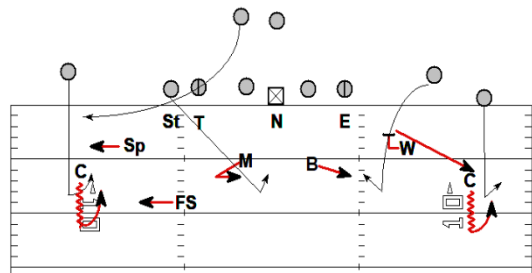


## ALL CURL

The depth of the curl can vary between 5-10 yards, depending on how soft the coverage is. The offensive advantages are that all receivers will be facing the quarterback and be scattered sideline to sideline.

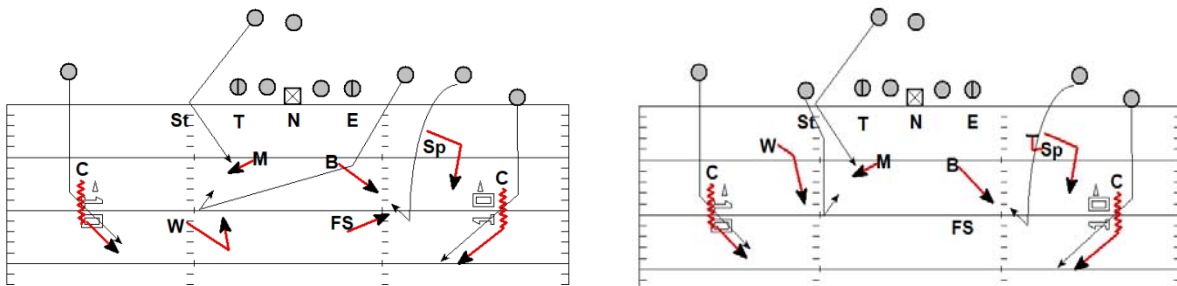
The QB reads outside receiver first, starting with pre-snap, and the next reads are to the middle of the field. The weakness is the comeback on the pro side (SPUR). That Corner has no help from the SPUR or the MIKE.

Remember, the STUD is delaying the TE release off the line of scrimmage.



## GRAB

One of the favorites of Tony Franklin, this is a deeper version of all-curls.



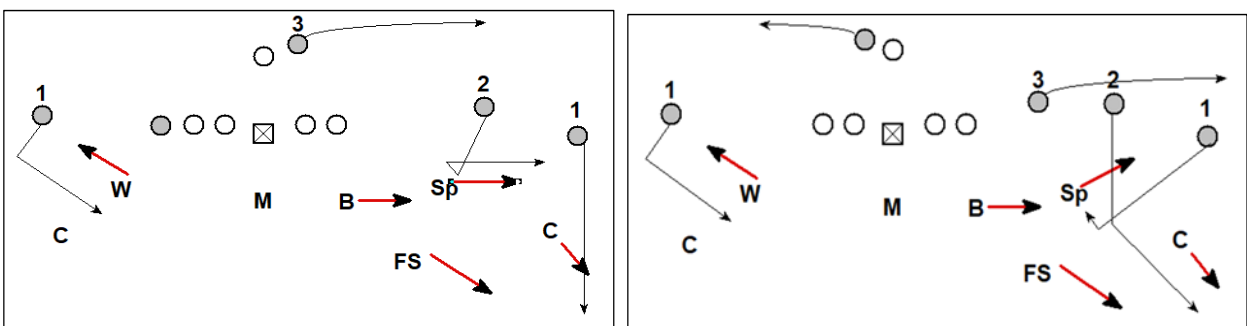
The posts are the QB first read. Remember, to commit to Robber concepts by your FALCON, the Corners must be great deep defenders, especially vs post. The only concern is out of Pro-Twins (pic on the right), the WILL would cover the TE instead of dropping to #1 if the STUD did a lousy job jamming the TE. Perhaps you are running storm and letting the TE release free. The BULL could also blitz since the FALCON has all of #2 vertical.

## WHEEL

Since the Air Raid sends receivers to the flats on almost every play, wheel routes are a nice change-up and can be called for within most other pass concepts, like shallow cross, or used in play action. In our coverage, whomever has flats also has wheel routes.

## STICK & CORNERS ("snag")

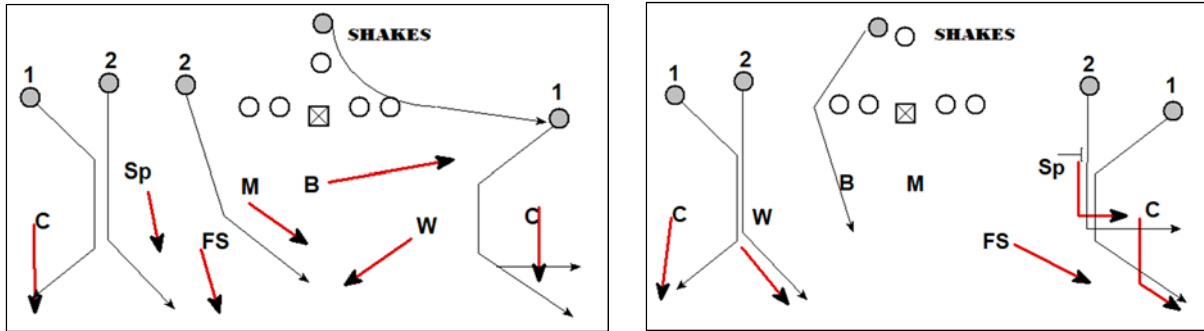
Stick and Corners are "Leach innovations" that put Wes Welker on the NFL radars while playing for Leach at Texas Tech. Stick and Corner creates both a vertical and horizontal stretch in the same concept. Cover 5 or "Roll-Trips" brings the CB up on the swing and lets SPUR sit on the stick.



## SHAKES & CORNERS

The Shakes concept is a classic 2-high safety beater. The inside receiver will stack or run directly behind the outside receiver. Versus a locked-up corner, the shake turns into a post/corner that breaks at 12 yards. He will flatten out the route if the defender maintains cushion. The out runner will break flat at about 6 yards. The QB read is out, shake, corner. He does not look at the backside, that is a press box call

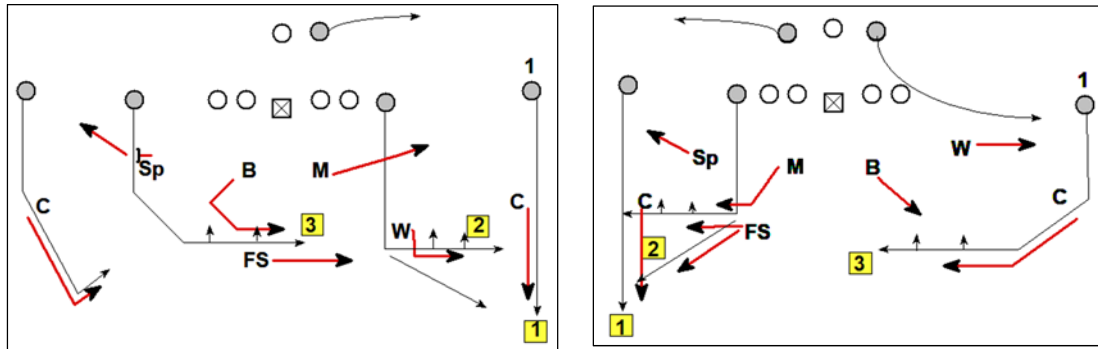
Versus Trips, this is a great quarter-quarter-halves beater. I have it drawn it up vs Solo which is better. If you lock up #1 in Special, the SPUR would be isolated on the #2 slot receiver.



The obvious answer is to reroute number 2. Although this reroute can serve as an unintended pick for the number 1 receiver. The second answer is to play safeties and or corners in a deeper technique, however, this technique will usually concede an out throw or the post runner flattening out for a 12-yard completion.

## Y-SAIL

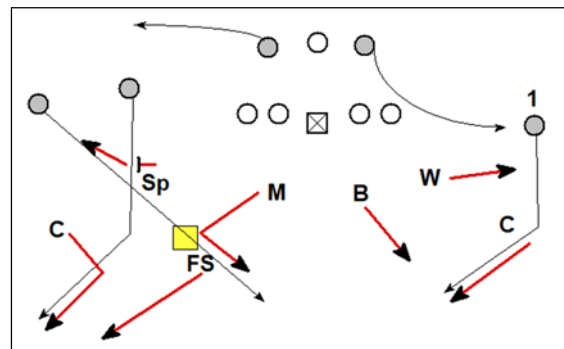
The other favorite zone beater of Air Raid, the Y has some flexibility: running a true corner route to the soft spot in a zone or sticking his foot and breaking flat on a true "out" route. He can settle at any time in an open window. We have this well covered on the READ side. However, setting the RB on the weak AWAY side in the 2x2 set puts the WILL in tough 1on1 coverage with no cutter help underneath. The FALCON really has to read the QB Elbow.



### Y-Corner (Pick/Flat)

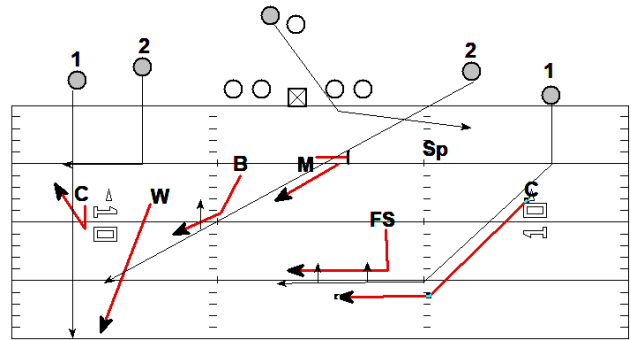
MIKE align on the near hip and may be left alone on the stutter route by #1 if the FALCON mistakenly goes to help the CB with #2. If WILL is up in Cover 3, both ILB can get stuck defending deep middle routes.

The WILL can help on either #1 receiver if he is back in Cover 4 or Cover 5.



## Y-CROSS

Before Leach added Four Vertical concept to the arsenal, the vertical routes in Y-Sail and Y-Cross were the main “deep” routes in the offense. The Mesh concept is the go-to route versus man coverage, but against zones expect one of the two “flood” plays: strongside (Y-Sail) or weakside (Y-Cross) flood. The Y-Cross can be ran as play action, drop back or even an RPO.



First read is the quick throw to the receiver on the left, who turns inside vs Cover 2 or to the flats vs Cover 3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> read is outside as the X either fades or posts to take a safety deep. The QB eyes will then progress to the middle, looking for the Y cross running 18-22 yards downfield. This crosser runs “over “under Bull and over Will”, will immediately fill any space of blitzing LB or sit in zones between ILB & OLB. The last read is backside post-dig.

The running back runs a true option route. He runs five yards deep, right at our WILL, breaking outside, inside, or settling up in an open void against zones.

It’s the exact same concept as the Y-Sail, except the Y is coming from the opposite side of the formation. Y-Cross is a nice change-up to the Y-Sail and Mesh concepts versus teams overplaying the Air Raid’s inherent right-handed nature.

## Covering Crossers

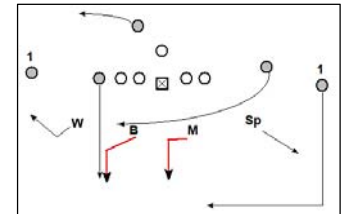
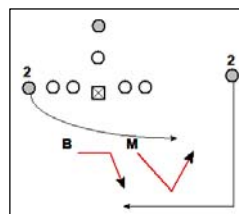
One of the most difficult concepts for any defensive coordinator is how to handle crossing receivers. Do you run with them or pass them off to another defender? No matter how a crosser is picked up in a zone, a problem will exist.

In a traditional zone, much like in basketball, routes get passed off to other defenders when they run through a zone. A hook to curl defender “spot drops” to his landmark and runs with any receiver coming into his zone until he reaches the edge of his zone, or another receiver entered his zone. He was told to “pass the route off” and to “look for work”.

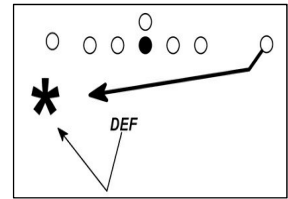
This works good in basketball, however in football, there is just too much ground to cover, linebackers are not as good of cover guys as DBs, and there are athletic mismatches vs speedy slot receivers. Advanced passing concepts have also become more advanced, overloading zones and running high/low concepts. Splitting the two and rallying to the throw no longer works as more high school QBs can fit the ball into the tightest of windows.

There are four choices: (1) Pass Off; (2) Intersect; (3) Wall Off; (4) Simply run with them. We teach all four. When to use them depends on coverage and formation.

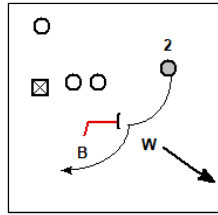
**Passing Off:** This is the easiest to teach but has the lowest success rate. There may not be a defender available to pass off to or the receiver may stop and sit down in between the two defenders. When the defender passes off the low crossing receiver, he must immediately climb to the next level.



**Intersecting:** If the crosser does go underneath, then the defender will come “down” to the receiver. This usually occurs when the defender has achieved “depth” in his drop. The defender must anticipate where the receiver will be, especially since the receiver is running full speed.



**Walling Off:** Jamming crossers buys time for the pass rush and allows the LB to turn and run with the route. The receiver must be forced to go “over the top” and never allowed to go underneath the Linebacker.



**Reading the Elbow of QB**

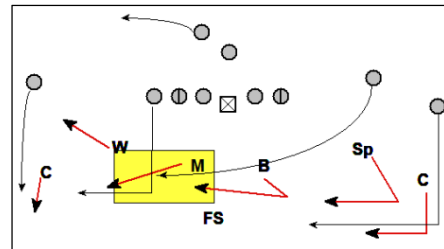
All three of our safeties (SPUR, WILL, FALCON) and Linebackers are taught to read the QB elbow. If the QB elbow is inside of the defender, then the QB is going to throw it inside. We don’t care where the QB looks. That’s not where the ball is going. The ball is going where the elbow is going. Everything we do is off that elbow. If the elbow is outside of them or across their face, they are expanding since the QB is throwing the ball to the sideline.

**Crossing Routes and the Split Field Concept**

Passing off routes while using the split field concept can lead to some confusion because you can’t pass off a crosser if there is no defender on the other side of the formation to pick it up. It becomes important to know where the #3 receiver is located and where he goes after the snap.

Let’s start the explanation out of a 2x2 set, playing quarters to both sides. The WILL, CB, and MIKE have to take care of the 3 weakside flood routes, so there is nobody for the BULL to pass the crosser off to.

In the example, the BULL will run with the crosser since the #3 (running back) went away from him. Notice the SPUR “passing off” the crossing route by the #2 slot since #2 did not reach linebacker depth. The SPUR drops under the #1 receiver.



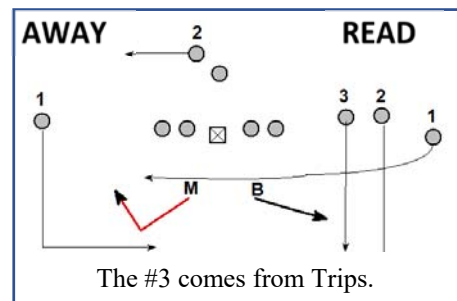
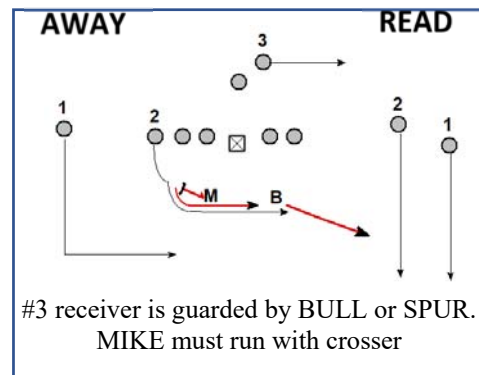
REMEMBER: The STUD End is re-routing the TE and delaying his release off the Line of Scrimmage. Also, our FALCON does not rob vs 1-back sets if we think the TE is a receiving threat. With RB as a #3, we probably move our FALCON to the TE away side.

There are THREE rules needed when guarding crossing routes:

1. Run with shallow crosser going TOWARDS the 3-receiver side.
2. Pass off the shallow crosser going AWAY from the 3-receiver side.
3. Switch two shallow crossers.

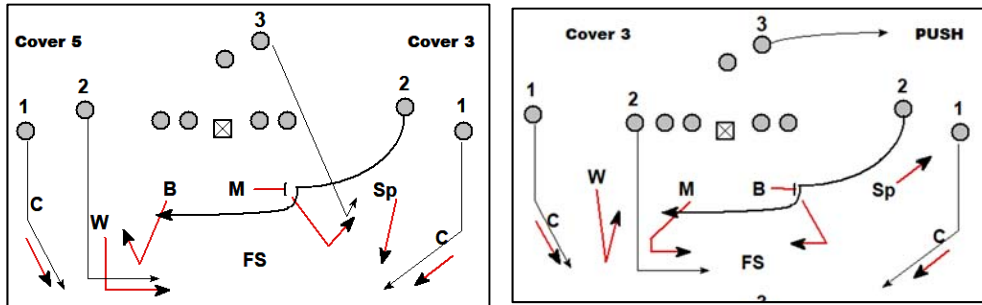
REMEMBER: The STUD End is re-routing the TE and delaying his release off the Line of Scrimmage

Some coaches don’t like their linebackers playing man on receivers, but I don’t think that is a mismatch at the high school level like it is in college. Any high school linebacker can run with another player for 3-5 seconds before separation occurs, which is why the pass rush is so important to pass defense.



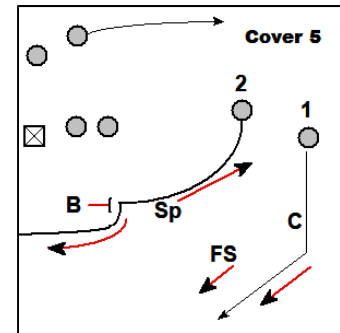
**SHALLOW CROSS away from 3-receiver side**

Remember communication is critical here. The Inside Linebacker on the READ side is a “**Wall #2, 3-Receiver Hook Dropper (3RH)**.” So, he re-routes the shallow crosser and yells “cross-cross” to the other Inside Linebacker. He then takes the back out of the backfield and the SPUR drops to #1 since #2 ran under him before getting re-routed. If the back flares, he gives a “**PUSH**” call to the SPUR and follows the QB shoulder. He “cuts” under the dig by the #1 on his side or digs coming from the other side if #1 runs a post.



The crossing route is going to be passed off to the WILL in Cover 3, or to the weak-side Inside Linebacker if WILL is back in Cover 4 or 5. The WILL can be very aggressive on the crossing route if he is back at safety and the QB's shoulder is inside. The FALCON also reads QB and helps on the dig, cross, or post. If the ILB runs with the crosser, then the dig by #1 is going to be tough to guard.

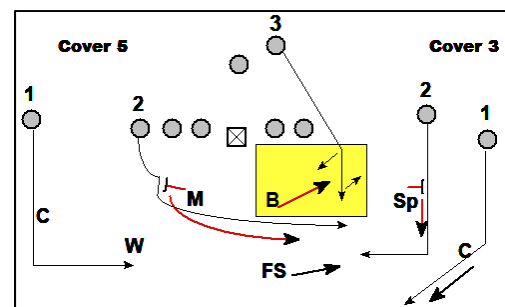
Cover 5 on both sides is a good call against teams that run lots of crossers and mesh concepts. In Cover 5, the SPUR has #3 (RB) all the way. The FALCON has #1 since #2 disappears underneath, so now the Inside Linebacker (BULL) can run with the cross all the way and get help on the other side by the other Inside Linebacker.



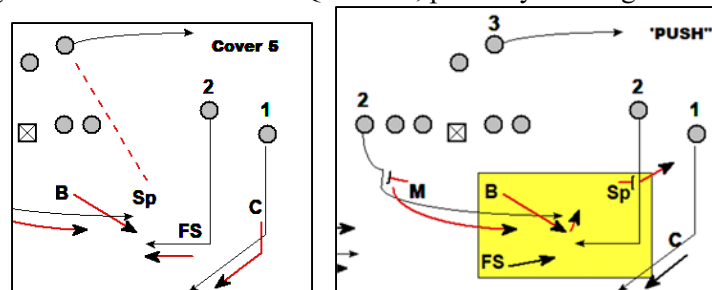
**SHALLOW CROSS towards the 3-receiver side**

The MIKE re-routes the shallow crosser and runs with him. The BULL is a “**3RH**” player and has the back out of the backfield or gives the SPUR a “**PUSH**” call if the RB flares or runs flat routes. Otherwise, the SPUR climbs with #2 as long as #1 keeps climbing. He could drop down to intersect the shallow crosser depending upon the QB elbow. The BULL also reads the QB elbow and either “cuts” under the dig or intersects the shallow crosser.

FALCON is not robbing, he is a deep 1/3 player. He has to read QB and will guard the dig or the post.

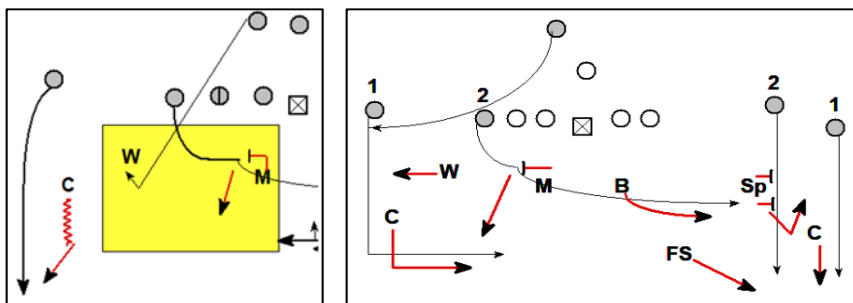


If we were in Cover 5 on the READ side, the SPUR has RB no matter what. The FALCON takes the dig and the BULL reads the QB elbow, probably “cutting” the dig. Either the SPUR or BULL could help MIKE by intersecting the shallow crosser depending on the QB elbow.



### #3 ON the AWAY side

This puts the most stress on our defense. There are only 3 defenders guarding the 3 receivers. We cannot call the passing strength based on the RB, because it is too easy for the offense to move the RB to the other side of the QB after we set our defense.

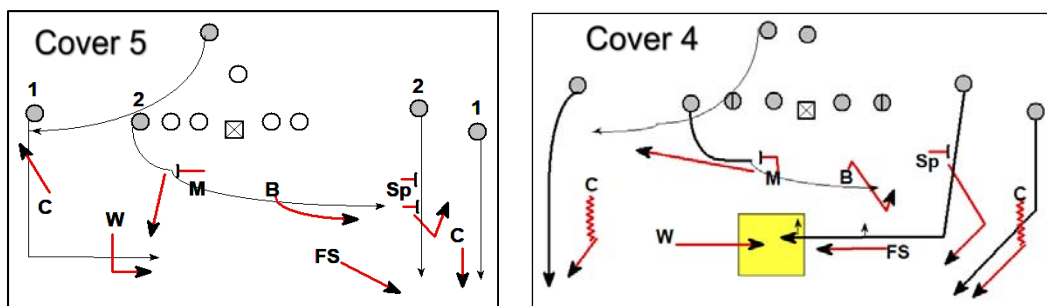


Remember, our STUD end is re-routing the TE, so we are confident that he will release late. If we are worried about the Tight End or Running Back catching a lot of passes, then we bring the FALCON over to help that side. This helps if they go vertical in a Cover 3 call on the AWAY side. Bringing the FALCON over requires the SPUR & CB in a Cover-5 on the READ side.

In Cover 3, the WILL has RB flare/flats. After walling off the #2 crosser (TE) over the top of him, the MIKE then checks for a dig by #1. If the #1 receiver goes vertical, look for a deep dig route from the backside (AWAY).

In Cover 4, the CB & Will both cover the dig by #1. MIKE & BULL are in a fiddle (2 on 1) against the back. Since WILL is back, MIKE fiddles and takes the back while the BULL cuts the crosser.

In Cover 5, the MIKE will take RB middle and the CB takes RB flat-flare.

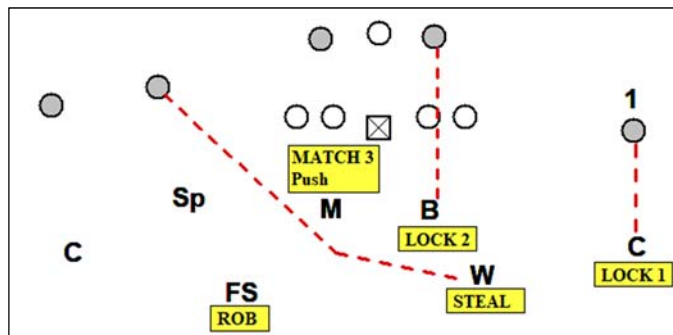


### Steal Coverage

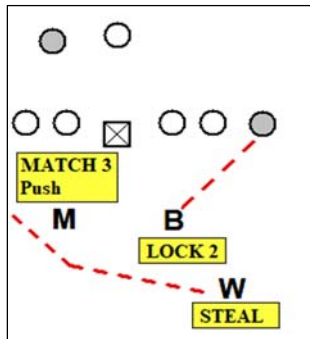
Air Raid teams create a soft middle of the field by forcing safeties to guard vertical routes by outside receivers. This leaves the zone dropping linebackers to defend simple crossing routes without safety support. Steal Coverage entices the offense to throw the deep crossing route by making it look like the middle is open. We like this coverage when the ball is on the hash and the WILL at 8yards in the boundary.

The WILL becomes a “robber” for the crossing routes, spying the front side receivers for deep digs or crossing routes, the same as he does in Trips “Solo” coverage. The FALCON “robs” #1 on any inside route by the #2 slot receiver, regardless of how deep the route is. Unlike his normal robber rules, STEAL has him passing all inside routes of any depth off to the WILL.

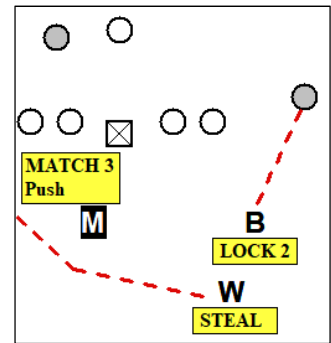
SPUR still re-routes #2 and will “push” on any flares by the RB. The CB on the READ-Falcon side plays Cover 3 technique.



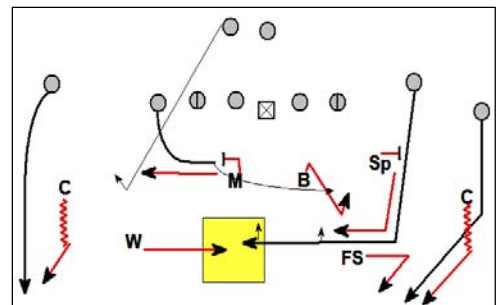
The backside BULL and CB are locked up in man-to-man on #2 and #1. If the #2 threat is in the backfield and pushes to the front side, the BULL must push with him.



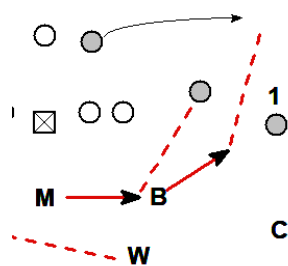
This frees up the WILL to “rob” any deep crossing/dig/middle routes from the receivers on the frontside (see Y-Cross or Mesh). Versus 3 verticals the WILL has #2 vertical on the strong Read side. (see Shakes or Divide). The FALCON splits the difference between #1 and #2 if both go vertical.



If #2 runs a corner route (Y-Corner), then WILL helps the CB on his Away side.



By doubling the post, the defense is able to bait the QB into throwing the ball across the middle. The SPUR re-routes and widens the slots dig route. The MIKE and BULL “banjo” the RB and TE. As the BULL takes the TE, the QB should see the void left in the middle hole. The WILL works to the MOF and intercepts the dig.



The Inside Linebackers have to “slide” into the boundary versus 2x2 and pro-twin sets with RB in the boundary. Together they “banjo” the RB and #2 receiver.

### Adjustments to STEAL

- If the strength is in the boundary, the defense needs to check out of Steal and into base coverage.
- To 3x1 sets, the defense needs to check to “Solo,” which is its sister coverage for 3x1.
- “Banjo” the Mike and Will if there is a 2x2 set and the back is set into the boundary.
- WR motion does not affect the coverage if it comes from the man side. To adjust, the Will must push with #2 weak (CB is still locked).

RB motion will push the Mike and Will (would be a natural post-snap adjustment anyway).

### Conclusion

Using the boundary safety as a mid-field robber in STEAL coverage is a good changeup to defend Air Raid on obvious passing downs. Double teaming the deep routes bait the QB into throwing the ball into a bad situation. Asking the WILL to read the strong side #3 receiver is something that we already do in SOLO trips coverage and blends well with a split-field scheme. When using Steal it is important to remind the LBs to get hands-on WRs and disrupt routes and timing.

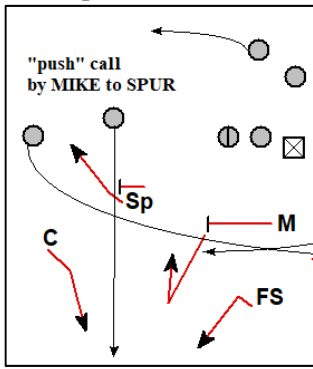
## TWO CROSSERS (mesh)

The mesh concept with two crossers is designed to damage man coverage. Defending two crossing routes not only depends on the QB elbow, but also where the WILL hybrid is lined up.

Remember, our general rule is that we run with shallow crossers going to the multi-receiver READ side and pass off shallow crossers going towards the less receiver AWAY side. Since there are two crossers, this is where TCUs "common sense rule" applies. The MIKE and BULL linebackers must communicate and switch so that they are not "rubbed" off.

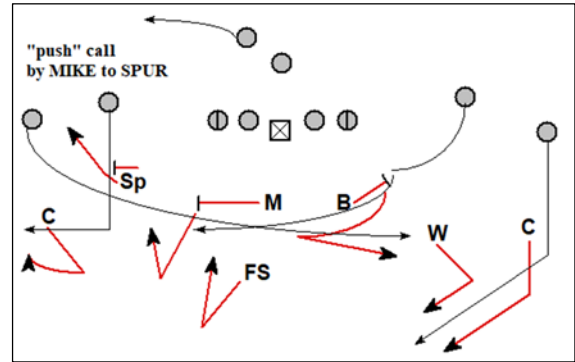
Switching only affect the Inside Linebacker on the AWAY side, because in this example, the MIKE would drop and "find work" after re-routing.

The BULL would run with his crosser until he sees another crosser coming at him, which he would intercept and take. The MIKE has nobody to guard in this example so the crosser coming from the weak (AWAY) side should come into his vision.



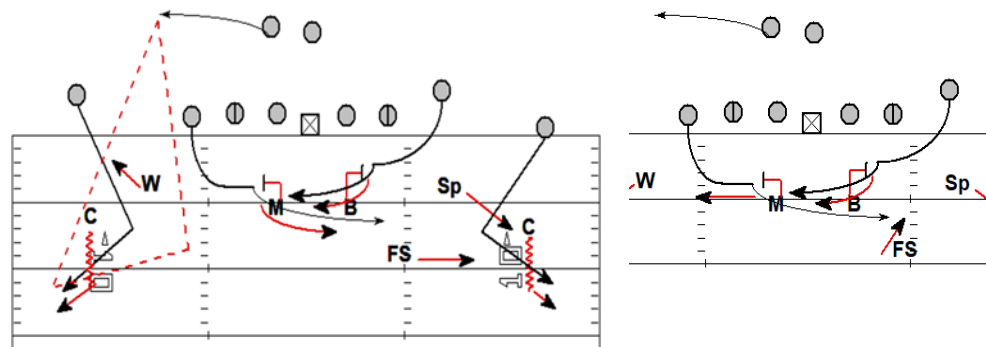
Additionally, the QB eyes & elbow will take him there, and hopefully he hears the BULL or FALCON yelling "cross-cross". The FALCON is also helping in this example.

If #2 went vertical instead of out, the MIKE would initially drop to him, however, our Inside Linebackers do not drop deeper than 10yds. If his head is on a swivel and he hears "cross-cross" hopefully he can come up and intersect the crossing route in time.



In 1998, Leach and Mumme took the pages out of Lavelle Edwards BYU and Mike Shanahan Denver Broncos playbook. Based on shallow crossing routes ran under five yards, the Mesh or Y-Mesh may be the most popular concept for high school teams that run the Air Raid.

The mesh concept works so well because of the stress it puts on both man and zone coverages. The sheer chaos that exists that close to the line of scrimmage makes it extremely difficult to guard a shallow route running across the field. Although receiver-linebacker mismatches are not as profound at the high school level, running with a speedy slot receiver across the field is never easy.



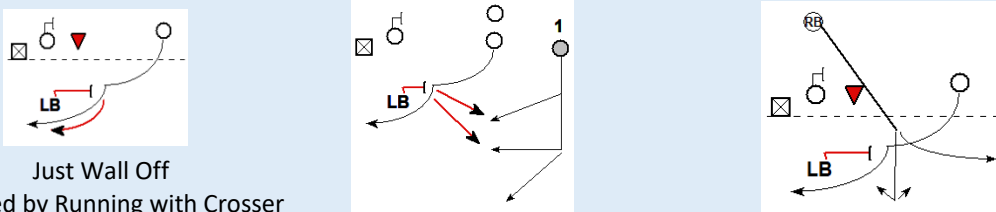
The play is a triangle read on the frontside, with the corner route, the cross, and the RB swing creating the triangle. The corner route can adjust to a flat underneath out route versus a soft corner. The shallow crossing route will sit in an open zone or continue toward the sideline and angle upfield against man coverage.



Normally the FALCON will rob #1, which forces MIKE & BULL to run with the crossers. If the offense is very good at running shallow crossing routes, you can work on the MIKE/BULL re-routes and switching off the routes. The FALCON can also take a step and peek inside as he watches his #2 receiver read disappear inside. If he does not see another crosser coming his way, then he is free to rob #1.

### Drills

1. **WALL OFF:** Teach to attack the inside hip, causing a bubble in the route over the top. Attacking the outside hip will cause the Linebacker to get beat underneath. Do not attack until WR sinks hips and chops feet. Be patient and let the receiver come to him before attacking the hip.

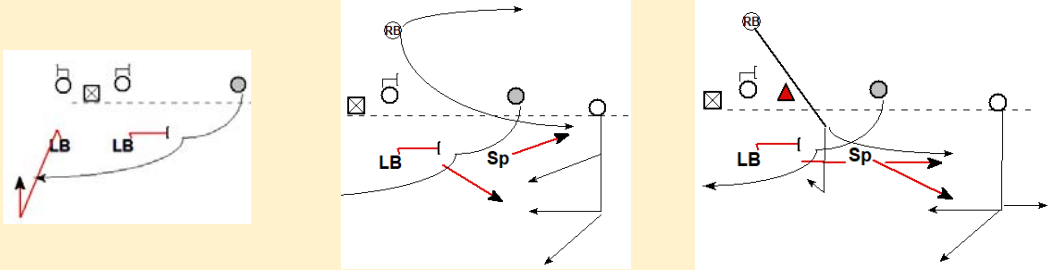


Just Wall Off  
Followed by Running with Crosser

Wall Off & Drop to #1  
Settle & Find QB if #1 deeper than 15yds

Wall Off & Find RB  
Has RB if route break past LOS

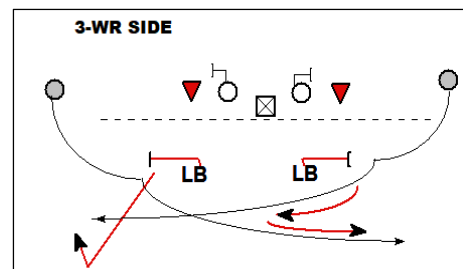
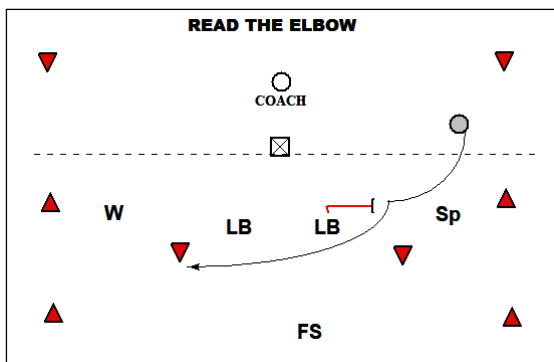
2. **PASS OFF:** 2 on 1 drills to teach Recognition & Communication



Pass Off & Intersect  
Remember Communication

PUSH if RB breaks out before LOS

SPUR drops to #1  
ILB guards RB



**READ THE ELBOW DRILL:** Set cones up in common areas where receivers settle verse Cover 3 and Cover 4. As the players drop, the coach points his elbow at certain cones and players learn to adjust their drops. This drill starts without receivers and we slowly introduce receivers, 1 at a time. Save the crossing routes for last.