

Run & Shoot - Identifying Coverages

Calling out coverages:

One of the most important aspects of the Run and Shoot is getting the team to identify the correct defense and then running the properly adjusted route.

If one receiver sees a man coverage but the Quarterback thinks it's zone, the timing and passes will be challenging to say the least.

There are multiple ways to get this done, so I will cover a few and you can choose which one you feel is best for your team.

Option #1: Coach calls the coverage and players adjust routes pre-snap.

In this option the coach can either send in the play and route adjustment when the QB calls the play (in the huddle or no-huddle to get a better pre-snap read).

This limits the players in that they cannot make adjustments after the snap if the coverage is different than the pre-snap look. But it does put the analysis on the coach which, may be more reliable than any of the players who may not be confident enough to make the call or may not be smart enough to determine subtle differences pre-snap.

Option #2: One player on offense calls the coverage pre-snap. If you have a smart player who you can trust to call a correct coverage, then building in a pre-snap call is a solid way to get everyone on the same page and running the same route adjustments. One player whose job this could be is the motion man who either motions to trips or uses a Return motion back to doubles to check to see if the defense follows him giving away the man coverage. He will motion and then call the coverage out (in code like "Tom" or "Jerry" for Cover 2) and the receivers and QB know which route to run. You could also give this role to the QB if you feel he has the ability to handle the call. This could be a good choice if the QB sees an opening and wants to take advantage of running a route a certain way.

Option #3: Players on offense all adjust based on post snap reads. This is definitely the most challenging, but allows for offenses to actually run the best route possible every single time no matter what the defense does to you pre-snap. Ultimately, this is the best option but requires every player to recognize the safety look (0, 1 or 2 high) and the under coverage (man or zone). This should be the goal of all Run and Shoot teams but whether you or not you get there doesn't mean you necessarily will be better.

Ask yourself if the error rate is high enough in any of these systems to move to require changing to another one. If it is then move, or find a way to simplify or fix your problem.

You can also do combination of these systems like having the QB call out the Safety Number, but the players recognize whether they are being covered man or zone. They can usually identify this one easily by defensive clues and post snap movements. If the defender lines up head up and his eyes are on you, then it is man, if he does not line up head up and he is watching a key on the line or QB for his read then it is zone.

Other Coverage Clues:

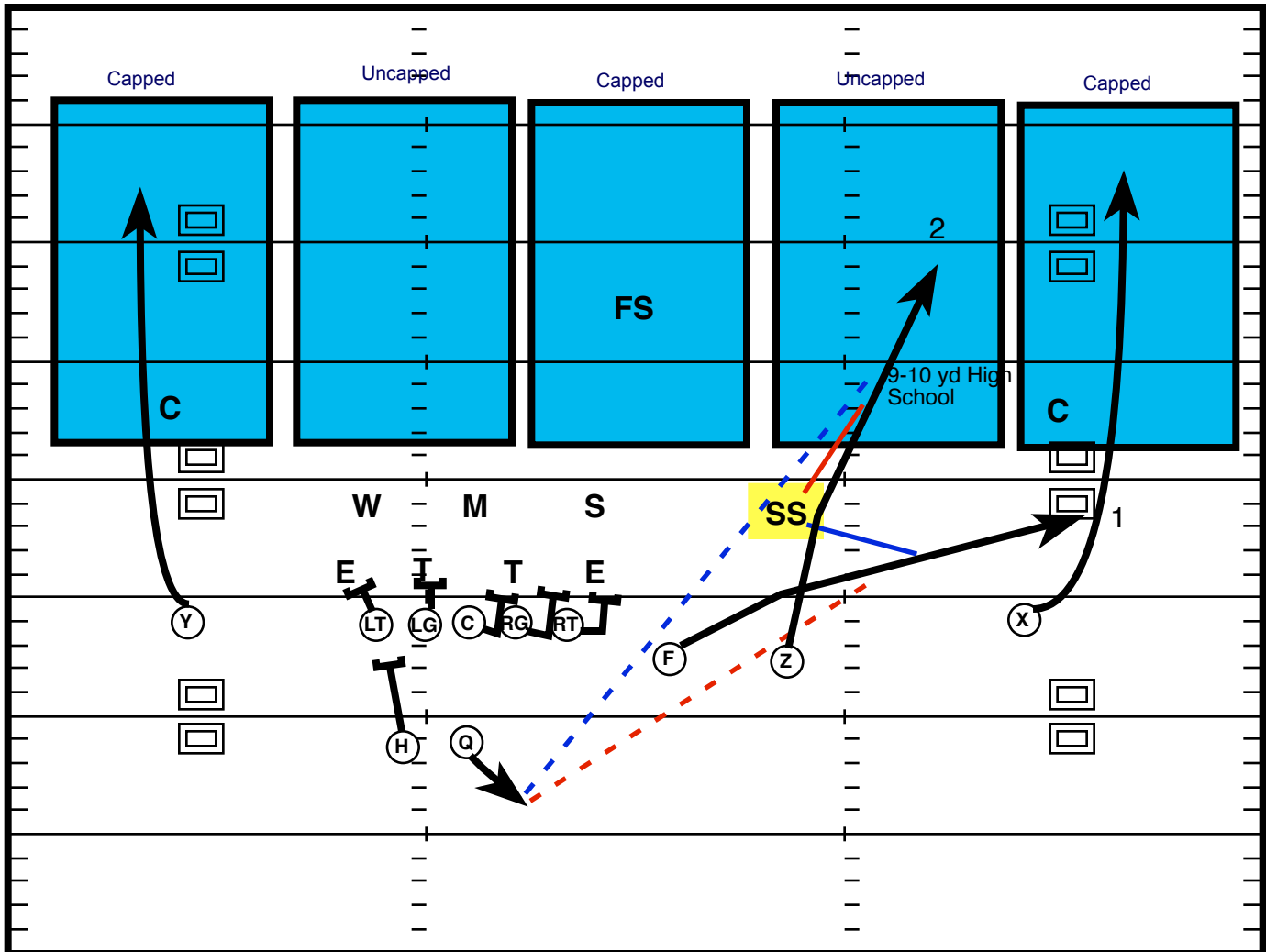
1. Alignment - Head up or inside shade are typically man coverages. Outside is Zone. Leaving a receiver uncovered or splitting the difference between two defenders is also a zone giveaway
2. Eyes - One the man is man, on the QB is zone.
3. Distance - up tight may often be man, soft or deep is more likely zone.

Don't confuse technique for assignment. A coach may for simplicity sake teach a similar technique for zone or man coverage. Sometimes it's just simpler and can also disguise things better.

Ex. Seeing a corner in a backpedal is a man to man technique, but he may have a deep 1/3 responsibility.

4. Watch for walked up weak side safeties - this may key a blitz as he has to cover the blitzers man responsibility
5. Watch for movement with motion. Man defenders stay with their man even during motion most of the time.

"GO" vs 1 High



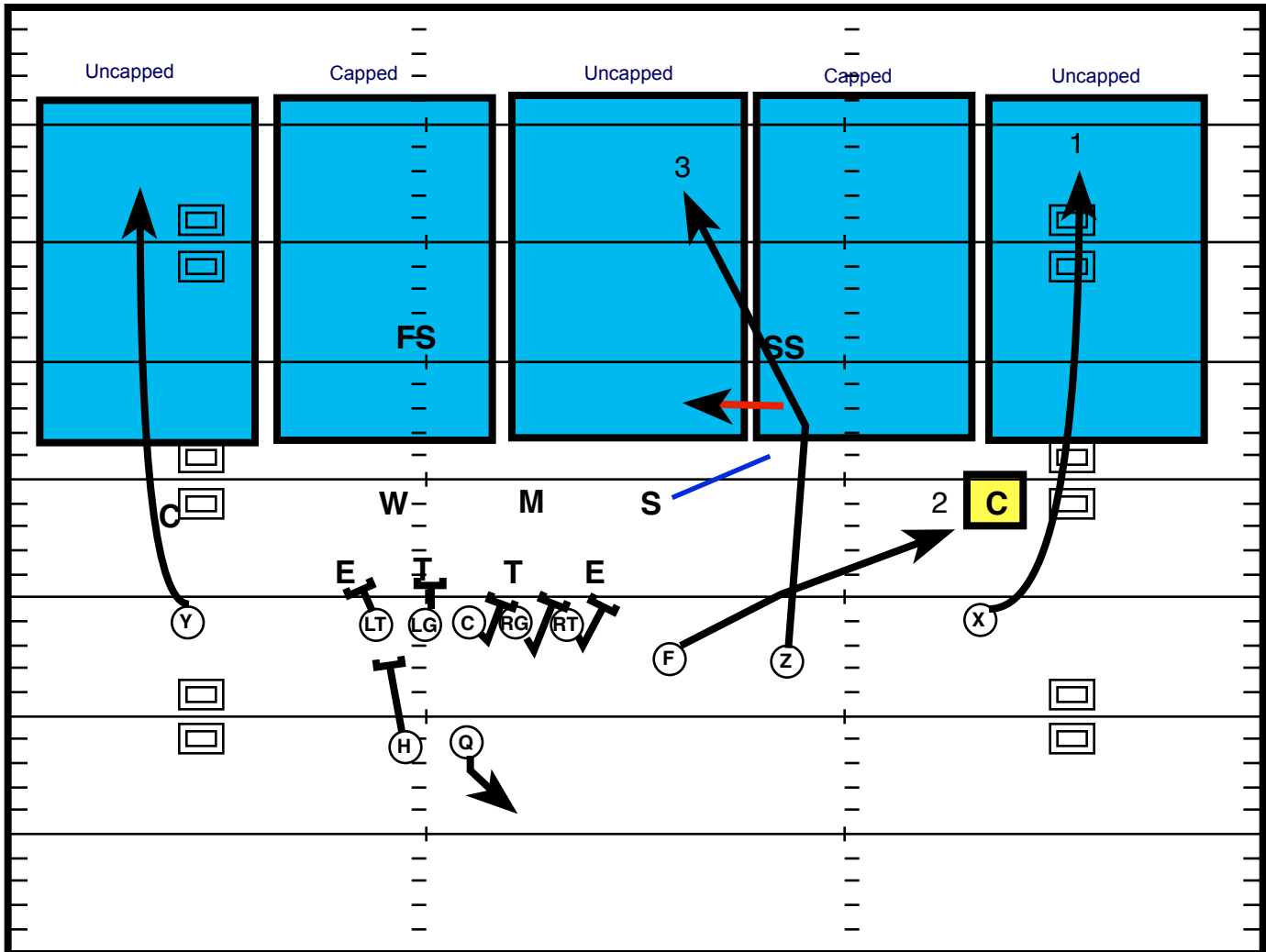
How It Works:

The Go route vs Cover Three or Single High Safety Man Free works to stress the SS covering down on the Outside Slot Z as well as the FS. The SS will seek to drop or get contact on the Z which gives a clear path for the F to be open in the weaker flat zone. X's job is to clear out the Corner for this route to have room to run. F can quickly angle outside making the S backers job to catch up next to impossible. F should build depth to 7 yards so after the catch he will have a better gain. The Z should stretch his route to the outside of the flat defender if someone is aligned outside of him. This can also make it difficult for the SS to get to him.

The Quarterback's read is to see the single high safety and know that the receivers are stretching the defense vertically and horizontally. His specific read is the SS - or whoever the flat defender is. If the SS does anything other than step forward, his best option is F. If he steps forward then he can easily anticipate the Z breaking past the SS and being open in the hash window. Z should look over his inside shoulder.

The QB can dropback or also sprint to the route making it even easier to throw. I prefer a slight roll playside. The Offensive Line can sprint protect or combo with a Zone Slide and Man backside.

"GO" vs 2 High

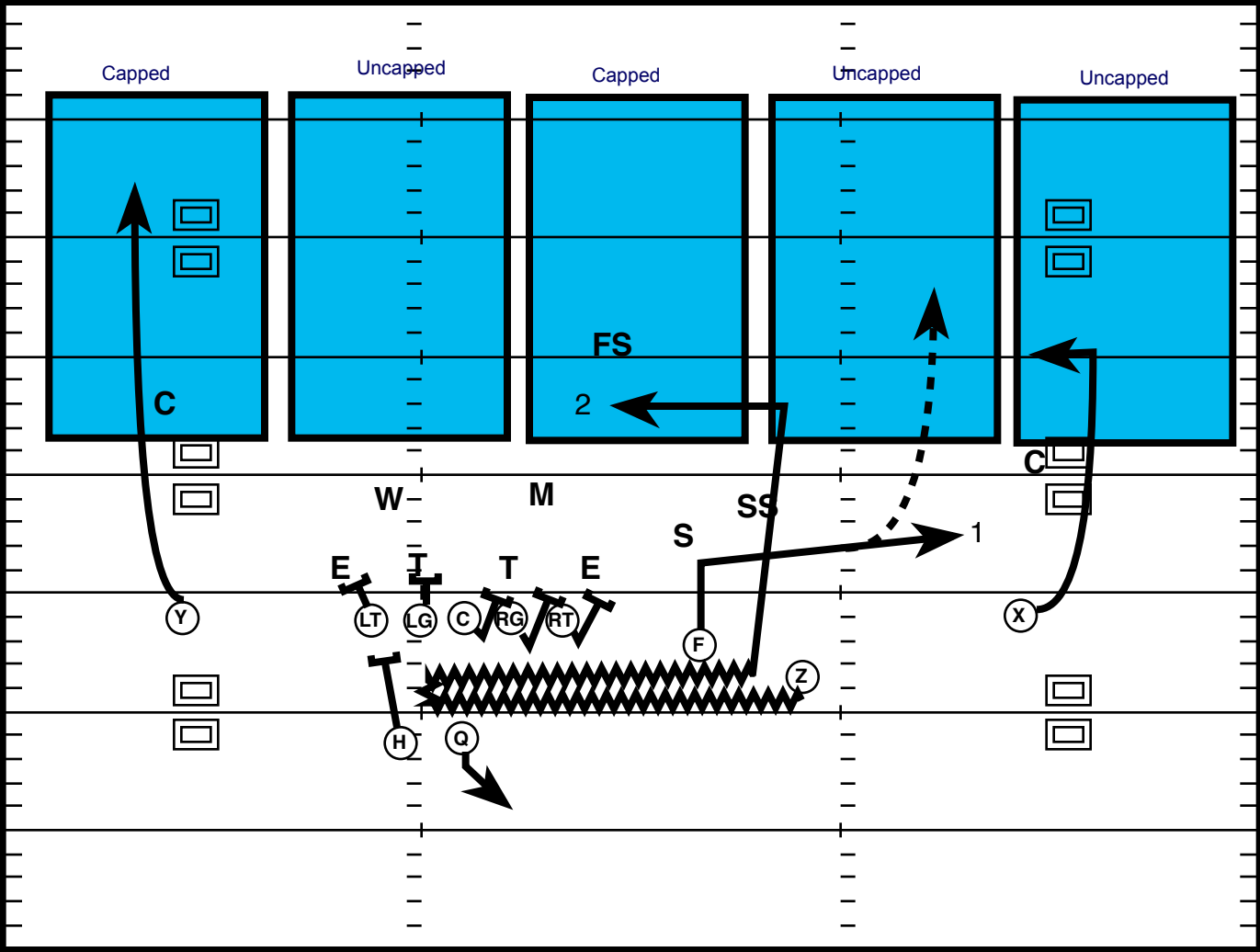


How It Works:

The Go route vs Cover Two adjustment stresses both safeties high because there are three verticals only two safeties are asked to cover. It also stresses the C dilemma to run with the X since the S has to stay inside with the Z. The X has a mandatory outside release for the fade and if he clears the Corner he will slow down in the window between the numbers and the sideline. The F has the same shoot/arrow route that releases outside quickly and builds to 7 yards. The Z sight adjusts on his release to run a post into the middle of the field (MOFO-Middle Of Field Open) where there is no capped defender in the Middle "tube".

The Quarterback's read is to first check the X whenever there is uncapped space behind the corner and the corner is inside 7 yards. If X clears with no contact right away he will throw to X. If C drops or sticks with the X, the throw goes to the F quickly. If neither are open he can look to the Z post down the field as the SS may have rotated to help with the X leaving Z wide open. If the QB is sprinting out or rolling he must set his feet to throw to Z if the progression leads him there.

"GO" vs Man



How It Works:

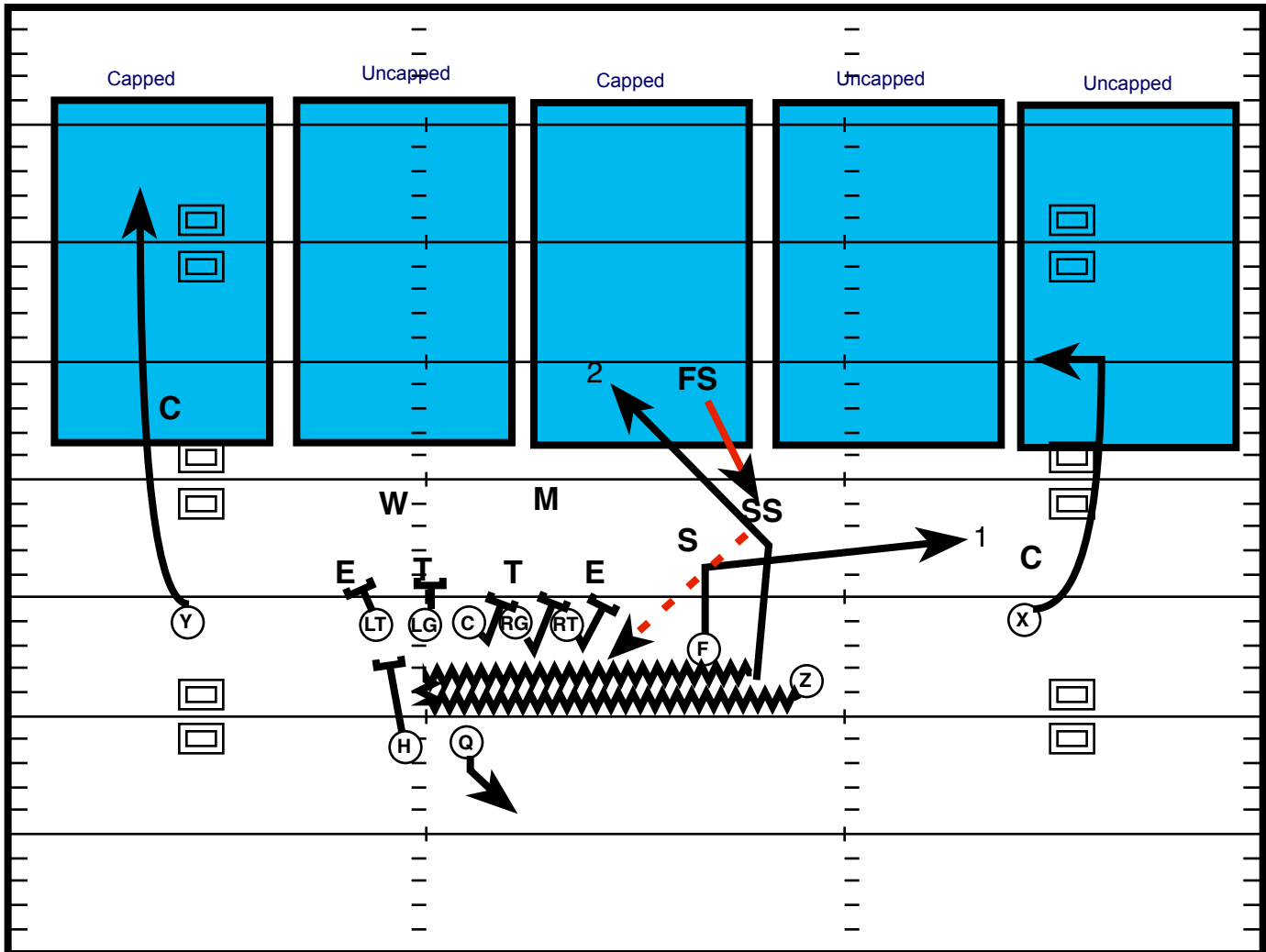
The Go route vs Man Under could be seen with 1 or 2 high safeties and a man to man defender underneath.

On the snap the defender may play tight to the man or have eyes on the man, not the play. If Z cannot easily beat the SS, then he should break off the route flat inside under the Safeties. F against a close defender will now pushes upfield two steps before breaking out to get better separation.

The Quarterback's read when he sees man coverage is to go F to Z and find the first person to clear the confusion. He can also wait for F's secondary route adjustment upfield as another option if the quick arrow is not free.

The QB can watch the defense on the Zipper motion to check for coverage. If he sees man he knows the Z may break off his route as shown above. If nothing happens quickly or the Quarterback pumps, Receivers all go to their secondary route.

"GO" vs Blitz



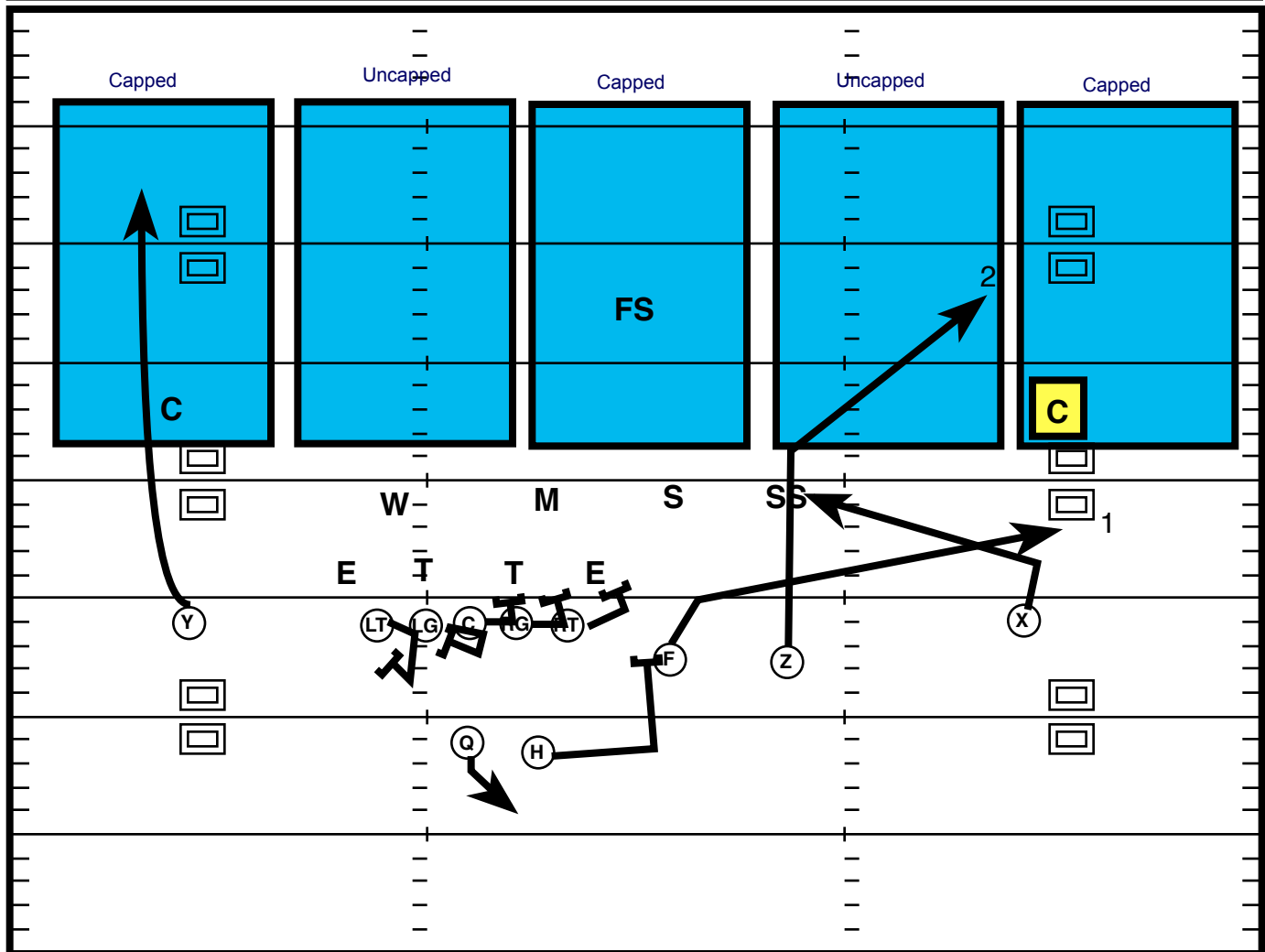
How It Works:

The Go route vs a Blitz can be keyed by seeing a no high safety look defensively. When safeties are creeping up behind backers who are up the QB and WR's have good clue that something is coming and the ball can be thrown quicker. The Z's route can take any angle because there is no high safeties to stay under anymore. All other routes are the same as against Man Coverage.

The Quarterback's read is to just go to the first open receiver between F or Z. If he can see clearly where the pressure is coming from like the SS above, then he should throw to that similar area that is now vacated.

If your QB also suspects pressure, he can check to a much more aggressive pass protection. Even if the rules stay the same as the 1/2 man 1/2 zone slide, a call should be made to make the blocking solid and not kick-slide which puts defenders in the face of the QB trying to get the ball out quick.

Sprint Pick



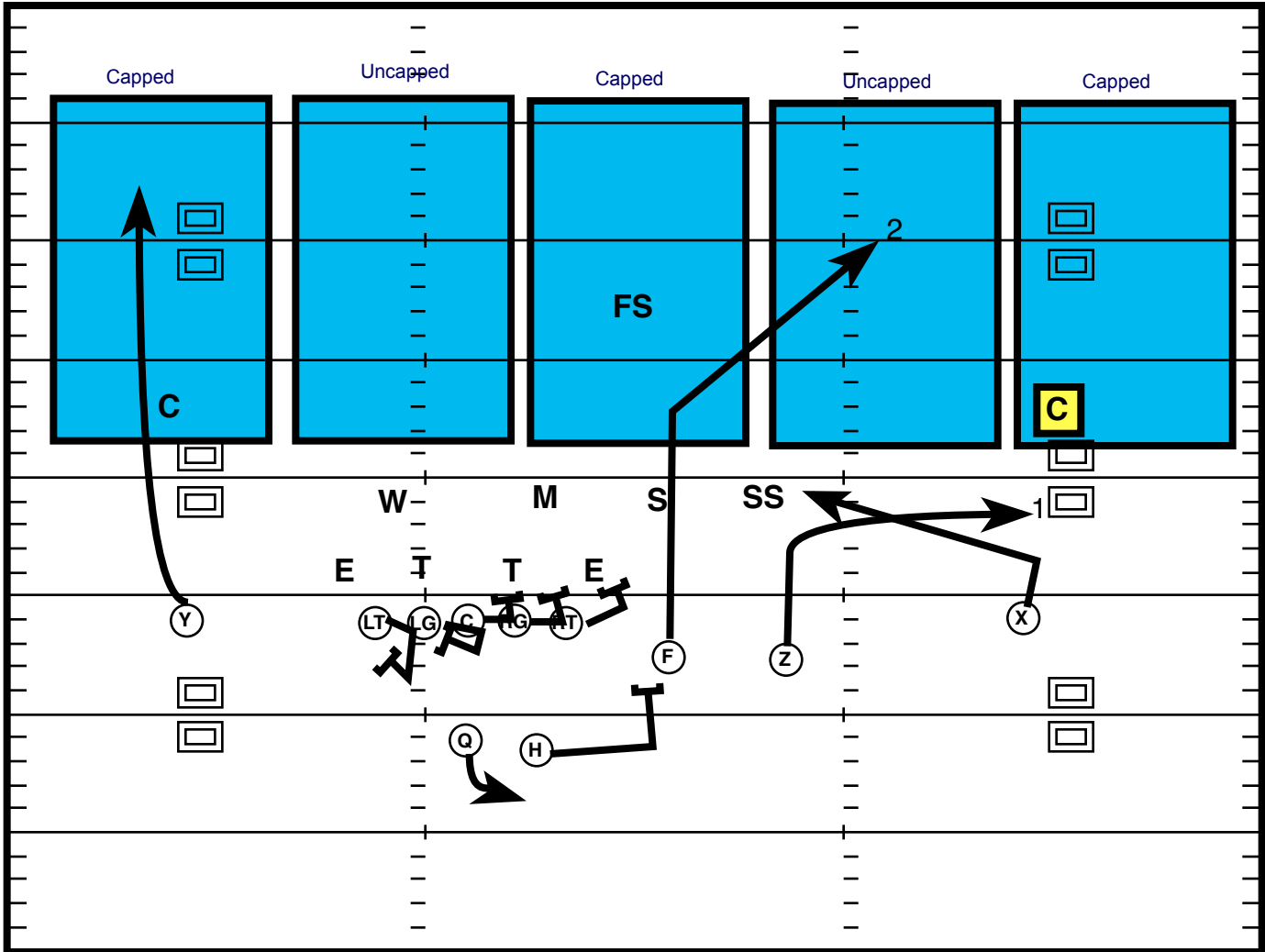
How It Works:

The Sprint Pick Play is called as a counter to the Go Play to give a different look to the defense and stress the corner with a "pick" of the Strong Safety. X runs a flatter slant through the angle of the SS's path covering the out route by F. Z runs a corner route.

The Quarterback's read is to sprint and throw quickly looking first at the F to clear the pick and make a catch with room to run. If it's cloudy he can find Z or run the ball or throw it away.

Sprint Pick can also be run as a dropback pass just by changing the protection. If your QB needs help getting the ball out or to the right side - the sprint is a good option. To the left, a dropback can be better then trying to get the QB to reset his feet from sprinting left if he's right handed.

Sprint Pick Switch



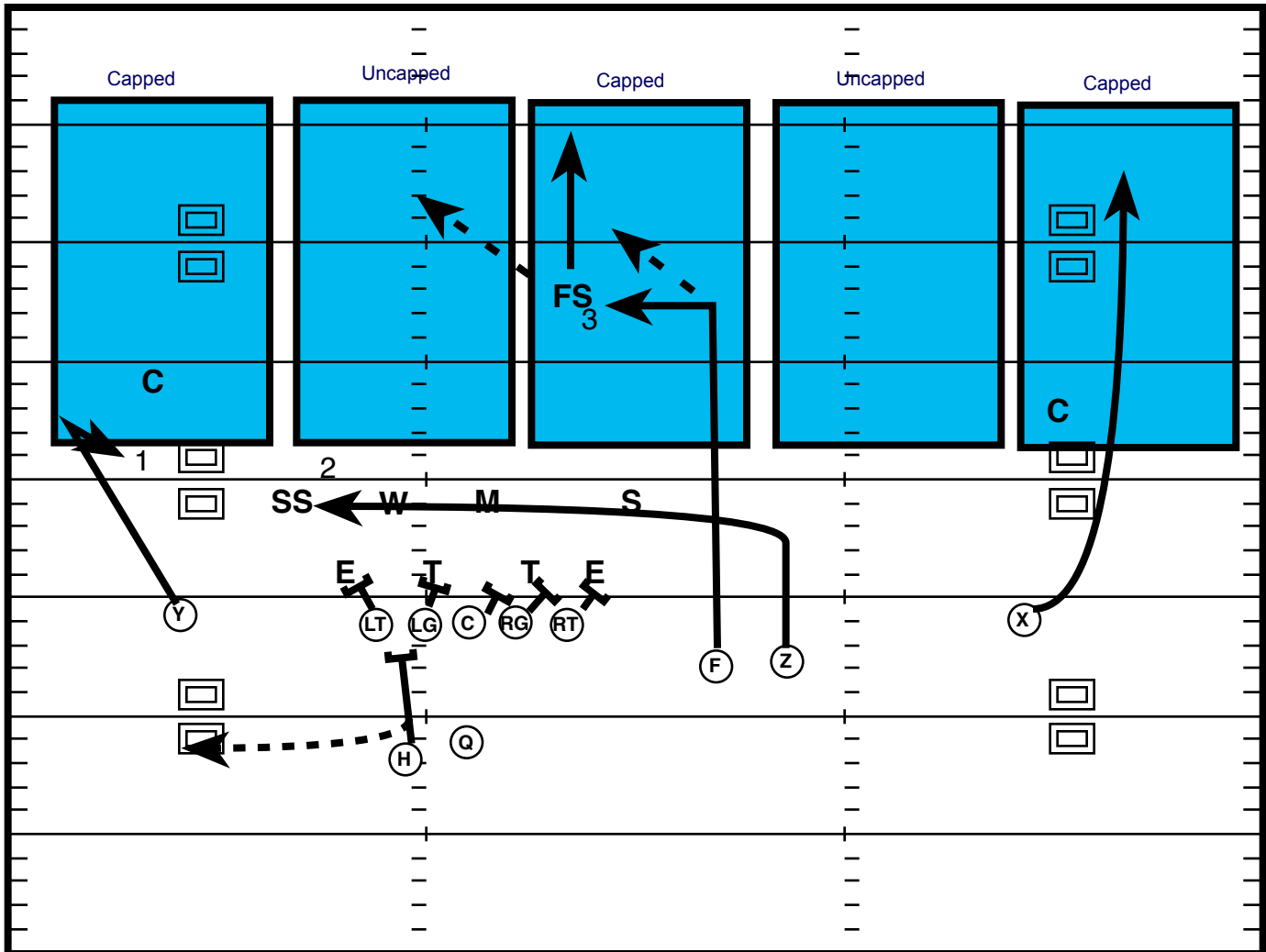
How It Works:

The Sprint Pick Play is called as a counter to the Go Play to give a different look to the defense and stress the corner with a "pick" of the Strong Safety

With the switch the only thing changes is the Z is running the out and the F is running the corner. Because this hits even faster with the Z, a sprint out is the preferred method.

All the reads are the same as regular Sprint Pick.

"Choice Z Special" vs 1 High



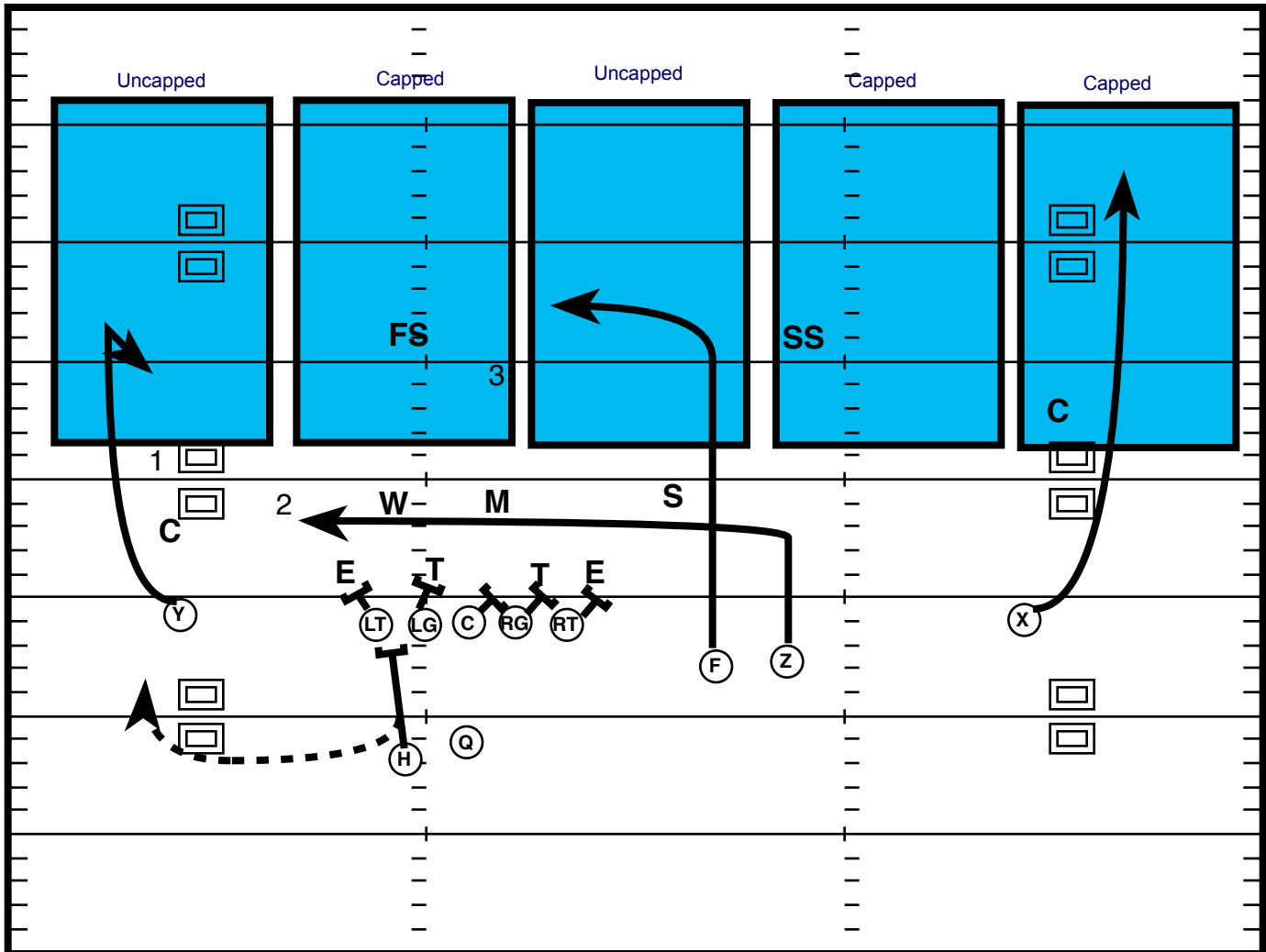
How It Works:

The Choice route vs Cover Three with a single high free safety is a play designed to start with an option route to the Y. Traditionally the Y could run a variety of options, but Hawaii has only shown two clear variations. The first is a wide Hitch. This route makes sense against cover 3 because to the boundary side, the throw is shorter and running the hitch wide helps avoid any under coverage by an outside linebacker that could deflect or intercept the ball. The other option is to run a speed out, but often the tight split needed to make this play work could give it away. Against any soft coverage the default route looks to be a type of wide hitch that turns into a kind of spot throw with the receiver turning inside at about 7x1 from the sideline. I have found this route to be good against any coverage personally.

The Quarterback's read is to start with the Y and throw it if it is clear. If cloudy, he then progresses to find the Z on the shallow drag and finally the F on the Dig at 10 yards.

If the QB makes sure to look toward the Y the FS and W on the backside should be pulled away from the Shallow and Dig for easy completions.

"Choice Z Special" vs 2 High



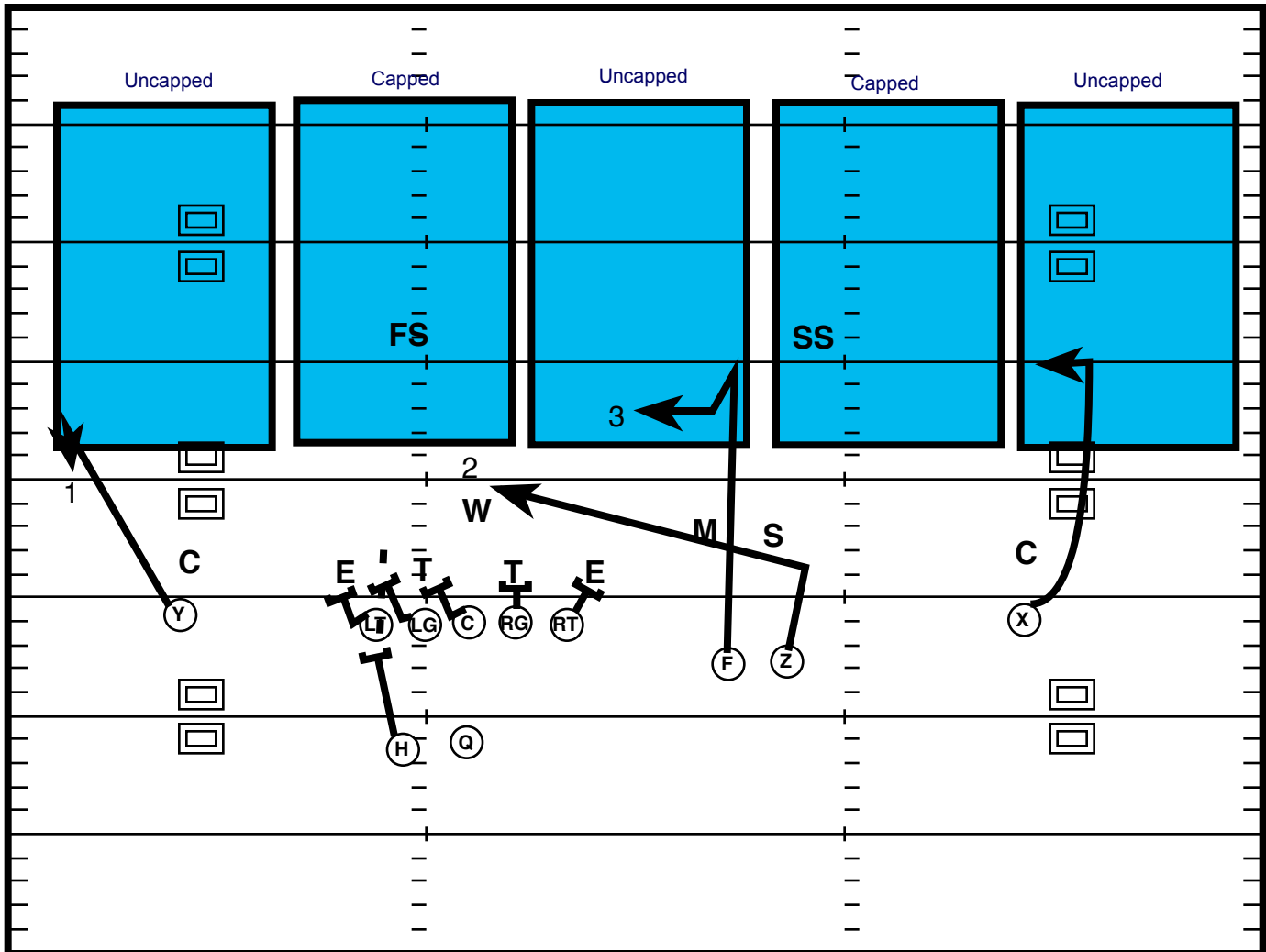
How It Works:

The Choice route vs Cover 2 with two high safeties is also designed to start with an option route to the Y. Against cover 2 the Y has to work hard to release outside the C but once past him can settle in the window between the C and FS. F an Z run the same routes with both looking to settle up in any open windows. The principle of settle in the Zones but keep moving against man holds true here.

The Quarterback's read is to start with the Y and throw it if it is clear. If cloudy, he then progresses to find the Z on the shallow drag and finally the F on the Dig at 10 yards.

If the QB makes sure to look toward the Y the FS and W on the backside should be pulled away from the Shallow and Dig for easy completions.

"Choice Z Special" vs Man



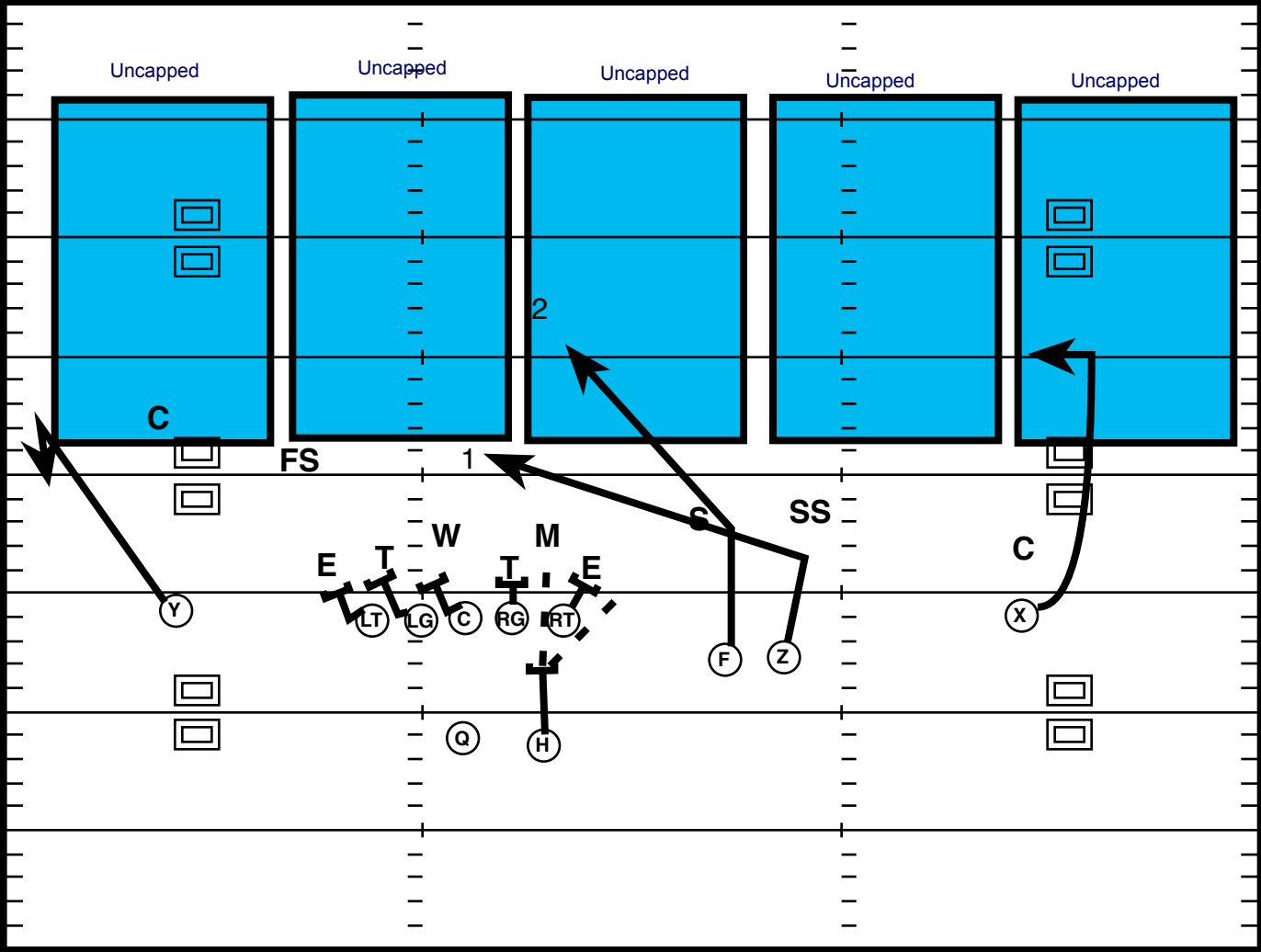
How It Works:

The Choice route vs Man with 1 or 2 safeties high takes a different look. Starting with the Y, the wide hitch turns into a back shoulder fade. This should be worked on daily in practice to get the timing down perfectly. The ball should be thrown about 12-15 yds to the back shoulder on a line. The F has an important clear out and must release outside his man defender. At the top of his route he can execute the Top-Gun technique (watch the movie and you'll see what I'm talking about because it's much cooler with fighter jets) and break back inside continuing across the field at about 10 yds. The Z has a wide slant to make the break back under the F creating a natural rub. Both F and Z should be 1-2 yds apart in spacing. X runs off a clear route.

The Quarterback's read is to start with the Y and throw it if it is clear. If cloudy, he then progresses to find the Z on the shallow drag and finally the F on the Dig at 10 yards. He can also pre-snap eliminate the Y if he wishes and go straight to the Backside Z to F read.

All receivers must keep running if it is man, especially if the QB pumps and scrambles.

"Choice Z Special" vs Blitz



How It Works:

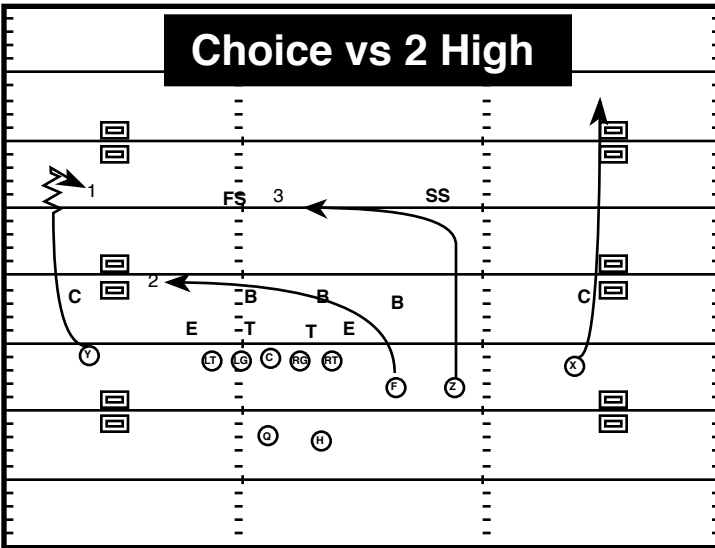
The Choice route vs Blitz is similar to Man with one major exception. The F can now run a quick slant to any angle of the field he chooses to get most open. He will press the toes of his defender and break expecting the throw now.

The Quarterback's read when he sees a heavy blitz with no defenders over the top only goes to F or Z. He likely will not have to go from Y to F and Z. Both F and Z should be open so he can take his pick of whichever one looks cleaner. His priority is get the ball out calmly, accurately and quickly since the pressure is coming now and they can possibly bring one more then can be blocked.

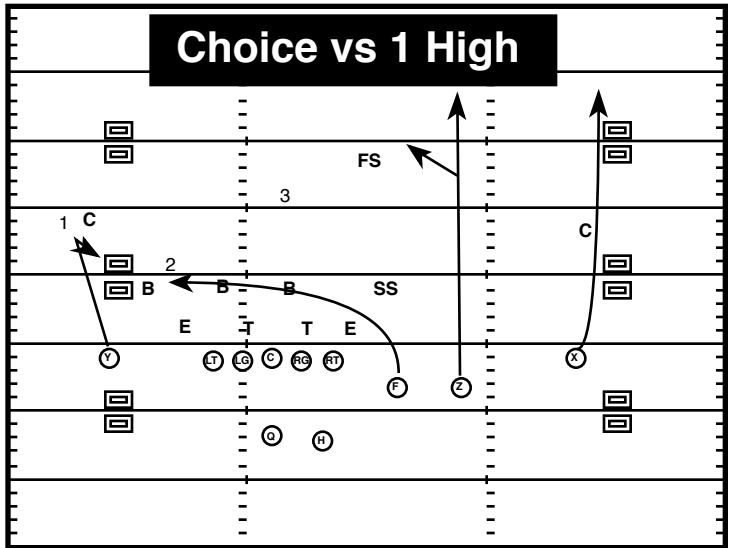
All receivers must keep running and the QB will lead them with his throw. F and Z must do a great job stepping on the defenders toes before breaking to help them get as much separation as possible.

Choice Base

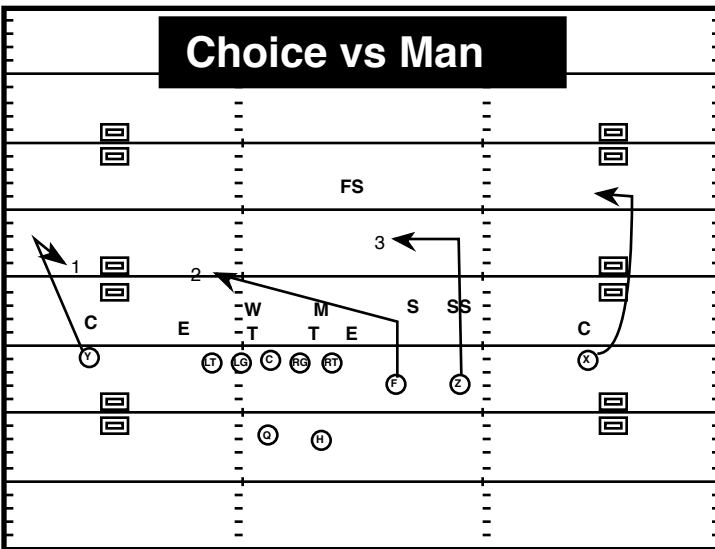
Choice vs 2 High



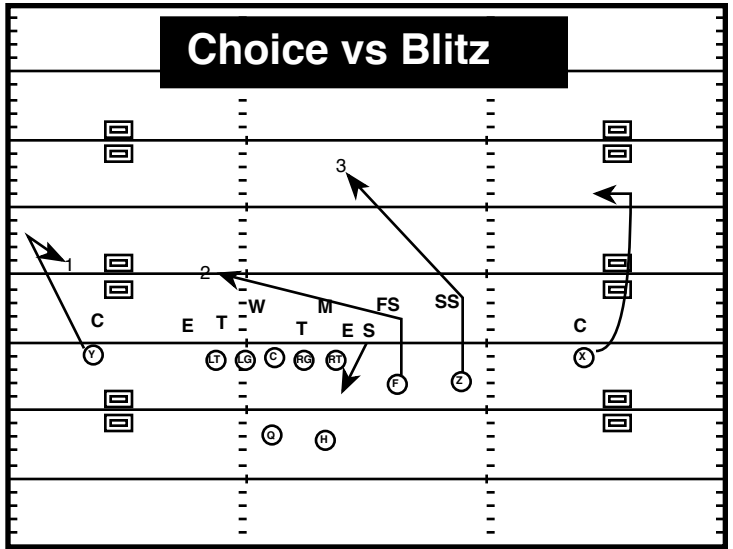
Choice vs 1 High



Choice vs Man



Choice vs Blitz



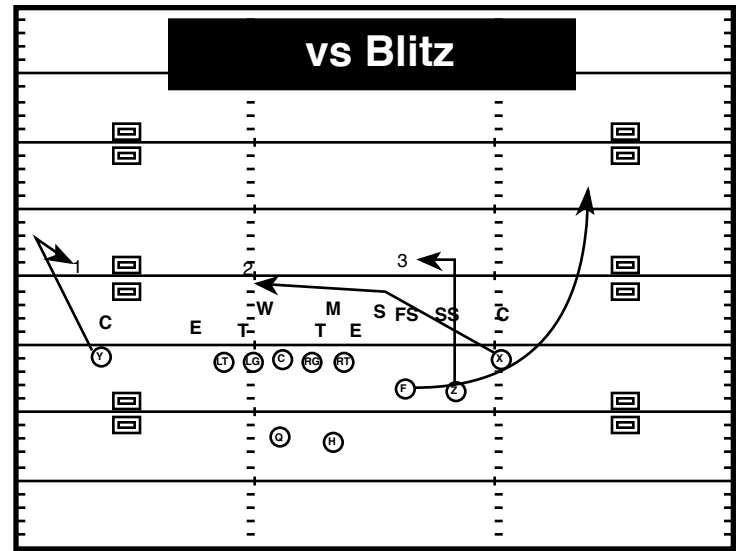
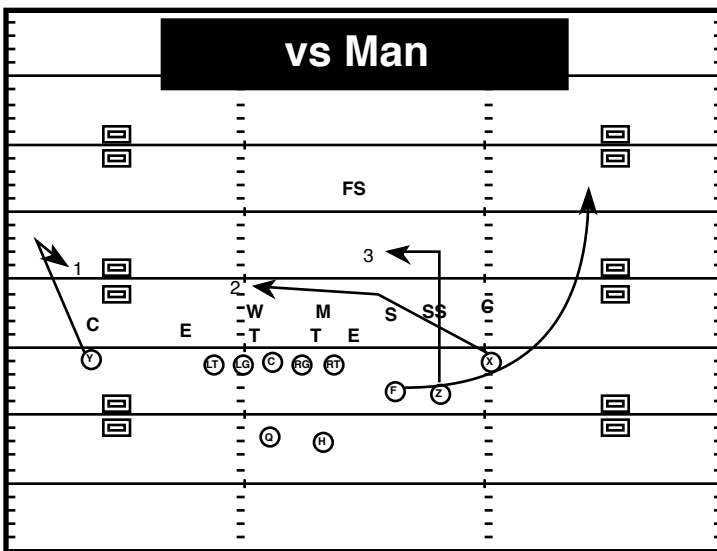
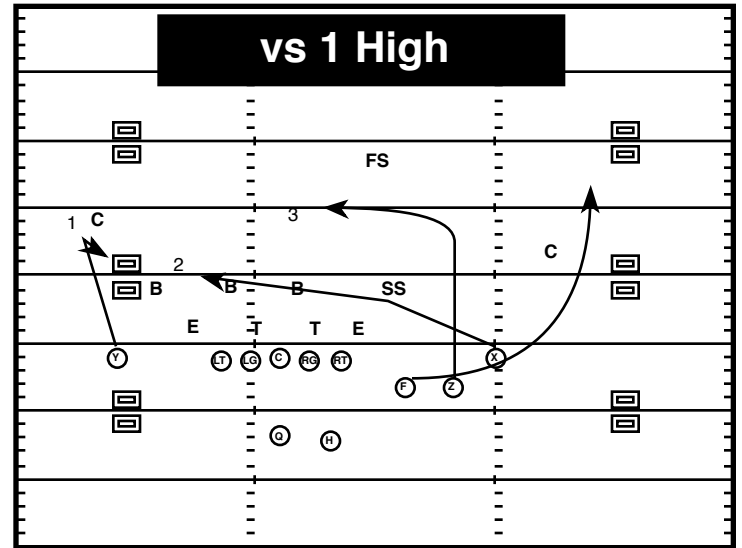
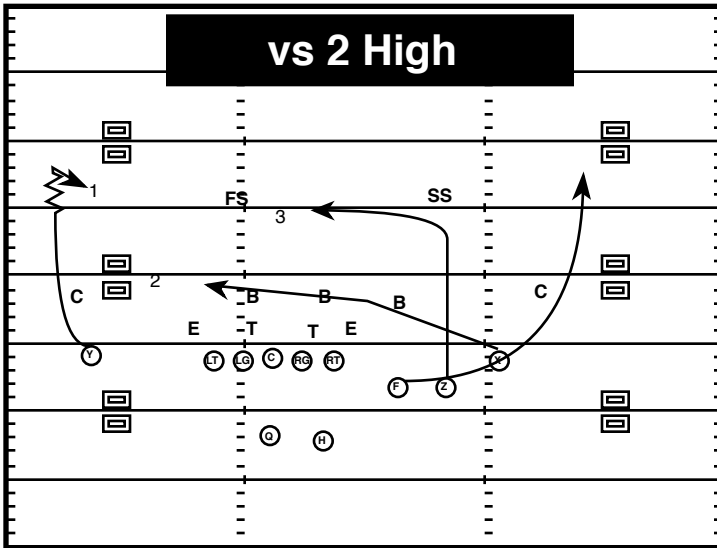
How It Works:

The Choice base package is the route originally designed without any switching. It's effectiveness is in the simplicity of the Choice however it may be easier to defend with man coverage because there is not challenge of crossing receivers.

The progressions and reads are all the same as any other Choice Special. It also allows for the X, Z and F to be evenly spaced disguising the play more than others.

One important factor to this play is to make sure receivers are never stacked on top of each other in their routes. It is better to have some spacing so the QB never has to throw over one to get to another and also follows a natural progression of movement from one side of the defense to the opposite.

Choice X Special

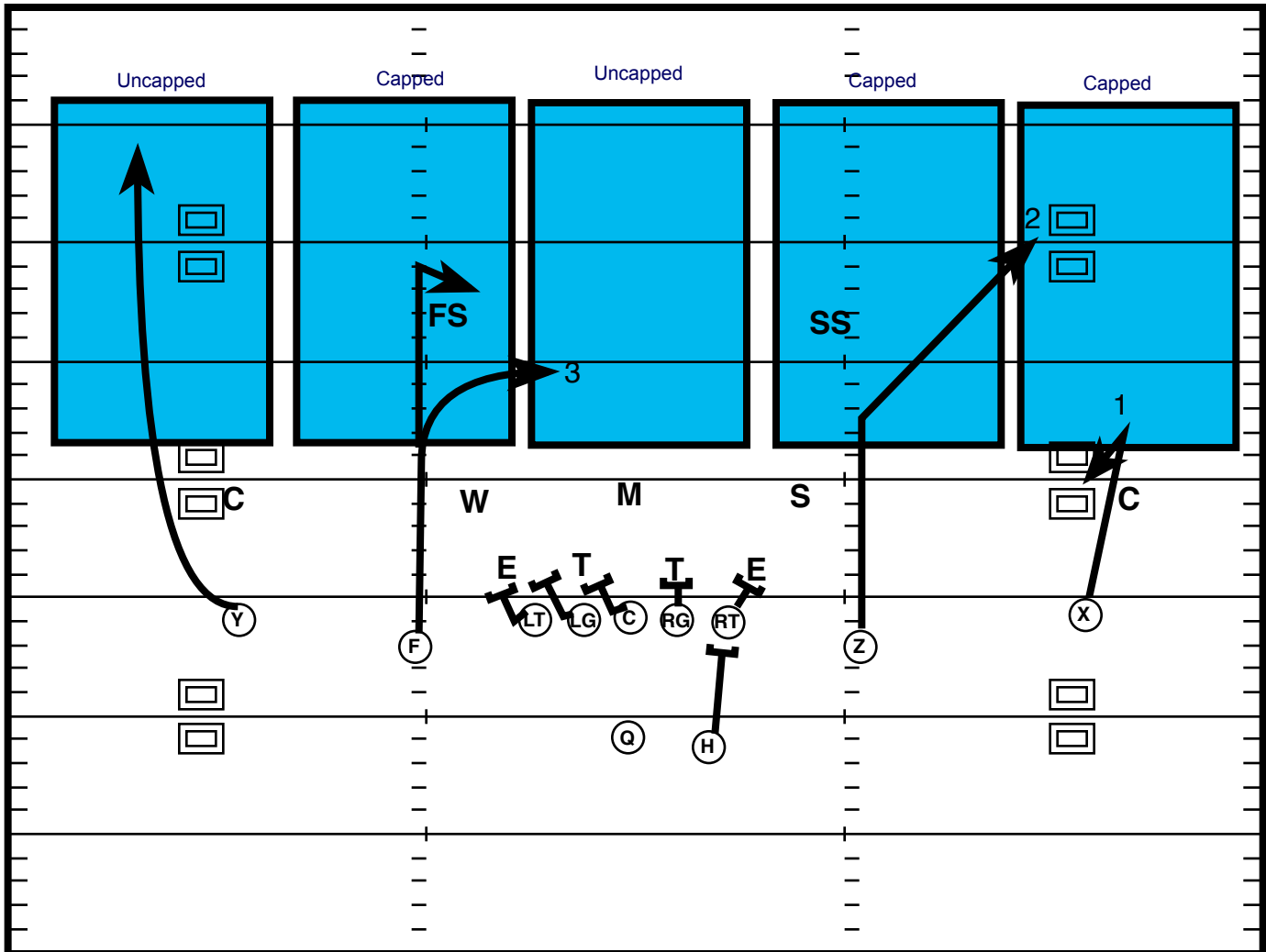


How It Works:

The Choice X special needs to be compressed more because the X has to have time to get across as the shallow cross.

X should always go first and have the right away, even if his release has to take him shallower than necessary. Against hard press teams it may be beneficial to move X off the line and have the Z up on the line. This would be in a more traditional Bunch formation.

"Smash" vs 2 High



How It Works:

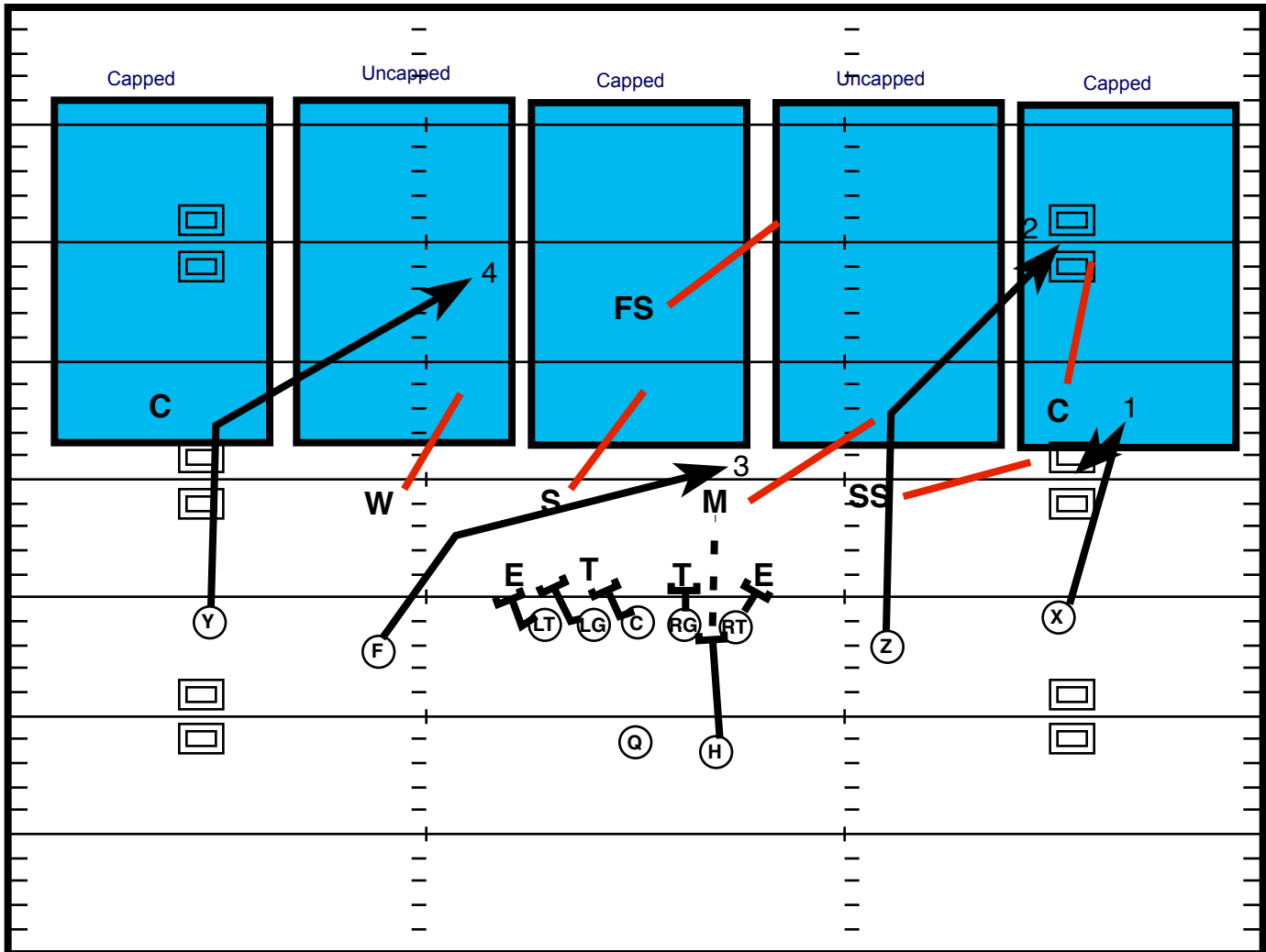
The Smash Route is a great route to challenge two high safeties because of the vertical stretch placed on the Corner and the Horizontal stretch placed on the SS. X runs a 5 yard hitch. Z runs a short corner route behind the X. F will run the bender route and once he clears the W Linebacker, he will bend and find the zone between the Backers under the FS.

The Quarterback's read starts with the Corner playside. If he drops, throw the hitch, if he sits on the Hitch, look to the Z on the corner. If the Z is collisioned and/or the SS is in good coverage the QB will find F digging behind the LB's.

QB will drop and if the Hitch is open throw it on one step. The Corner is on the 3rd step and the F will be on the quarterbacks hitch up step.

There are two ways you can teach the F route. One is to push deep to 14 and come back into an open window between linebackers, the other is to work across at 10-12 and settle into an open window.

"Smash" vs 1 High



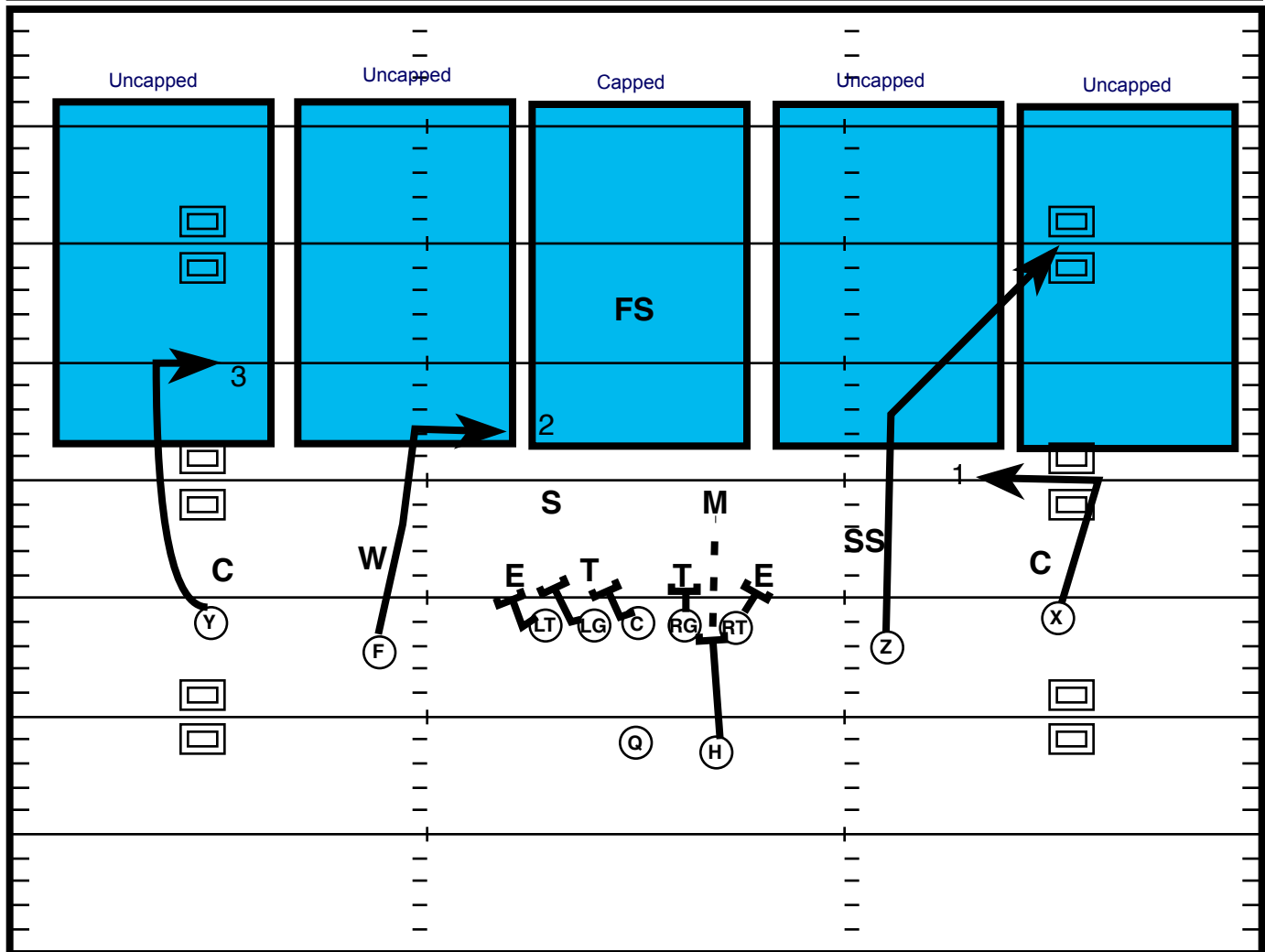
How It Works:

The Smash route is very similar with one high safety on the frontside with the hitch and the corner. X still has a hitch and Z still has a corner. On the backside, the F is different because his goal is to replace the playside inside linebacker (M) and find a window coming from the backside. The Y has a post to also replace the flowing Free Safety. Because of this as the defense rotates, the QB only has to move the next in the progression to find the open receiver.

The Quarterback's read is to start with the X and Z and read the Corner. If both are covered, he next goes to the F who should be replacing the M with a shallow drag at that time.

If there is time, the QB can also progress to a backside Y.

"Smash" vs Man/Blitz

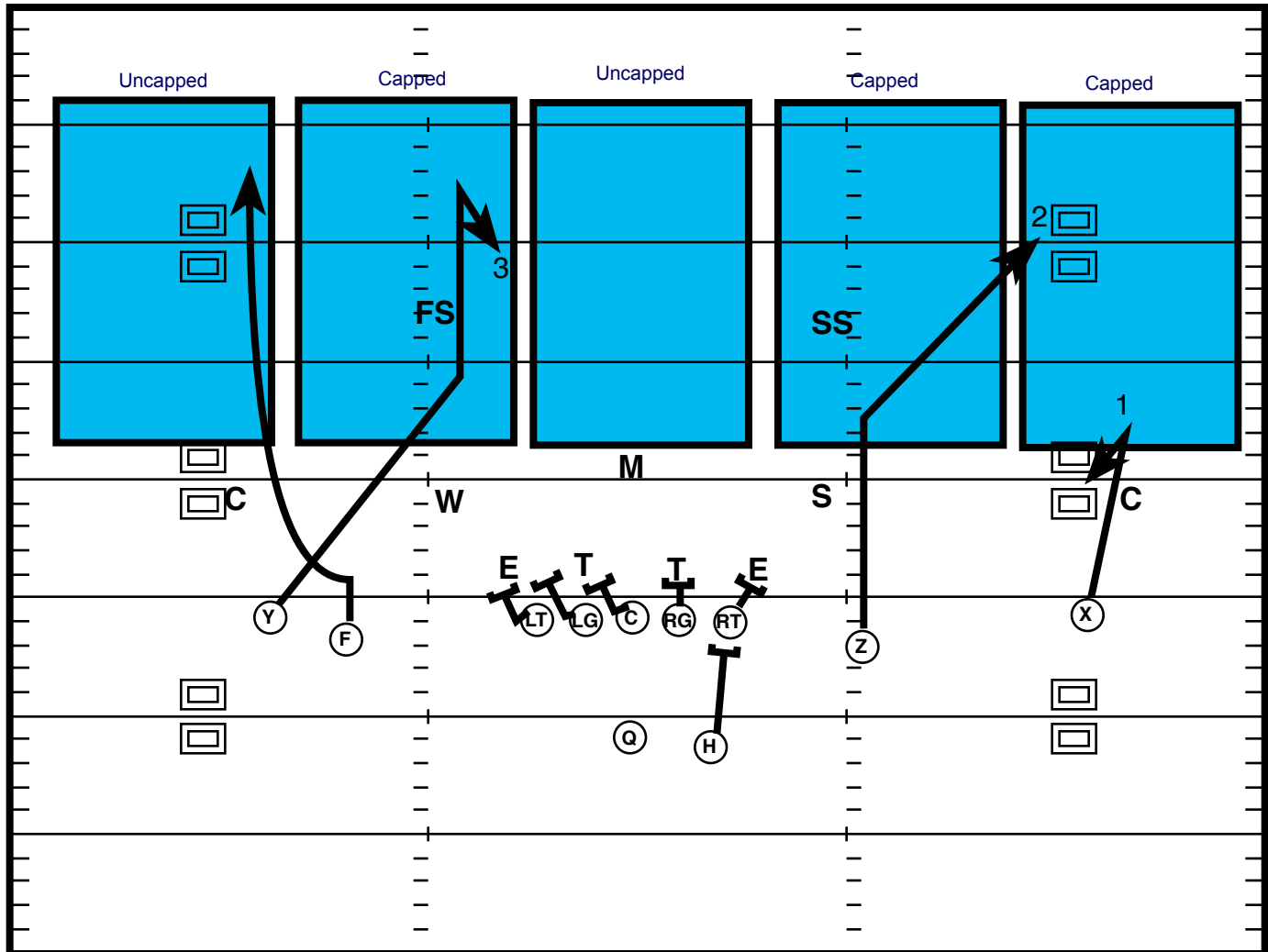


How It Works:

The Smash route against a man coverage changes with the X, F and Y. The X is now the primary receiver and will break off the hitch turning it into a Five and In route. The QB can also choose to go straight to the backside and find F and then Y also on short Dig Routes.

The decision to go frontside or backside can be made based on personnel or favorable spacing for the throw. If under a lot of pressure, the QB should be ready to get rid of the ball quickly to any one of the primary receivers as they are all running routes that can break open quickly.

"Smash/Switch" vs 2 High

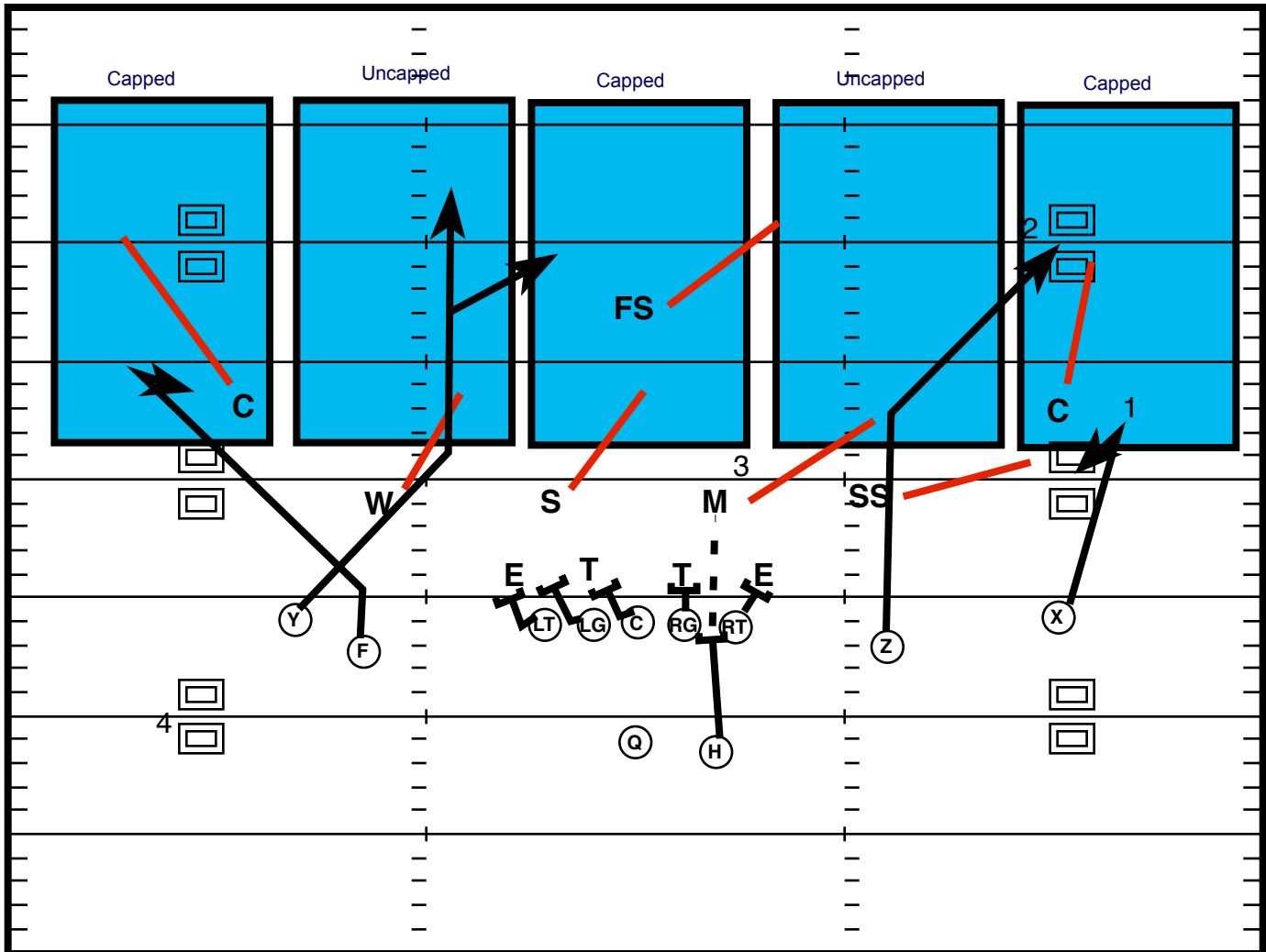


How It Works:

The Smash Switch Route changes from the regular smash in that the Y now runs to the hash and pushes vertically to determine if the FS has leverage covering over the top. If he does, then he must break it down and come back toward the QB finding a window between the backers. If however he can get even with the FS then he can keep running vertically. The F now releases outside toward the numbers behind the Y. He will keep stretching the defense vertically and if the Cornerback sits and the FS stays inside will be wide open.

The Quarterback's read starts playside with a look at the Z to determine if he can break open on the Flag route. If the SS has good coverage or the S gets a good collision, the QB must quickly progress to the Y on the hash. This becomes a primary backside read looking for the Y first then the F.

"Smash/Switch" vs 1 High



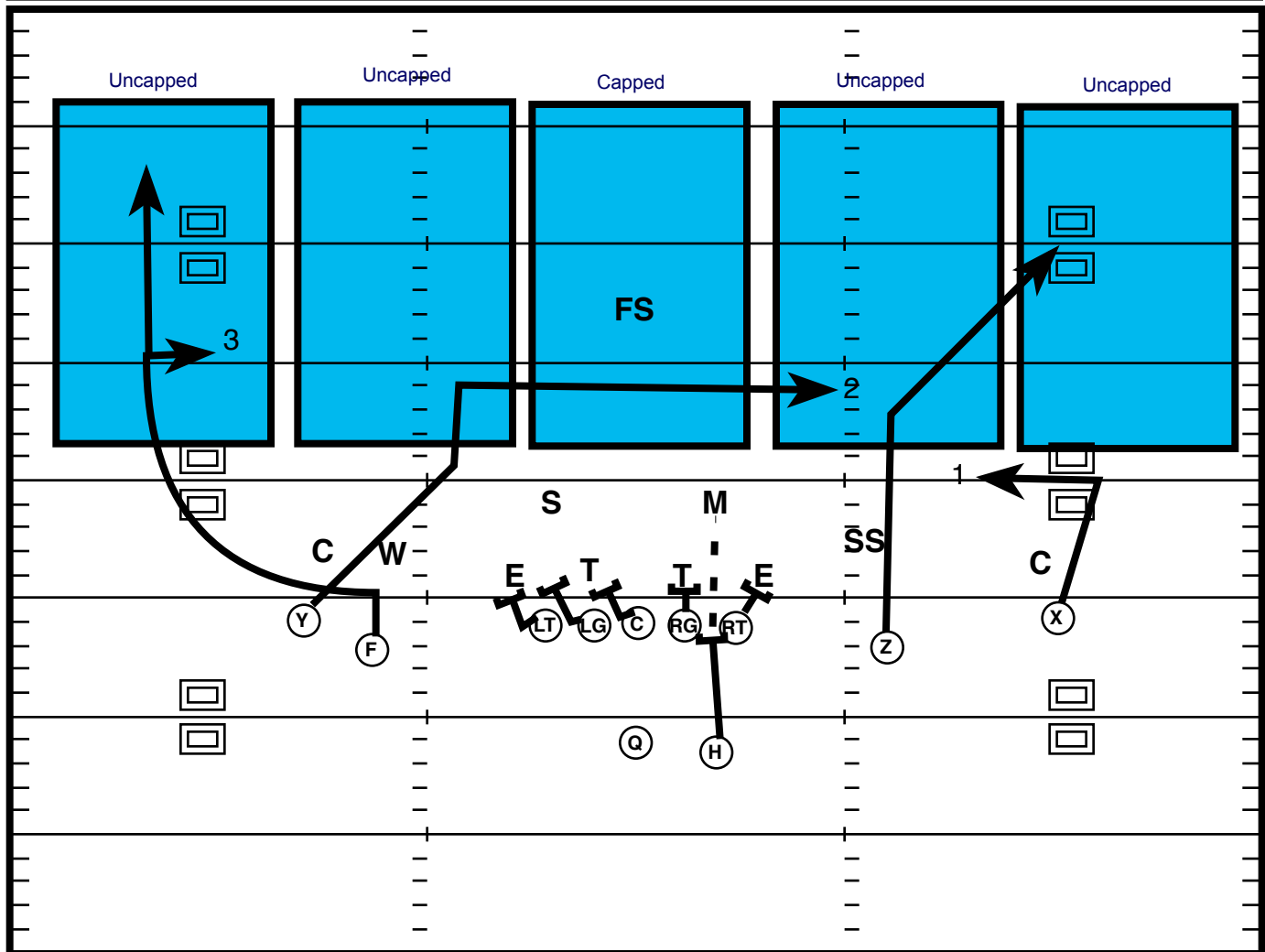
How It Works:

The Smash Switch difference with a single high safety are that the F can sit down if covered over the top by the Corner.

The Quarterback's read is to the playside Corner first to determine if the Z or X are open. Then he can progress backside to the F and Y. If the Smash to the playside is not open then the QB can now focus on finding the Y who should then always be open.

If there is a scramble situation the QB to the left will have the F as a nice sideline release and Y can scramble over as well.

"Smash/Switch" vs Man/Blitz

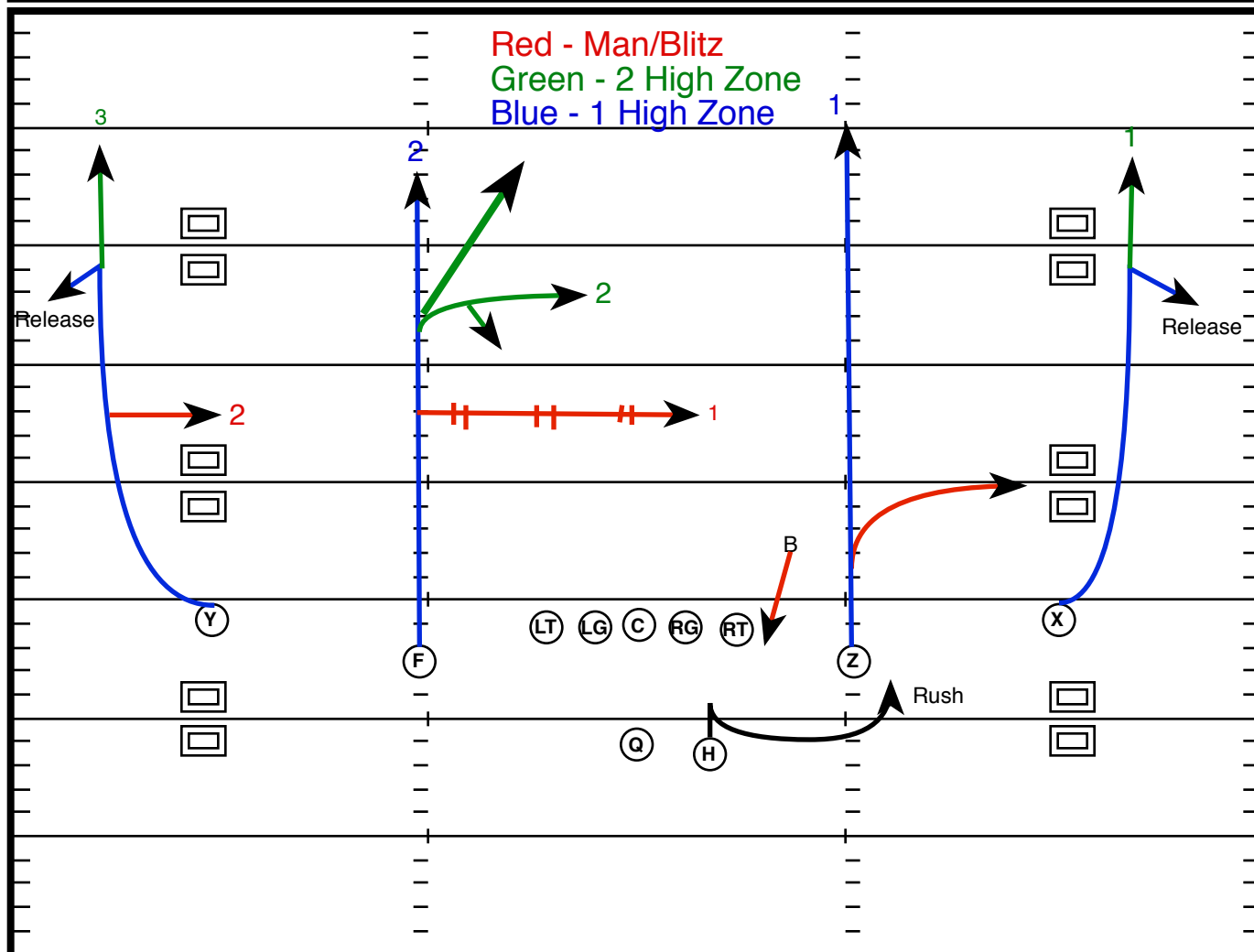


How It Works:

The Smash Switch route against a Man and Zone coverage changes with the X, F and Y. The X is now the primary receiver and will break off the hitch turning it into a Five and In route. Y has the first right of way to get inside to the hash where he then pushes vertical enough to create separation on the dig. On his release he can hinder the W by running through a shoulder pad on the way to the hash which could free the F. F should stutter and then release behind Y and if the W can't get through and the C doesn't pick him up, can continue up the sideline. The Y and F should have a tighter split against this coverage if possible to help with the "picking" action and make coverage much more difficult. If F gets picked up well he will break his route back inside at 10 yards.

The QB's primary look is at the C. If he has time or scrambles then he can find Y or F that have also broken off their routes. Man to Man technique is to keep moving and if the QB scrambles, always try to mirror the QB's movement with yours.

"Streak" vs All



How It Works:

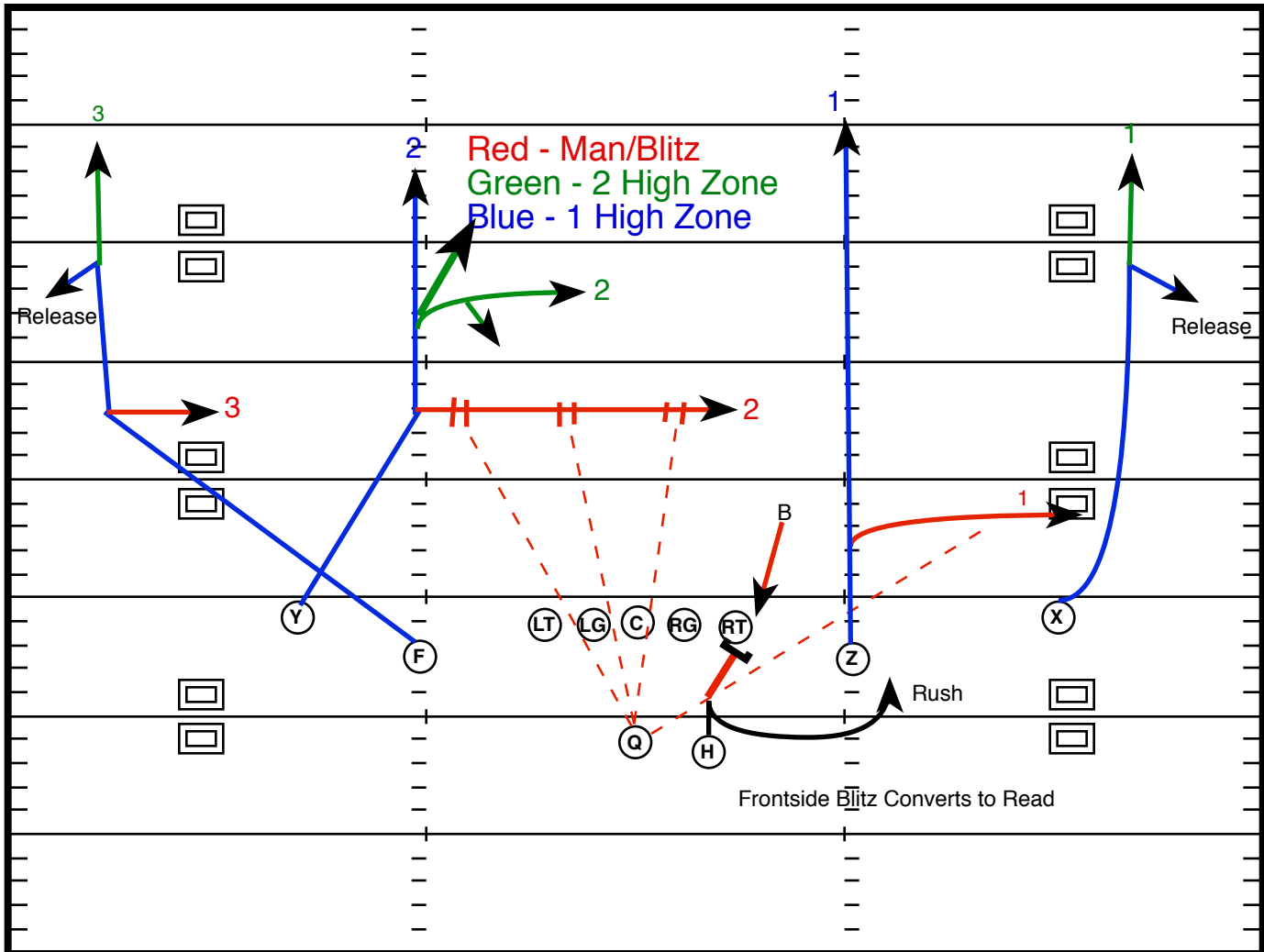
The Streak is one of the most popular Run and Shoot plays that has been adapted multiple ways into many offensive systems.

The benefit of the Run and Shoot version is that it has built in "on the fly" adjustments to defensive reactions that players are already used to using. The F has the same adjustments on the backside as Smash and the Z converts against a frontside B blitz to the Read route 4 step out.

The Quarterback's Progression is also very similar in that he is looking to the two receivers playside running the "Rails" and then to the Backside F if no one is running clear.

To make this play work the best, make sure you have the Z locked on his "rail" on the hash and the QB looks and semi-rolls playside to draw the defense over. If both receivers are "capped" (R4 Terminology) then the QB sets his feet and must find the F coming from the backside. The F should be your best receiver and your QB should be confident that if both Z and X are covered, then he will always be open.

"Streak Switch" vs All



How It Works:

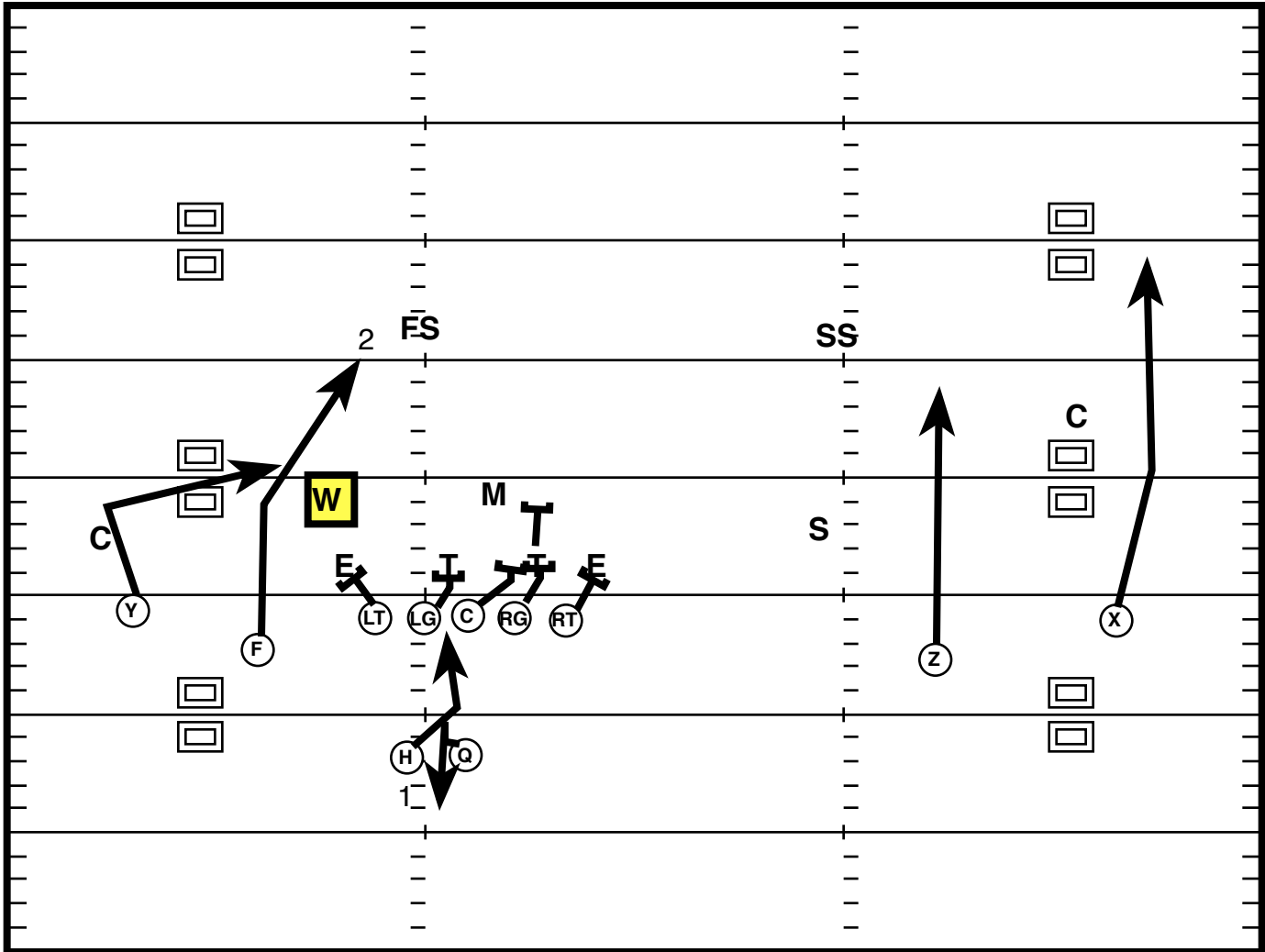
The Streak Switch is a variation on Streak that has the Y and F switching as they release into their routes. This is a good changeup vs Cover 2 teams that want to make it difficult to release vertically. It also helps disguise the backside seam/dig/curl making it more difficult for Linebackers and Safeties to defend.

Against a frontside Blitz, the Z will convert to the Read Package route which is a 4 step out route and an easy quick throw for the QB. If it is picked up, he still can progress to the backside just like in the Read play.

Receivers will need to play with splits to get timing down better with the Y and F moving closer to their landmarks.

Everything else is the same as the Streak.

Double Zone RPO Weak



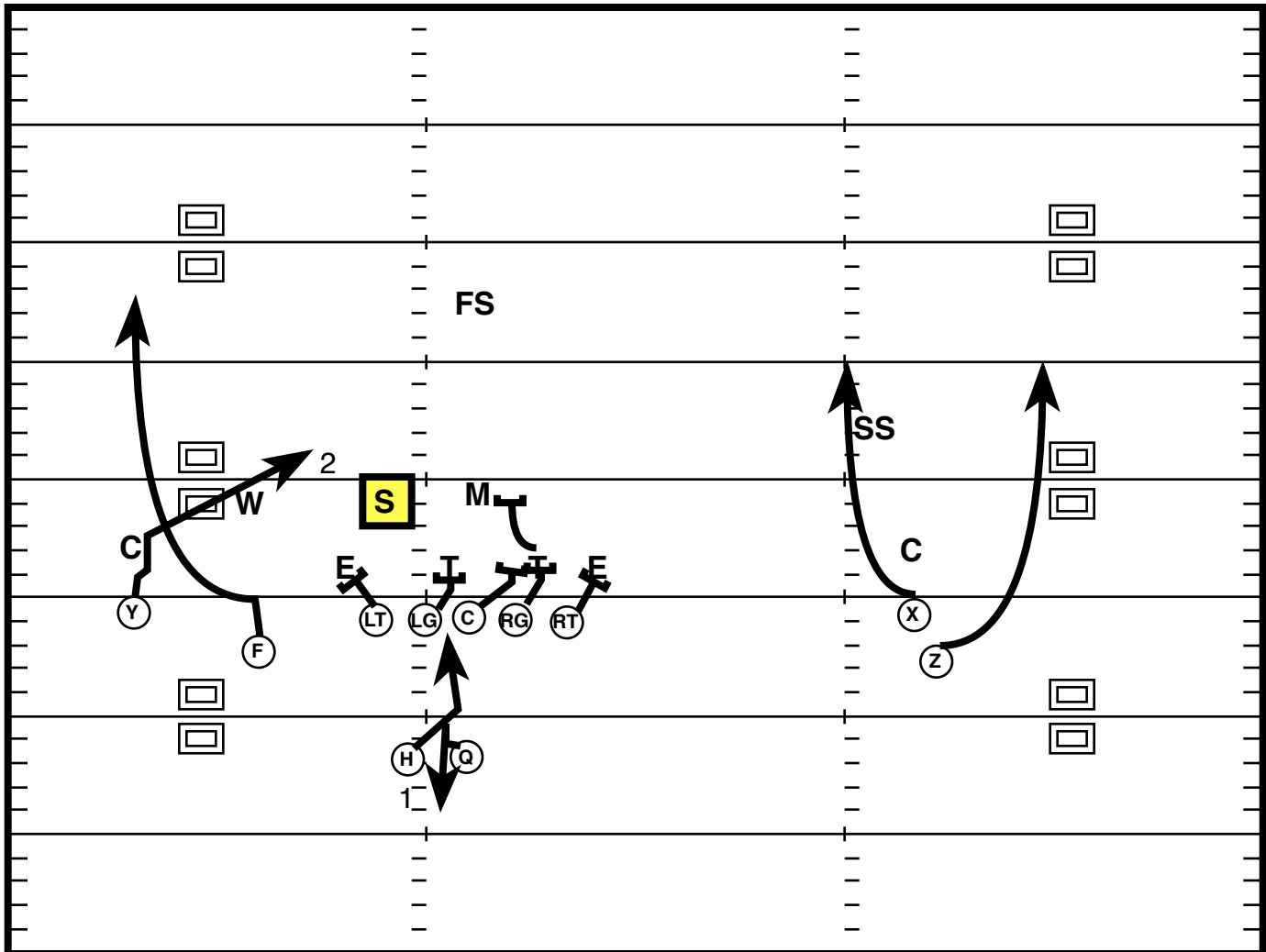
How It Works:

This RPO concept is the base concept that Hawaii runs. It is a Zone blocking scheme with a LT locking on (SOLID call) to the End in man. The QB will read the flat/curl defender - or first man inside the F defensively. If he steps up then the read is to pull the ball from the mesh with the H and throw the slant. The slant route is a base slant at a 45 degree angle. The Y becomes the second option if the F gets covered down by the FS. Y runs an "Outside Slant" to give him more spacing to find the window and keep his defender out of position should he receive the pass.

The offensive line is blocking with a step playside and block your man if you are covered. If you are uncovered like the Center, you will help playside with the next man up to the Mike Linebacker.

If the H receives the handoff he will look to Bang it up playside A gap or bend it back to the B gap bubble on the backside.

Doubles Zone RPO Weak vs Man

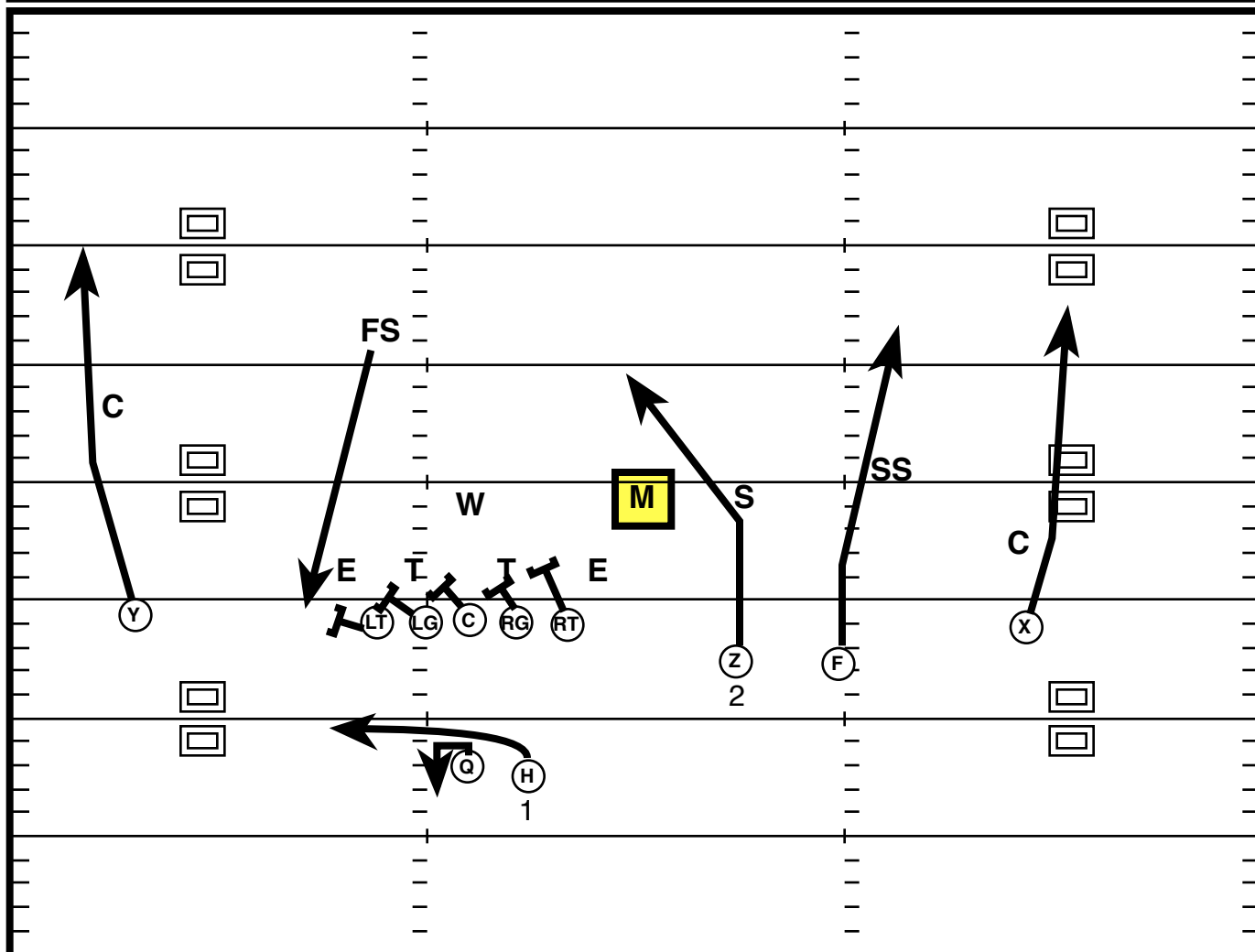


How It Works:

The Doubles Zone RPO Weak vs man has a change for the F and the Y. The F will release vertically into the path of the C to create a rub for the Y. The Y receiver does a nice job getting leveling up the defender with a stutter step and then getting inside position before breaking on the slant.

QB's read is the first man inside the F on the second level. This is the S Linebacker shown in the yellow box above. Because the W is head up on the F he is disqualified. If the S steps up to defend the run when the Mesh is occurring, the QB will pull the ball and throw the slant to the vacated area behind him.

Trips OZ RPO Strong



How It Works:

The Trips OZ RPO strong is a combination of Outside Zone and an inside slant route by the Z receiver. The read for the QB is the first inside second level defender to the trips side of the formation.

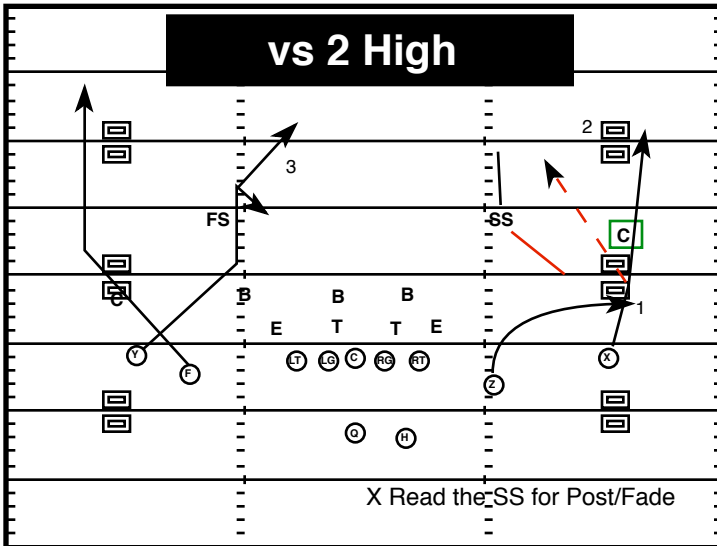
The S is disqualified because of his position so the M will be the Read.

The defensive line executes a Rip and Take Over reach block for the Outside Zone to the left. The RT is include as well because the end will not be a factor in the play if the QB keeps it to throw. The End will be doing his responsibility and squeezing down on the RT.

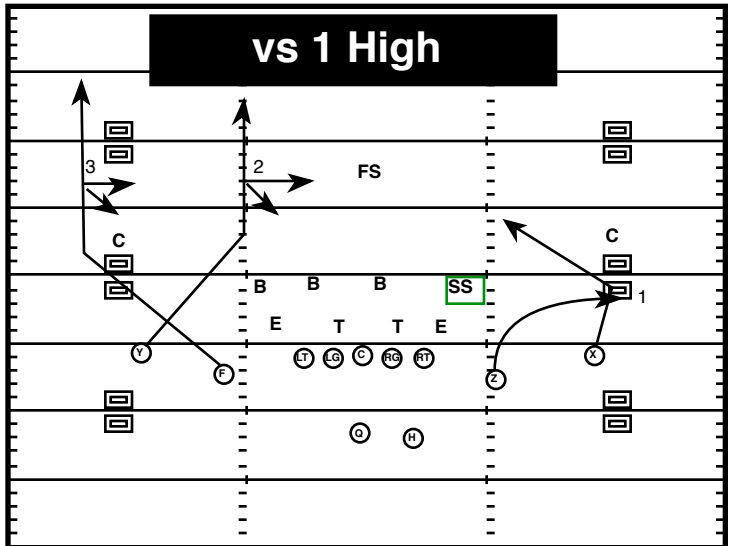
The QB will check the M while shuffling with the H's mesh. If the M steps up to defend run then the QB will pull and throw behind him. If he sits then the QB will give the ball to the H.

Read

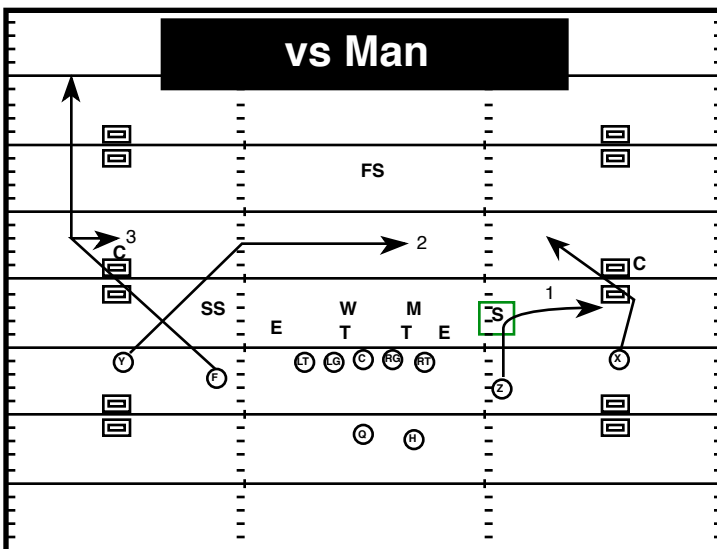
vs 2 High



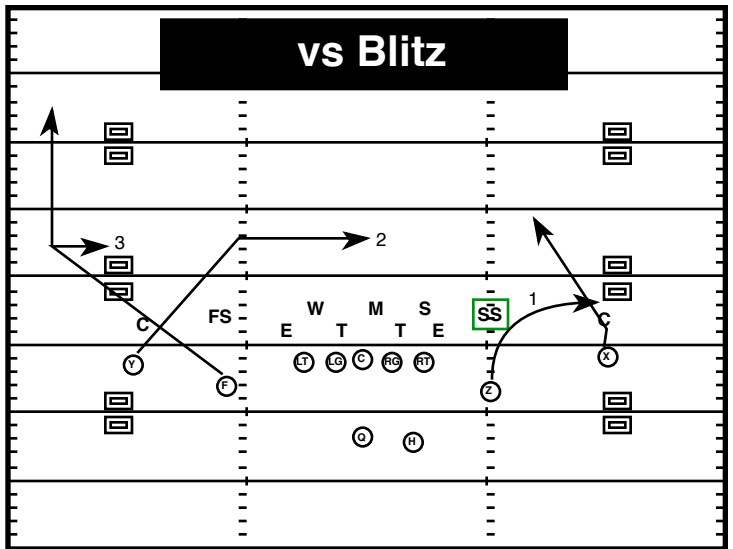
vs 1 High



vs Man



vs Blitz

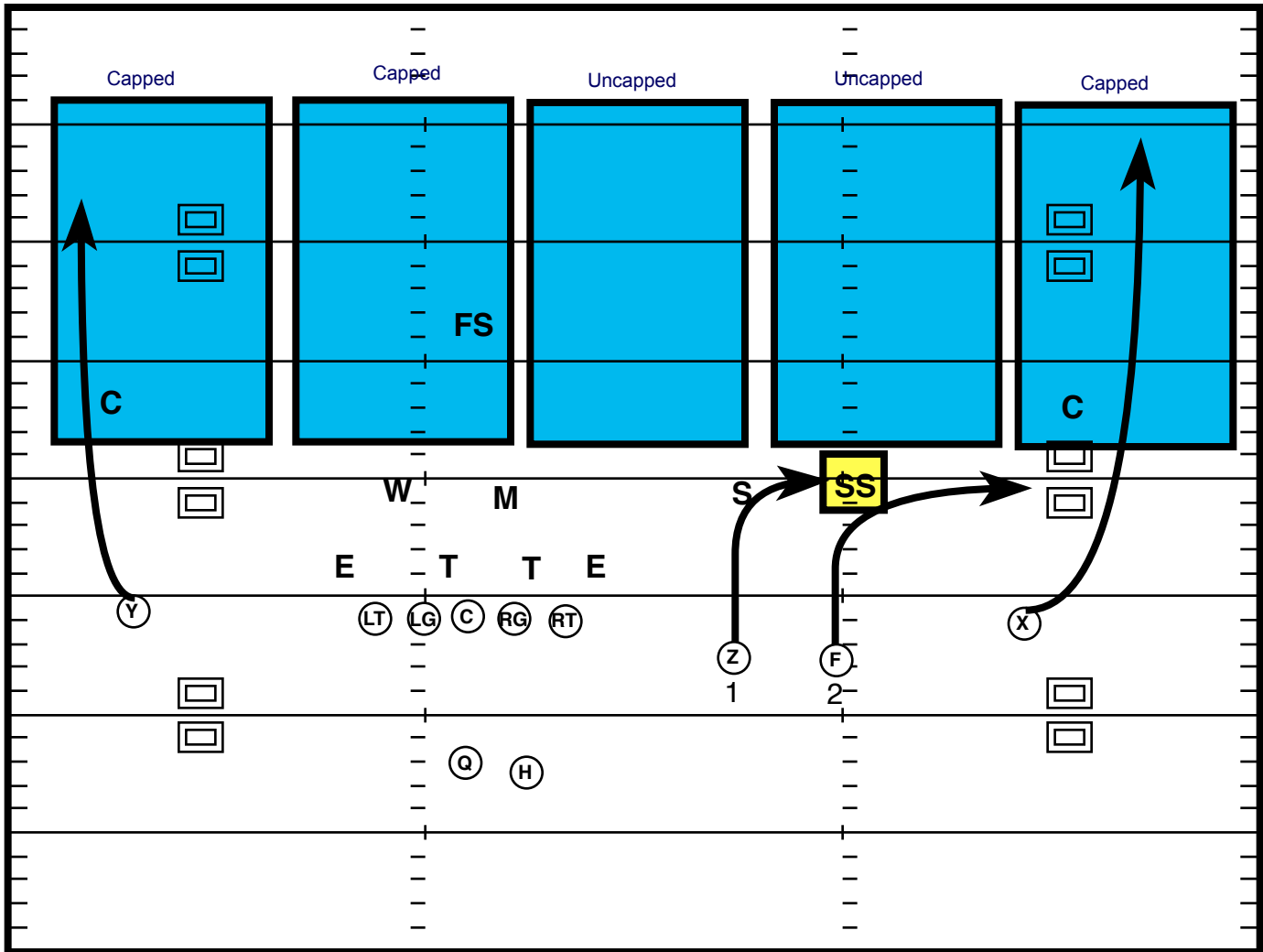


How It Works:

The Read concept begins with a Slant/Flat combination on the frontside and a Switch on the backside. If the defense shows two high safeties, the QB and X should determine pre-snap if it is Cover 2 hard corner or Cover 4 soft corner. Using a hard deck line at 7 yards should be helpful to identify between the two. If the coverage is Cover 2, the QB reads the Corner and the X runs a fade outside. In the 2 High look above the X will still read the near SS for possible loose man. If he sees this he will run the post over the top for a touchdown.

Against man and blitz looks the Backside Y digs across and becomes the primary option unless there is a playside blitz from the S or SS that opens up the Out route by Z right now.

Trips Double Outs



How It Works:

The Trips Double Out Quick Pass is a great quick game pass play that Hawaii runs frequently. It is a great leverage pass that can work against any defense you see. All the routes are set and will not be sight adjusted.

X is clearing out any deep defenders to isolate the under defenders. F and Z have Speed Outs both at the same level. If defenders rollup in a tight man coverage, they will release outside, push up and then speed cut outside. No inside releases are allowed. Everything is a mandatory outside release.

The QB's read key is the widest 2nd level defender. Because the SS rolls up, it is him. If he widens or runs out with the F then the Z should be open. If he sits, then throw to the F. The timing is a quicker one step and throw.

Hawaii's offensive line chose to cut block with the Center and the Guards. The Tackles stayed up but if they do, they must be solid and not kickslide or the Ends may hinder the pass.