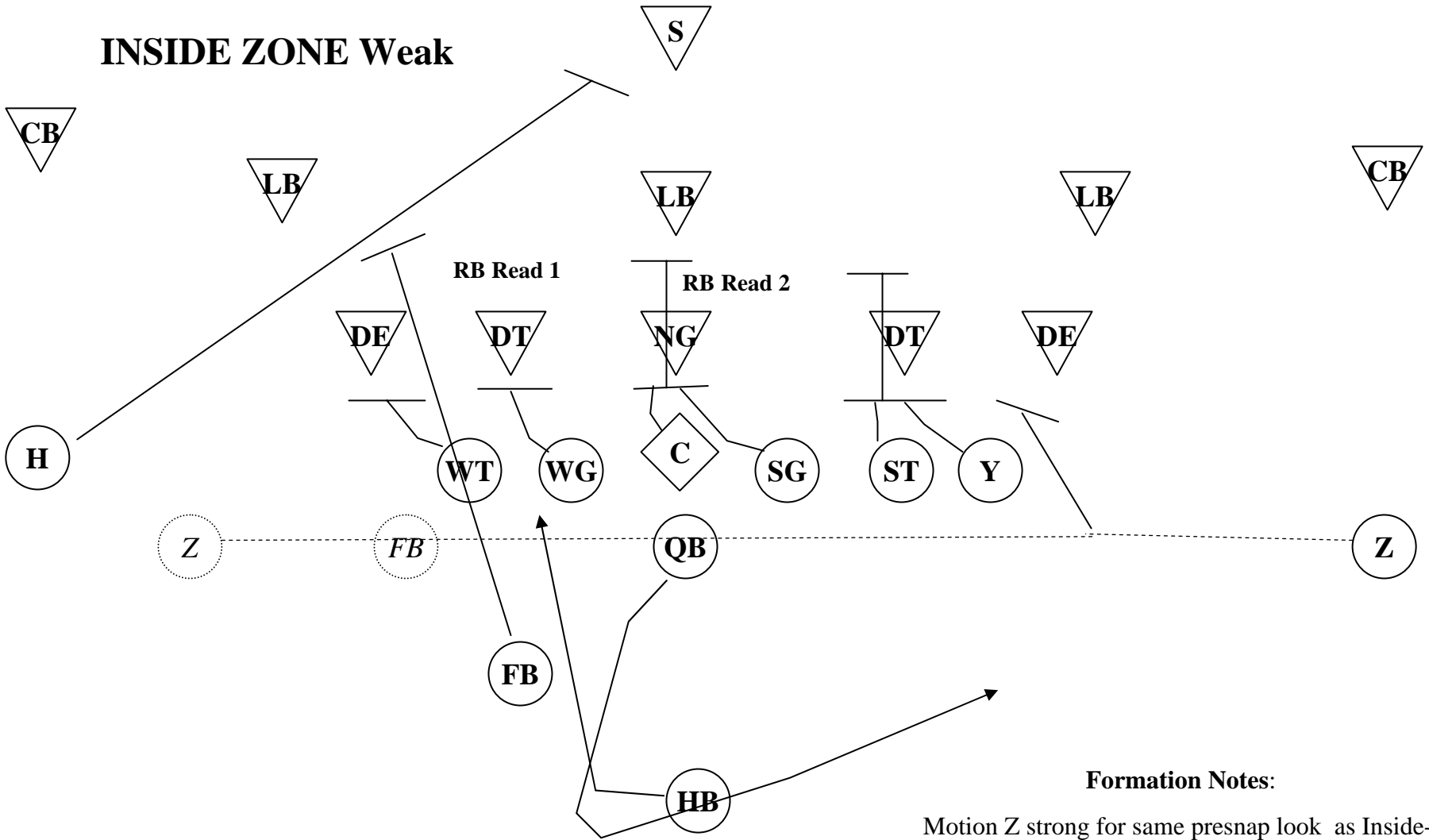
## Formation Notes:

Motion Z strong for same presnap look as Inside-Outside Zone Weak. Can also align FB to strong side and motion Z weak for the backside seal block.

Can align FB as weak side TE to get a better blocking angle on the backside seal block

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# INSIDE ZONE Weak



### Coaching Notes:

**FB** is responsible for blocking the “overhang” player (generally Will LB or Wk S) in B or C gaps (**NEVER** in A gap)

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### Formation Notes:

Motion Z strong for same presnap look as Inside-Outside Zone Strong to seal back side DE. Can also motion Z playside to overload point of attack.

Can align FB as weak side TE to get a combo block from PS DE to Will LB



## OUTSIDE ZONE: GENERAL COACHING POINTS

**Outside Zone** is designed to be an off-tackle no loss play. If the back hits the hole with conviction, the number of double teams on the LOS should result in vertical running lanes and a consistent positive yardage running game. Outside zone is not a “to the sidelines” sweep, it is designed to cut upfield at the LOS.

**QB:** Open playside (step to 4 or 8 o’clock) and intersect the RB’s path to the TE. Extend the ball to the RB, as this will sell the play action pass scheme we run off this play. After handoff, run **FULL SPEED** bootleg action away from direction of zone. This keeper fake will help hold the BS DE, and set up our bootleg play action pass game.

**TB:** Drop step and run straight for TE’s rear end.

**TB READS:** Read the helmet of the **2nd** down linemen OUTSIDE the center (shaded NG does **NOT** count). Do not read the OLB. If his helmet goes inside, turn the ball upfield just outside of him. If his helmet goes outside, switch read to next inside down lineman (usually a DT). If that helmet also goes outside, cut the ball back across his face. If it goes inside, cut the ball upfield between him and the lineman you first read.

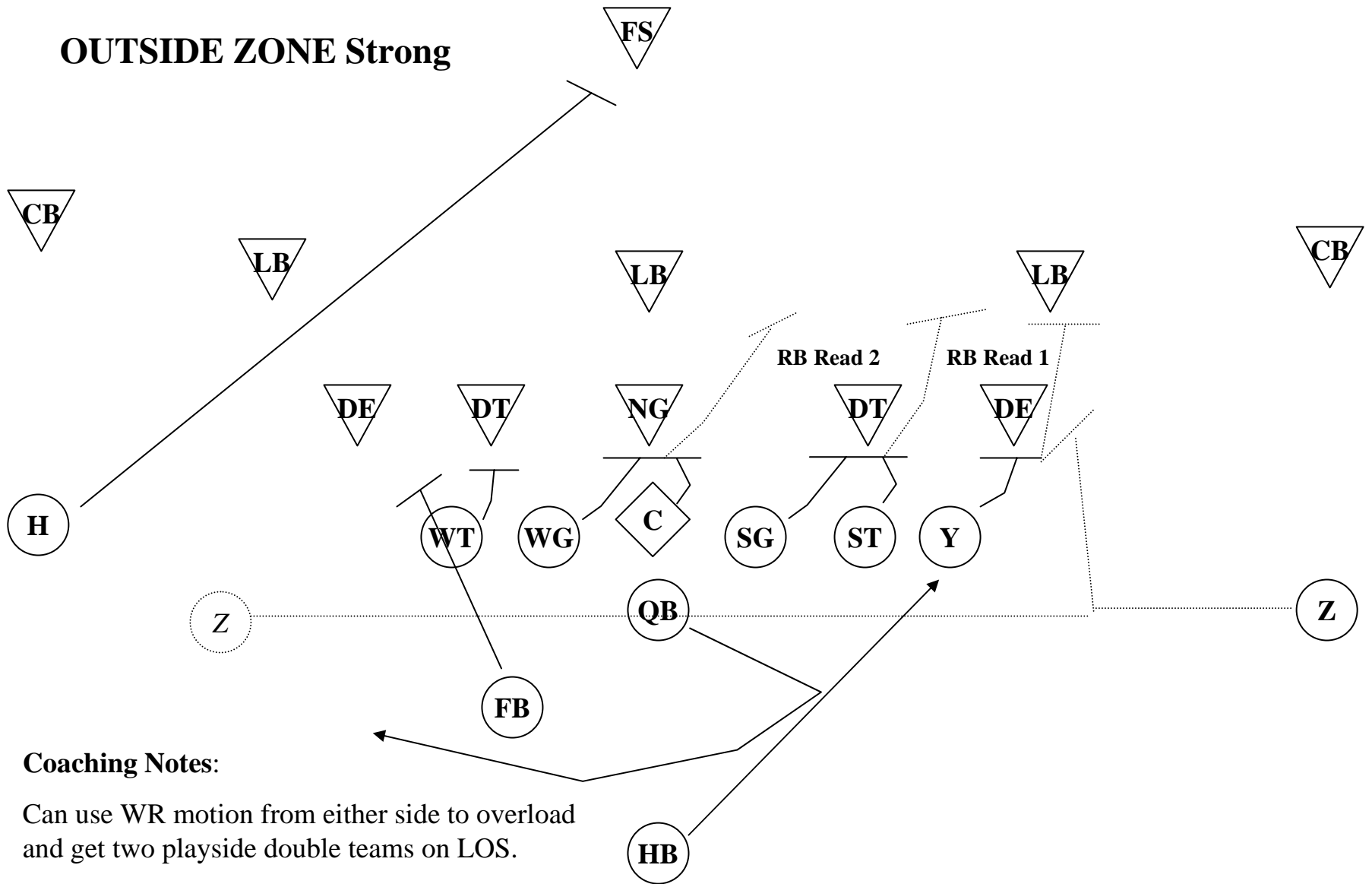
**TB...One Cut Rule:** You are only allowed to make one cut and then you **MUST** get upfield at full speed. Do **NOT** cut until you have reached the LOS and do NOT “**dance**” in the hole. **The best cut is NO cut !!**

**OFFENSIVE LINE RULES & TECHNIQUE:** Outside Zone is blocked with the same rules as Inside Zone. The primary differences in technique are:

1. Covered lineman **who has help** from an uncovered backside team mate will actually rip through the man covering him (essentially blocking him with the outside of his backside arm and his hip/back/shoulder) which forces his backside uncovered team mate to take over the block so the covered man can come off onto the LB to playside (“force the switch”)
2. Uncovered lineman will execute a wider reach block (almost a pull) in order to “piggyback” his covered playside team mate and will stay on the down defensive lineman covering his team mate so that blocker can come off onto the playside LB’er

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# OUTSIDE ZONE Strong



## Coaching Notes:

Can use WR motion from either side to overload and get two playside double teams on LOS.

Can align FB as weak side TE to give him a better blocking angle on back side DE (allows less penetration before engaging block), though this block is probably less essential than on inside zone.

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## INSIDE/OUTSIDE ZONE: MISCELLANEOUS NOTES: GAMEPLANNING

**INSIDE ZONE** = not as good vs. a gapping & penetrating defense

**OUTSIDE ZONE** = not as good vs a quick team that reads & flows well.

**THEREFORE** - feature Outside Zone in situation A), & INSIDE ZONE in situation B)!

### INSIDE ZONE TO "WIDE" SIDE VS "REDUCED" SIDE OF DEFENSE

- WIDE** side of defense = "B" gap defended by a LB
- REDUCED** side of defense = "B" gap defended by DLM (down lineman)

Through scouting reports, identify which will be the "wide" side of the defense and which will be the "reduced" side ( most teams are "wide" on the split end side & "reduced" on the tight end side). Most coaches i believe in (joe bugel; alex gibbs; just to name a few) do not prefer to run the inside zone to the "reduction" side (B gap defended by DLM, for example a 3 technique) because you will likely end up cutting it back inside the 3 technique to a tilted or shaded nose side WITH a LB filling between the shaded nose & the 3 (very tight quarters)! In the Riggins' years, Joe Bugle addressed this by "TAG" blocking (T & G FOLD) when he ran to the reduction side.

Assuming we are in 2 TE/2 WR personnel & they have "7 in the box" - Prefer to run it to the side where we have a numerical advantage (3 man side rather than 4 man side). If they have 4 men in the box to both sides of the ball (low S/S PROBABLY on reduction side) - it is better to shade side than reduction side BECAUSE we should get three initial double teams, which results in a LOT of movement off the ball! This is particularly true vs. the Va Tech style 4-4 defense. If you use a 2 te/2 wr/1 rb set (like the Indy Colts) quite often you can get in behind three double team blocks (TE & OT from the 7 to Will; OG & C from the 2i to Mike; & off OG & OT from 3 to Sam) and the RB can really cram the B gap for positive yardage rather than worrying about cutting it back....**Remember -the best cut is no cut!!!!**

### OUTSIDE ZONE TO "WIDE" SIDE VS "REDUCED" SIDE OF DEFENSE

On the outside zone, you can run it to the "red" (3 technique side) or "white" (b gap defended by lb). You may have to get into some pulling schemes like folding the on t & on g on the "red" side or pulling both the on t & on g around on the "white" side (like the Indy Colts). If you do this (pull; fold), the outside zone to the "red" side becomes a hell of an off tackle play & will cram the C gap; the outside zone to the "white" side should "circle the defense"!!!.

### COUNTER COMPLIMENTS INSIDE ZONE:

The BEAUTY of the Redskins' famous "Counter" was that it was originally a complimentary play to the Inside Zone. If the Inside Zone was best AWAY from the shade of the Nose (4 man side) - the Counter was equally good to EITHER side. The Counter is taught to LOOK LIKE THE INSIDE ZONE: QB's steps on Counter Left are IDENTICAL to Inside Zone Right. RB's first step on Counter Left is IDENTICAL to Inside Zone Right. These were important C.P.'s in the Riggins years! One of the 1st things to package with the Inside Zone was the Counter away. We would look to run the Inside Zone to the 1 tech and the Counter to the 3 tech. When we ran the inside zone at the 1, we would have the backside combo on the 3 look like the Counter. If we had a hard time cutting off the 3 with the BST then we would know to use more counter because the DT is chasing the play and will help create a huge hole when we run the counter to him.

## **INSIDE/OUTSIDE ZONE: MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:**

**RUNNING INSIDE ZONE FROM 2 TE FORMATION:** Remember this when running the Inside Zone with 2 TE personnel in game (which Gibbs LOVED to do): The THEORY of the play was to run it away from the shade or control of the Nose, since it was almost impossible to control the offset nose with the Center (4 of the front 7 defenders will be on the side of the shaded Nose - FORCING a cutback). Thus, it is best run as a DIRECTIONAL - seeking to run to the side of the defense which has 3 men. If you are in 2 TE's & 2 WR's, and the defense is in a 2 safety deep shell - SOMEONE may have 2 gap responsibility. Use that to your advantage.

**PLAYSIDE 0/SHADE (1 TECHNIQUE):** I would have the guard tighten down his splits to 6-12" and coach him to stop the 0/shade's penetration with a quick, firm shot before he goes on to zone with PS OT (if DE is in a 5 tech OG will usually end up on LB anyway, so this is just a slight hesitation). If OG uses shoulder or forearm, he MIGHT get tied up with him. This is the way that both Joe Bugel & Jim McNally blocked it in the mid to late 1980's. NOTE: RB can deepen because with a shaded Nose - he will CUTBACK!!!! We like to "fold" (2 men) a lot on the zone. Against the look you mentioned (run to weak side, 5, 1, 3 & 7 techs) we like to fold the Center & On Guard. That threw the ON OT into MAN on the 5 technique (On OG block down on Nose; Center fold on LB; On OT man 5 tech).

**PLAYSIDE 3 TECHNIQUE:** If we absolutely have to run the inside zone to the 3 technique side, we "TAG" (play side OT & OG fold) quite a bit: (PS OT down block DT, OS OG fold around PS OT onto LB, TE base reach technique on DE, Center cut off Mike LB). Vs. a 3 tech & Center uncovered - Center can still zone towards the 3 technique, but will usually end up working up on "Mike". Same as RG & RT vs "3-4" with DE in 5 technique (ON G & ON T still zone - but it usually ends up man with ON G on ILB & ON T on DE). The zone steps widen the defense regardless if you get the double team or not.

### **DISADVANTAGES OF ZONE RUNNING GAME:**

in answer to the question about "disadvantages of the system" - i would say that two men working together in zone blocking (or for that matter in counter/power blocking) must get to know each other's every move very well, & it will take time. I kid my players & say "it's like you're married to him". i use the analogy (not "dirty") of sleeping with my wife - when she turns one way in bed i have to instinctively turn the other (or get hit in the mouth with an elbow) - & that comes from sleeping together for forty years. they must work together constantly (you will do more 2 on 2 than 1 on 1 in blocking drills).

## INSIDE/OUTSIDE ZONE: MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:

### FORMATION AND MOTION NOTES:

We use many formations & motions to account for bs/de & playside secondary force in many different ways, but rest assured - **THEY WILL BE ACCOUNTED FOR**. One simple way is below (just one of many): I do not like the FB in backfield, he has a much better angle if closer to the LOS.

H O O C O O Y

Q

X

Z

R

INSIDE ZONE RIGHT:

H BLOCKS BS/DE

X BLOCKS S/S (#4 - SECONDARY RUN FORCE)

Z BLOCKS CORNER

**MOTION:** We primarily motion "H" from any of the four numbered positions in Diagram 1 to anywhere we need him.

We SOMETIMES let "H" lead on the Inside Zone. EITHER with PURE ZONE RULES (where he blasts a hole if none there, or goes on the near safety IF there IS a hole); OR with old fashion ISOLATION blocking (where we just leave LB for "H"! I like to do EITHER from this, because it removes the WILL LB from folding BACK into the play: VS 4-4 look we see:

S

C

C

W

M

S

R

5 1 3 7

X

O O C O O Y

Z

H

Q

R

We also LOVE to ISOLATE M with "H" - H just folds around on M & M doesn't see him coming (H gets there QUICKER than an "I" FB). W is controlled by the formation & CAN'T come inside).

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