

The Pass Rush Bible

The definitive guide to
pressuring the quarterback

By **Craig Roh**

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**Step 1: Develop
the fundamentals**

Stance

Stance is **foundational** to pass rush.

A good pass rush stance sets you up to **gain max distance** with **zero wasted movement**.

click [here](#) to see example



I did the math and you have **2.5 - 3 seconds** to hit, sack or hurry the QB. That's not a lot of time.

So, your stance needs to be **perfectly loaded** so you don't waste precious milliseconds getting to the QB.

Below, I've gone into detail on what exactly you need to concentrate on for a 2, 3 and 4 point stance.

3-point stance

The 3 point stance is a classic. Greats like Dwight Freeney, Robert Mathis and John Randle have used this stance to create havoc in the backfields of countless offenses.

This stance is also one of the easiest to learn and execute correctly making it great for beginners and veterans alike.

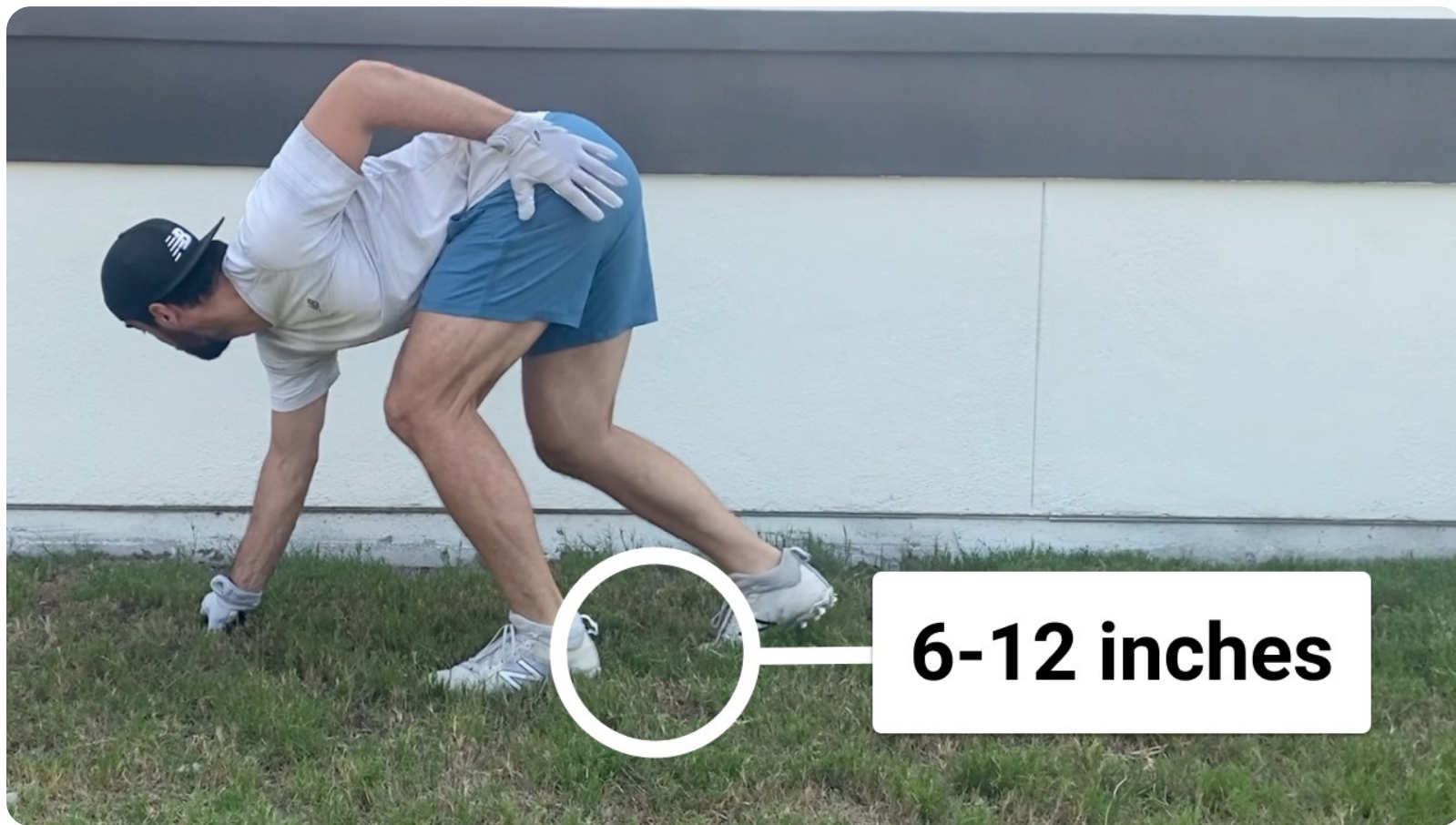
Below, I've detailed the points you need to concentrate on when using a 3 points stance. Here's a quick summary...

Coaching points

- ① Back toe 6-12 inches behind front heal
- ② 6-12 inches between feet
- ③ Hand under chin
- ④ Weight on front hand and foot
- ⑤ Greater than 90 degree angle in the front knee
- ⑥ Off arm cocked

Back toe 6-12 inched behind front heal

How large of a step you take forward will be determined by how much space you have between your back toe and front heal. The larger the space the larger the step.



6-12 inches between feet

Your goal is to gain distance forward and you can't do that if your feet are too wide.



Hand under chin

A hand under your shoulder will allow your body to easily roll forward, but also give you stability so that you don't tip over.



Majority of weight on front hand and foot

You should fall on your face if your hand were to be kicked out.



Greater than 90 degree angle in front knee

A large angle in your knee distributes your weight forward and makes it easier to gain max distance on your first step.



Off arm cocked

A cocked and loaded arm will help you to generate forward force



4-point stance

If you feel like your pad level is too high out of a 3-point, try using a 4-point stance.

Having two hands on the ground will help your upper body stay naturally low and gain distance on your first step.

click [here](#) to see example



The only difference between a 3 and 4-point stance is what you do with your arms when you're getting off.

Since you have both hands in the ground in a 4-point stance it's impossible to cock your arm back before you get off.

So, to generate forward momentum, you need to "split" your arms, violently throw one forward and one backward, when you get off the ball.

click [here](#) to see example



Other than using a “split” everything else stays the same between your 3 and 4-point stance (as seen below).

Coaching points

- ① Back toe 6-12 inches behind front heel
- ② 6-12 inches between feet
- ③ Hands under shoulders
- ④ Weight on hands and front foot
- ⑤ Greater than 90 degree angle in the front knee
- ⑥ Split out of stance

2-point stance

More and more defenses are using stand up edge rushers for greater vision and schematic flexibility.

For these defenses to work though, solid 2-point stances are essential.

Below, are a few of the points you should concentrate on when getting into your 2-point stance.

Coaching points

- ① Back toe 1-2 feet behind front heel
- ③ 6-12 inches between feet
- ② Loaded hips, ankles and off arm
- ④ 60% of weight on front foot
- ⑤ Push off of back foot
- ⑥ Roll over front toe

Back toe 1-2 feet behind front heel & 6-12 inches between feet

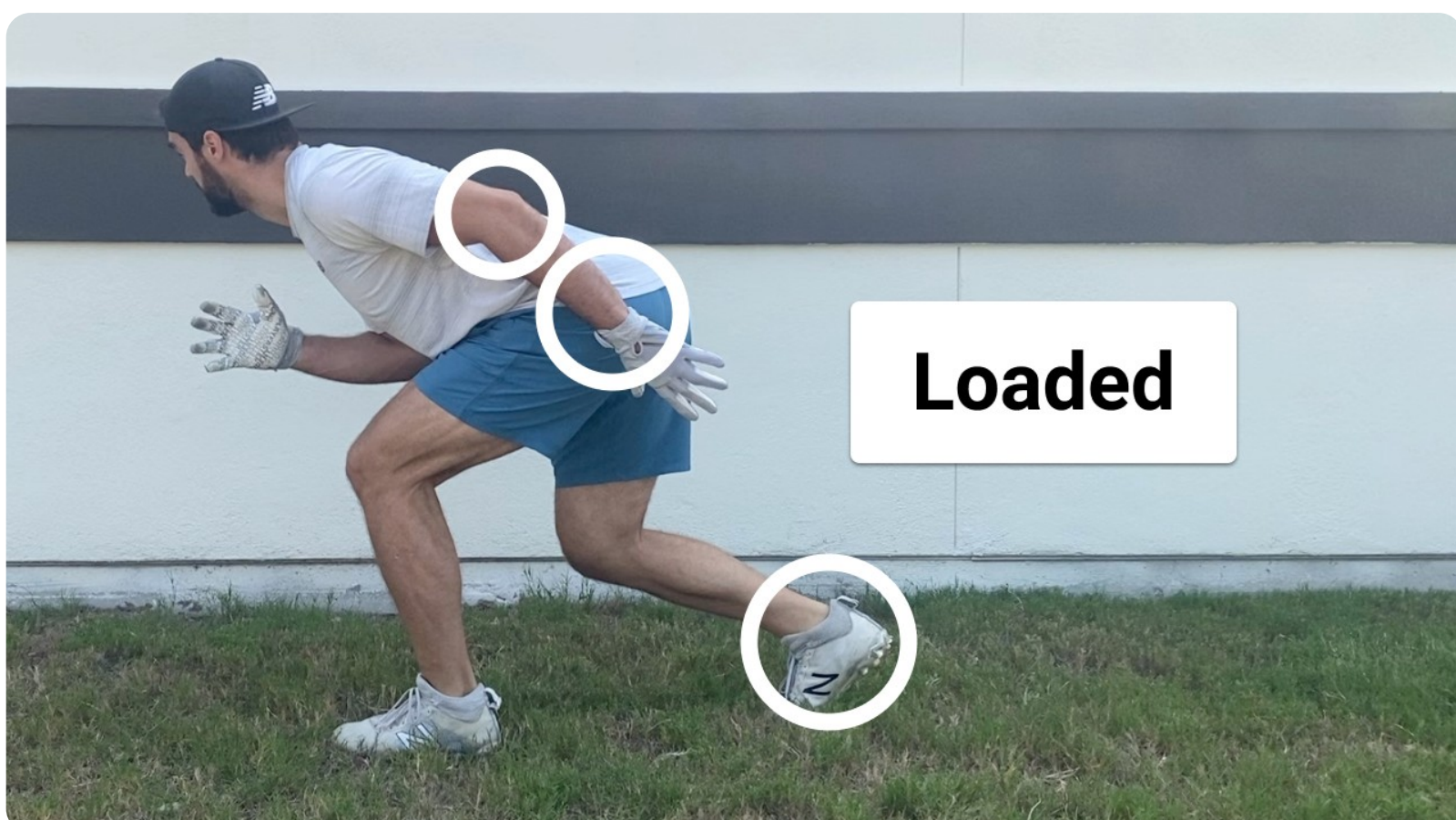
The width and length between your feet will determine the size of your first step.

In a 2-point, though, you will need more vertical distance between you front and back foot than in a 3-point to generate momentum.



Loaded hips, ankles and off arm

Loading these joints will help you to not move backward before moving forward. It's all about being as efficient as possible.



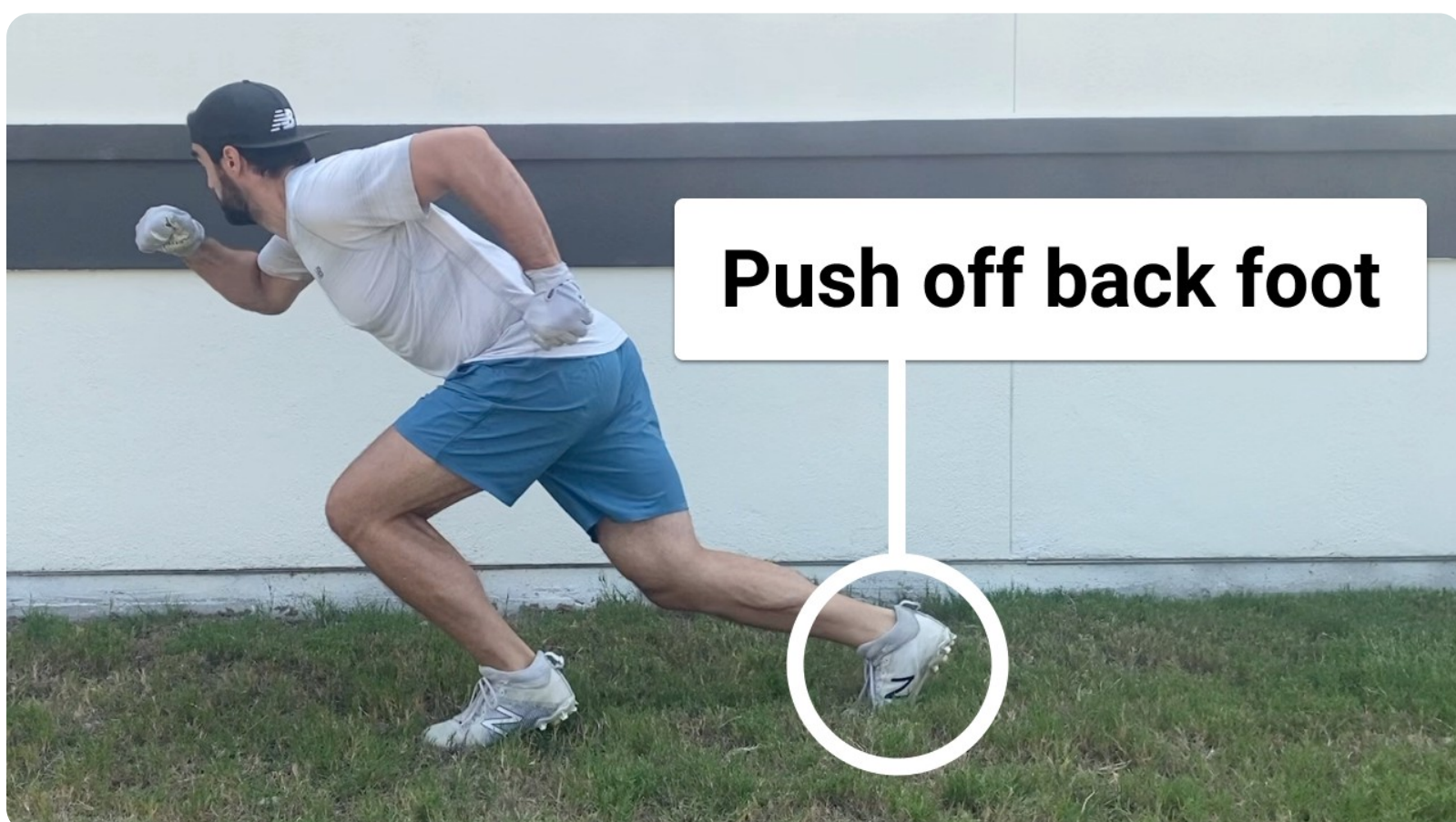
60% weight on front foot

Because you won't be pushing off of your front foot you only need 60% of your weight on it.



Push off of back foot

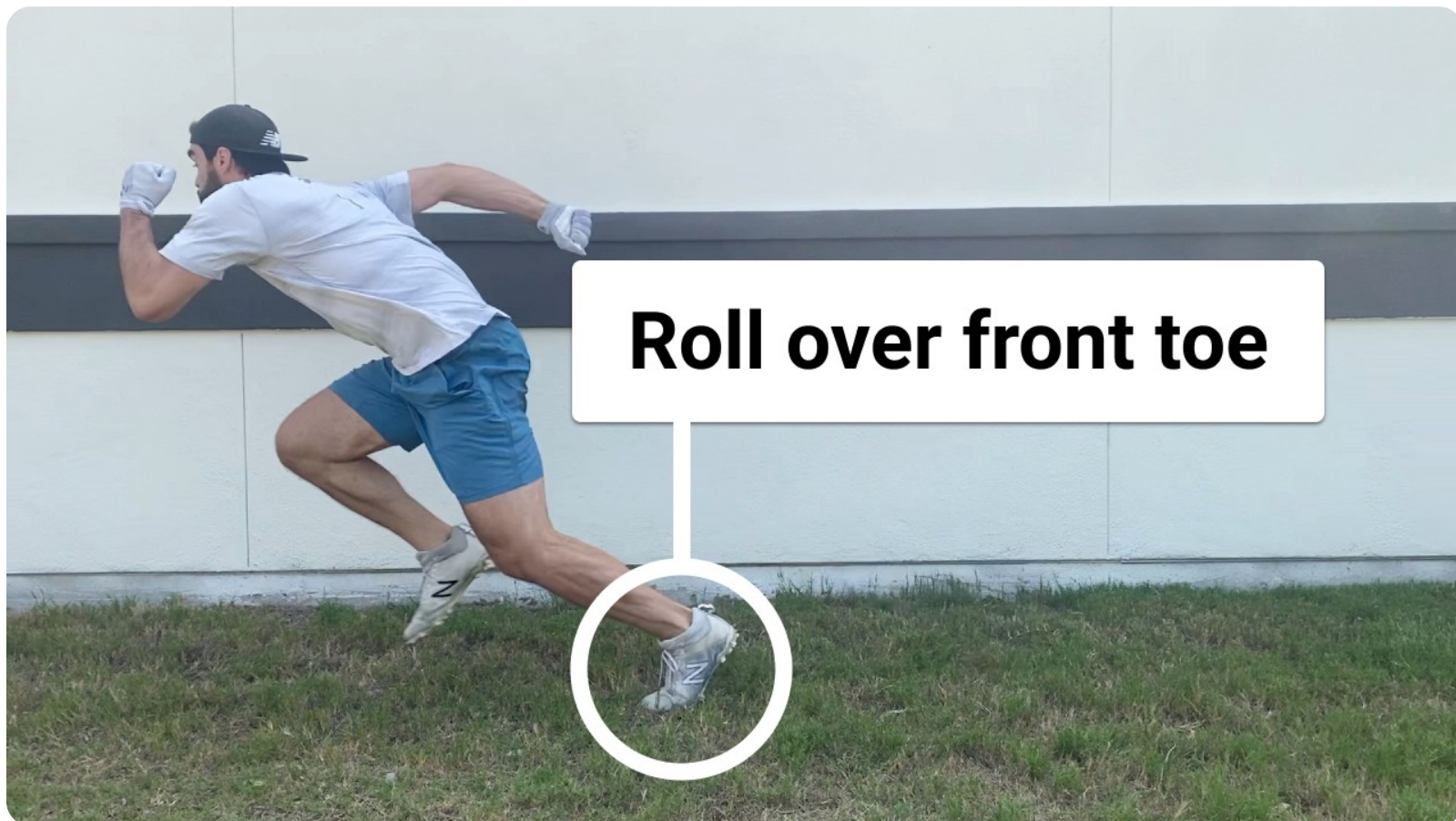
There's not enough of a shin angle to push off of your front foot so you'll need to push off of your back foot.



Roll over front toe

False stepping wastes precious seconds getting to the QB. Instead, keep your foot in the ground and roll over your front toe.

click [here](#) to see example



A final word

Stance is the foundation from a which a great pass rush is built.

If you get it right, you put yourself in a great position to be successful in any pass rush.

Get off

Eric Washington was one of the best D-line coaches I ever had.

He taught me many things about defensive, but the most important was that get off is the number #1 fundamental.

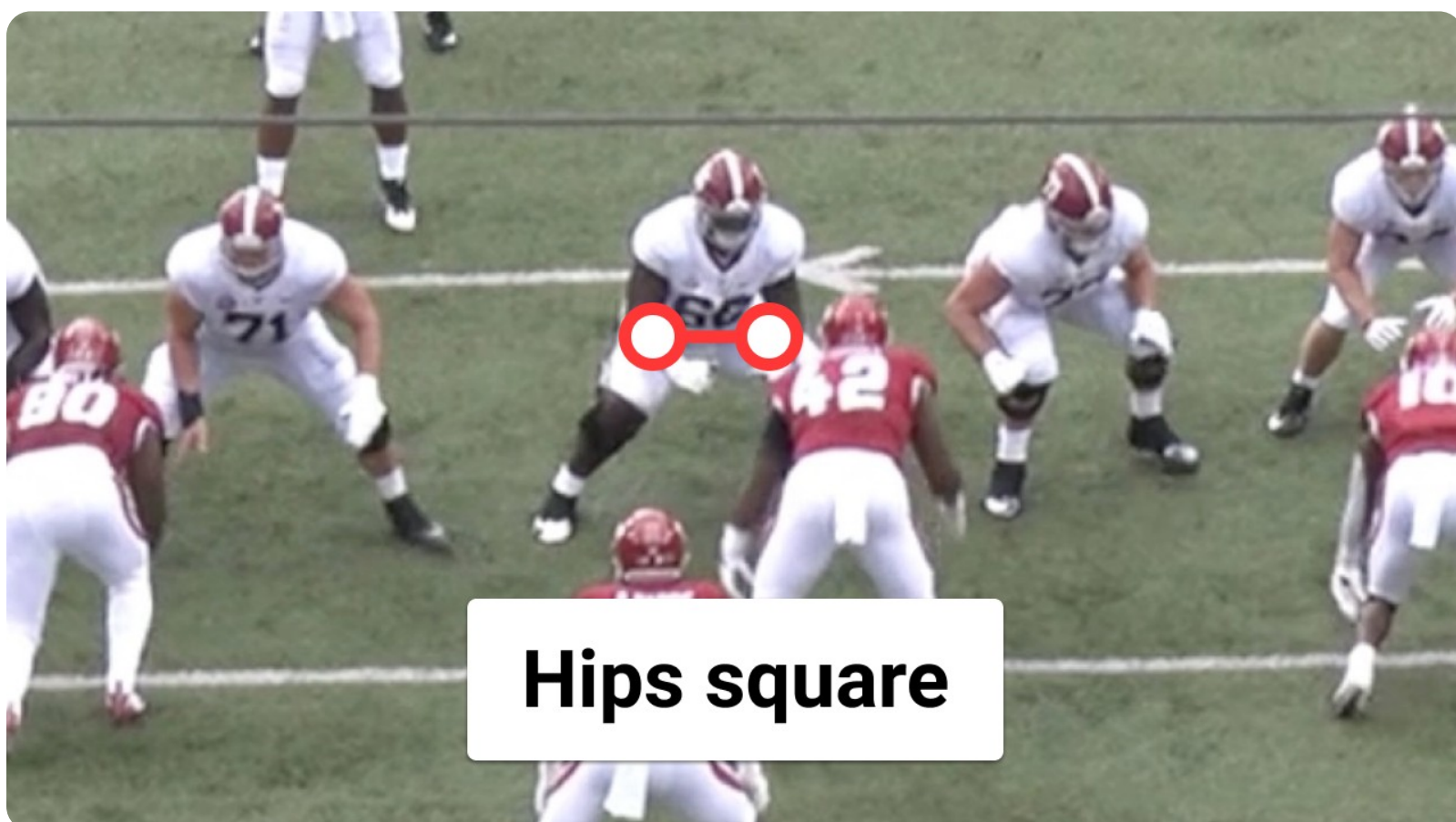
He always used to say, “Get off disrupts the mechanics of your opponent and gives you the advantage”

I’ll explain....

The job of The blocker is to stay in front of you so you can’t get to the quarterback.

To do this, blockers want to keep their hips square so they can defend against power, speed and inside rushes.

click [here](#) to see example



But if you get off the ball before your opponent moves, he will need to **cross his legs** and **turn his hips** to stay in front of you.

click [here](#) to see example



And when you have a blocker in that position you can do anything you want with him.

Let me ask you this...

Would you want to take on a power rush with your legs crossed? Do you think it's harder for your opponent to defend an inside rush with his hips turned out? Do you think he can defend against the speed rush if your shoulder to shoulder with him before he's even moved?

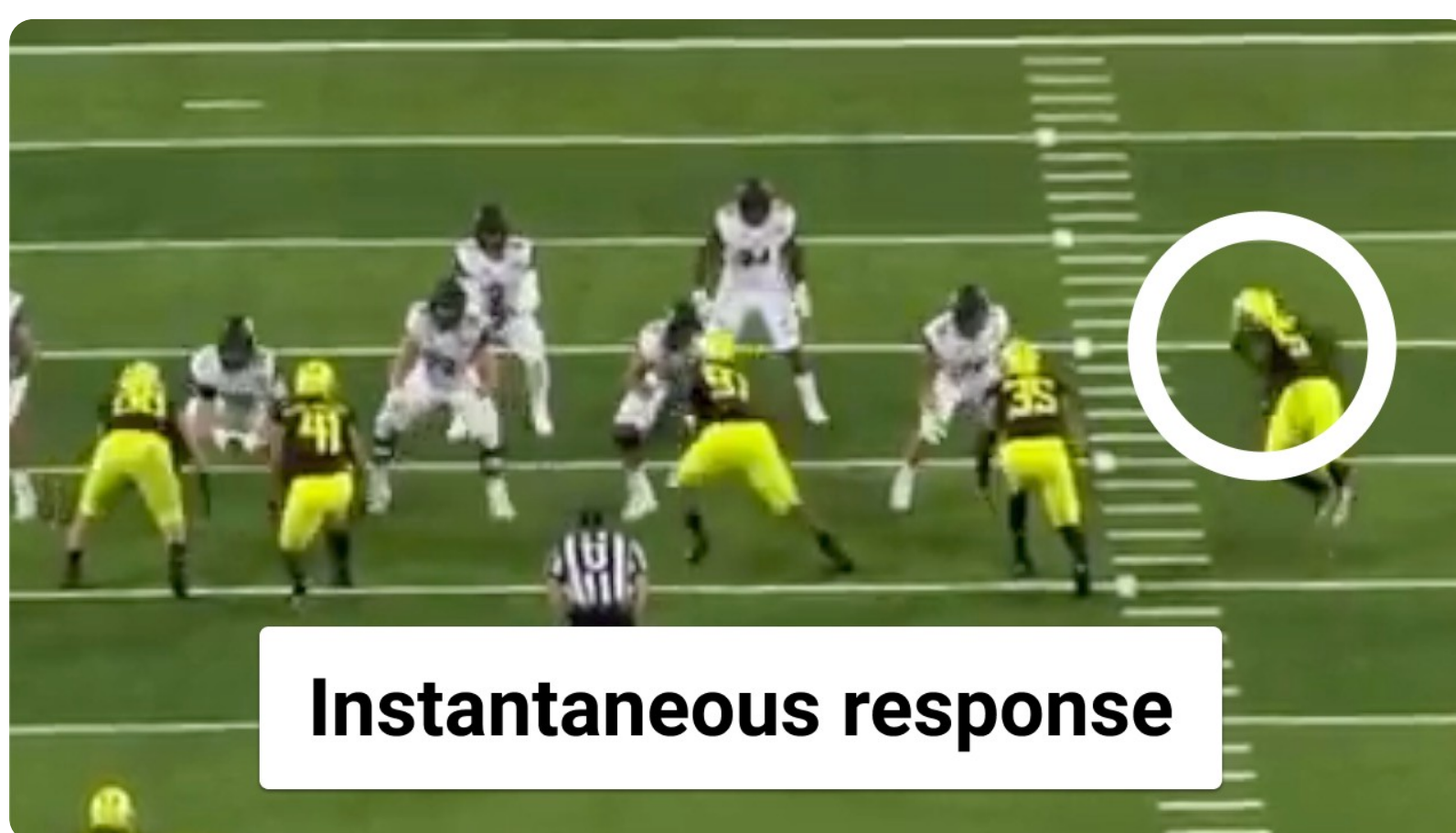
No way

How to improve get off

The quality of your get off is determined by **how quickly you can respond to a stimulus**.

In a best case scenario, you want to get off instantaneously (response) with any movement on the offensive line (stimulus)

click [here](#) to see example



So then to improve your get off, you need to train your ability to quickly react to a stimulus.

Here are 5 drills that I personally love for improving get off.

Competition get off

If you love competition you're going to love this drill. Get off on blocker movement and first one to the blocker wins.

Ball get off

All you need for this one is a ball and a friend. Practice your pass rush get off by keying the ball and grabbing as much green grass as you can with your first step when the ball twitches.

Stop light get off

This is one of my favorites. When you're waiting at a red light key the stoplight and when it turns green hit the gas as fast as you can - without putting anyone in danger.

Youtube visualization

Coronavirus can't stop this drill. Just type in CFB full games into YouTube, select the first game you see and imagine yourself getting off the ball when the ball is snapped in the YouTube clip. It doesn't seem like much, but visualization is one of the most powerful tools you can utilize to improve your get off.

Reaction time test

There are a ton of reaction apps and games that you can play on your computer or phone. One that I like is the **reaction time test**. Play games like these as much as possible. Getting as many reps as possible to train your reaction is absolutely necessary!

Don't get discouraged

If you don't become Von Miller by next week, don't get discouraged. Just like with everything else in life, it takes practice and lots of it.

The more frequently and consistently you rep the above drills the quicker your get off will improve.

And the great thing is that for many of these drills you can rep them every single day.

Eyes

Defensive line is all about **stimulus response**

To put it plainly, **the stimulus is the event during a play that triggers a physical response.**

For example, if the ball moves (stimulus) that will trigger you to explode out of your stance (response)

Below is a list of other common defensive line stimuli and responses.

stimulus	response
movement	get off
reach block	punch and drive
down block	close to hip
pass block	close distance
punch	side scissors

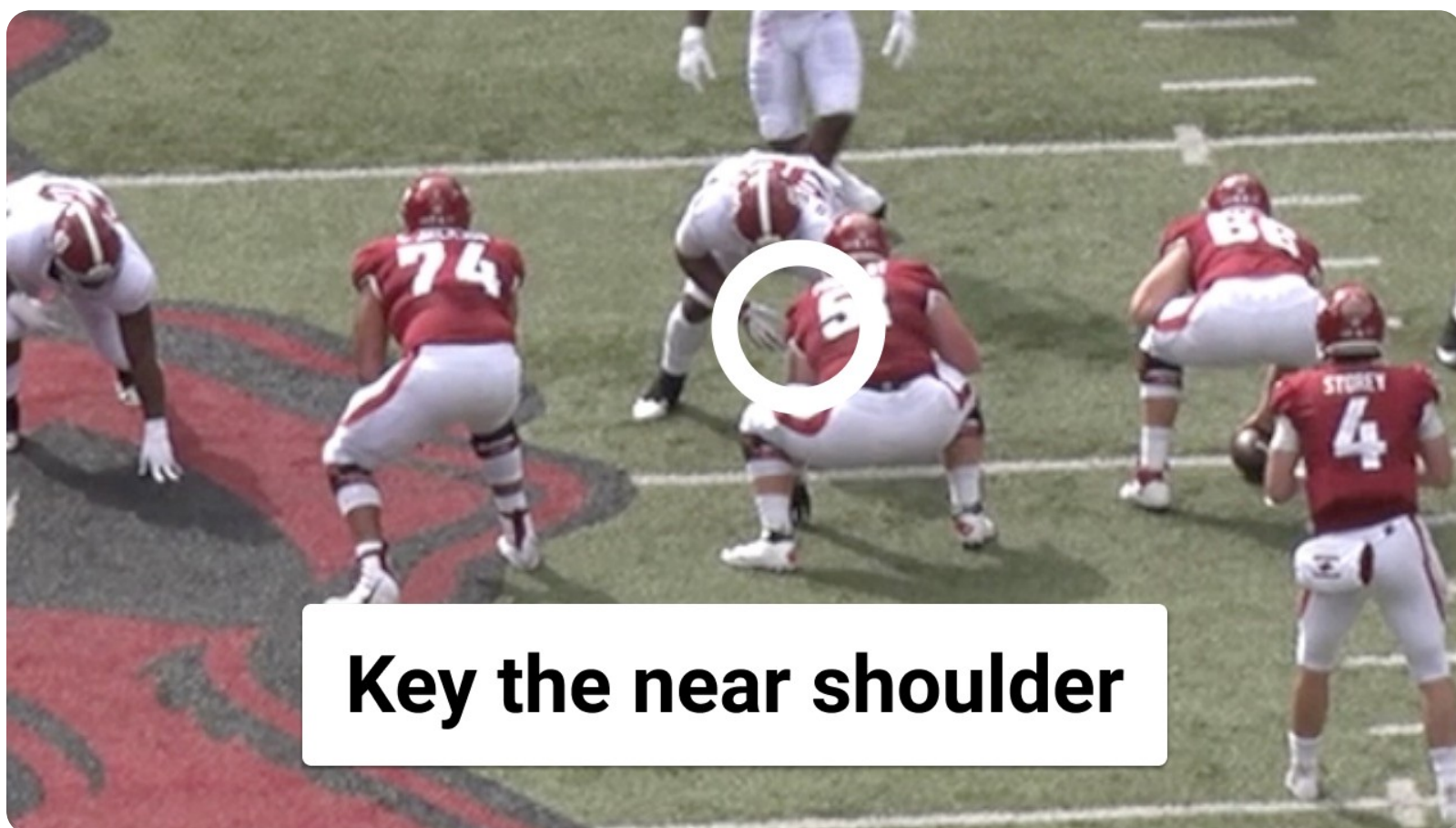
With this being said, your response is only as good as the stimulus you key. **The key then is what you key.**

50/50 Keys

There are situations where an offense is equally likely to either run or pass.

I call these **50/50 situations**.

In these situations, **key the near shoulder**.



Your opponent has all blocks open to him. He can reach, pull, base, and much more.

This is why you need to focus your **central field of vision** on his near shoulder.

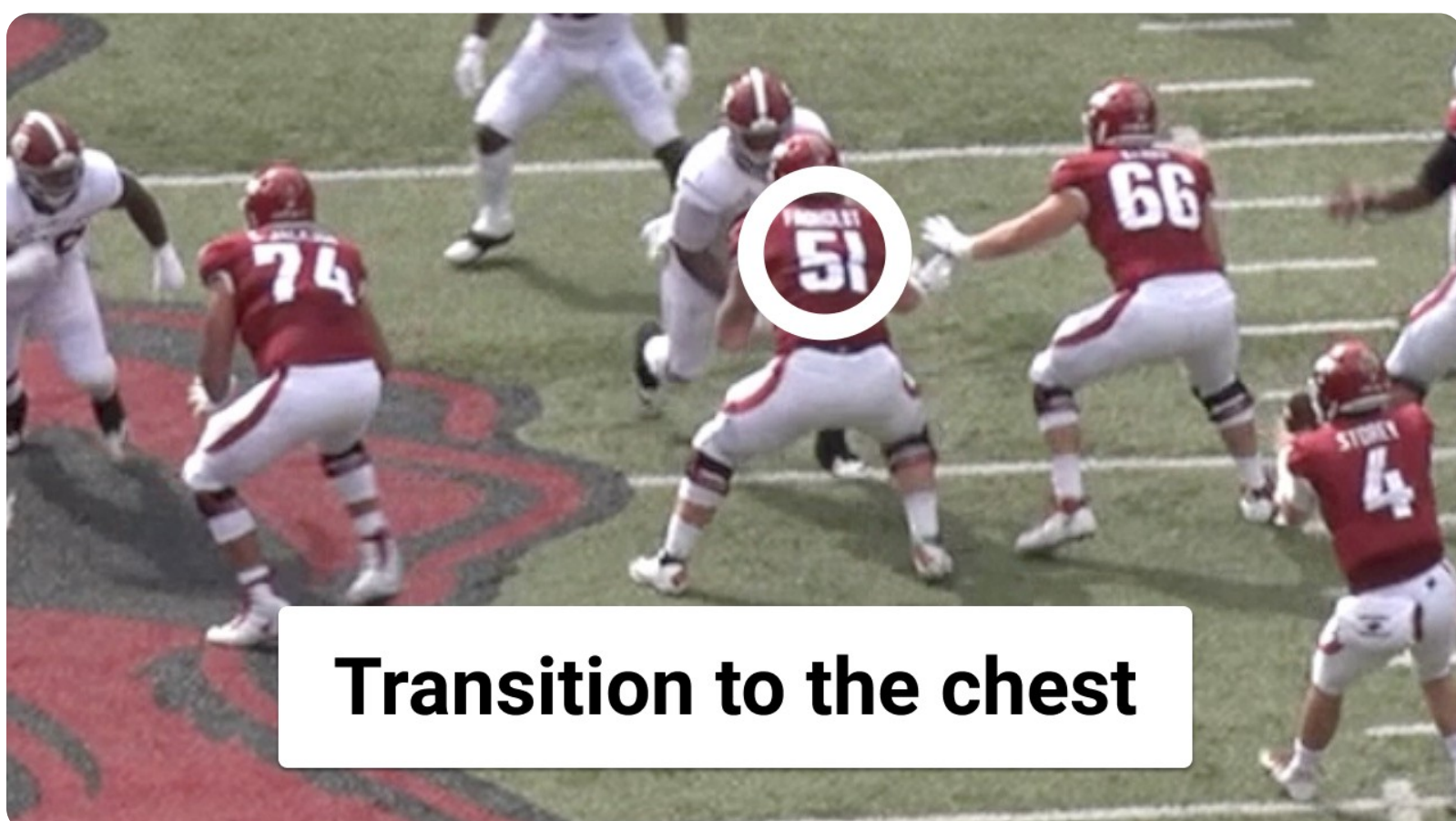
The near shoulder is the first thing that moves on a blocker's body and will give you definitive info on what block he's executing.

click [here](#) to see example



In the event that your opponent does pass set, **transition your key from the near shoulder to his chest.**

click [here](#) to see example



Focusing on this area allows you to quickly respond to the punch of your opponent.

Passing situation keys

In situations where you know the offense is passing, you should **key first movement on the offensive line.**

Many coaches say to look at the back tip of the ball, but the ball isn't always the first thing to move.

Instead, look at the film to see what consistently moves first on the O-line and key that.

click [here](#) to see example



Usually it will be the **hip, knee** or **hand** of the center.

Once the ball moves, transition your key from first movement on the O-line to **your opponents chest**.

As I said before, keying the chest will help you to quickly respond to your opponents punch.

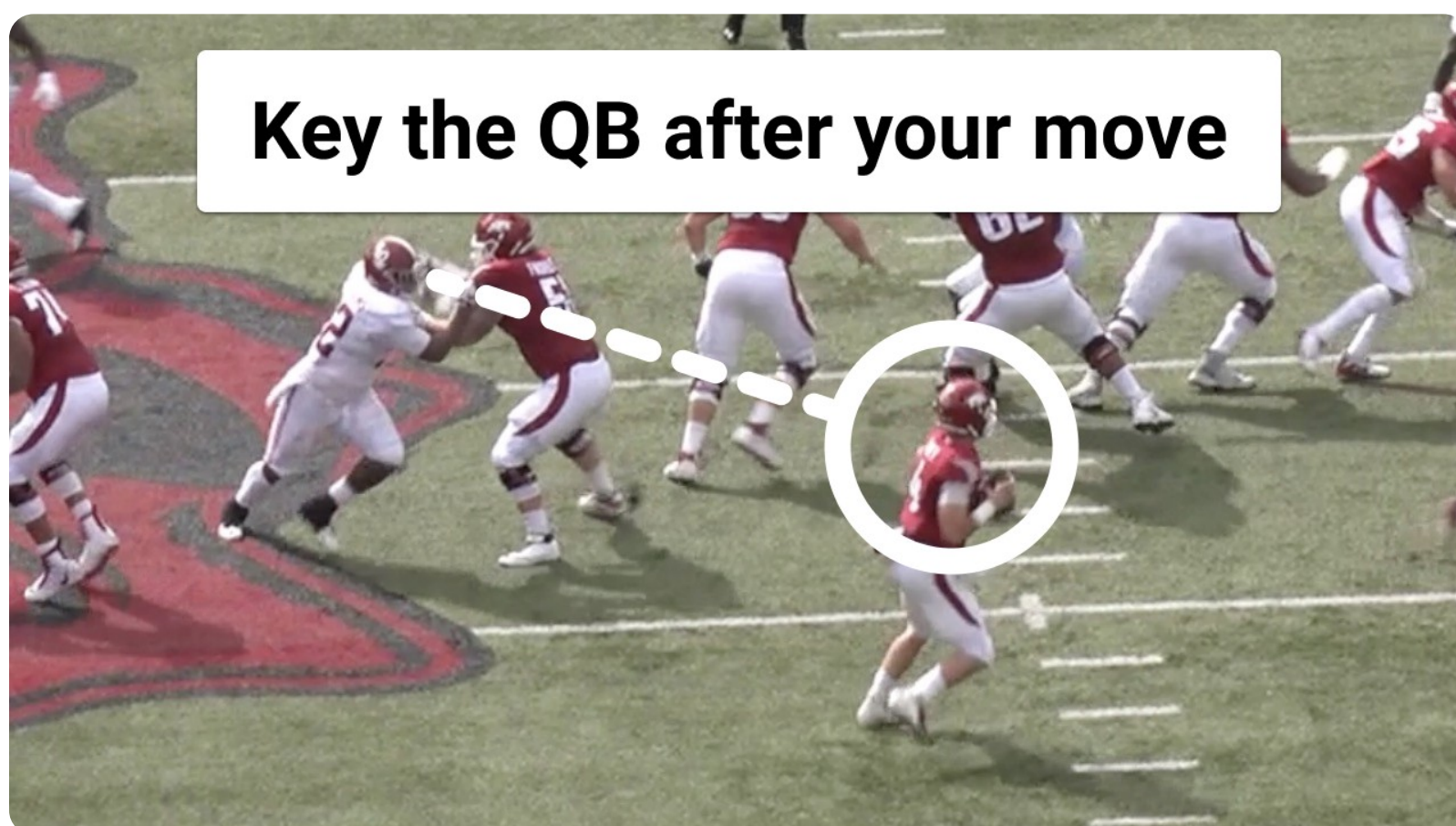
When to key the QB

Many young players want to look at the QB from the snap, but this is a massive mistake.

You can't get to the QB without first defeating your opponent.

So, **only** after executing your pass rush move should you key the QB and decide whether to stay on your rush path or counter.

click [here](#) to see example



Coaching points

- ① Key the near shoulder in 50/50 situations
- ② Key first movement on the O-line in passing situations
- ③ Key the chest when pass rushing
- ④ Key the QB after executing your move

Hands

The #1 tool a blocker has to stop you in your tracks is his hands. Just look at how this blockers's punch affects this rush.

It is critical then to use your hands to deflect the attacks of your opponent and disable his biggest tool.

To do this you must develop the fundamentals of effective hand usage: **position, reaction, violence** and **placement**.

Position

Coach Arpedge Rolle likes to say, "When you're tight to the fight get your hands up to strike."

That means your hands are up and ready to fight like a combat specialist when you approach your opponent.

click [here](#) to see example



So, rather than keeping your hands at your side, **ready your hands when you break the blocker's bubble** (the area where the blocker engages his punch).

click [here](#) to see example



Furthermore, how you practice is how you play so **ready your hands any time you're drilling hands** as well.

The key is to practice your hand position so frequently that your hands automatically go to the right position.

With this being said, have you're **hands up, a bend at the elbow** and **a continuous pumping with your arms** when executing any hand combat drill work.

via [Robert Mathis](#)

click [here](#) to see example



Reaction

The difference between defensive line and every other position on defense is that s\$%& happens now. Here's an example.

Say you're pass rushing and your opponent jump sets you and throws his punch. Do you have time to think, "He's jump setting! I should chop his punch down and work the edge."?

No way! **You only have time to react.**

The key then is to practice deflecting different types of punches in order to create **subconscious reactions**

It's these reactions that tell your body how to respond when you don't have enough time to consciously think.

To create subconscious reactions, have a teammate **shoot his hands at different levels** so you can react to his punch.

via [Robert Mathis](#)

click [here](#) to see example



And work these drills from both **head up** and **offset** positions to mimic different rushing situations.

via [Robert Mathis](#)

click [here](#) to see example



Violence

If you don't throw your hands with violence you're won't be able to successfully defeat a blocker's punch. **You just won't have enough force.**

So, work violent hands from **off** and **contacted** positions to imitate different game scenarios.

You don't want your opponent grabbing any part of you so **drilling** from an off position is most important; however, he may still get his hands on you.

So, incorporating violent lifts and knock downs from a contacted position is also needed to develop the violence needed to get his hands off of you.

via [Tim Hoover](#)

click [here](#) to see example



Placement

Lastly, **good hand placement will make it much easier to deflect a blocker's punch.**

For example, if you hit the lower half of the blocker's forearm, you will not be able to move the punch of the blocker because the **lower you hit the more strength he has.**

However, if you hit his upper forearm, you will easily be able to direct his punch away from your body.

click [here](#) to see example



A final word

It's simple **you beat the hands you beat the man.**

Flexibility

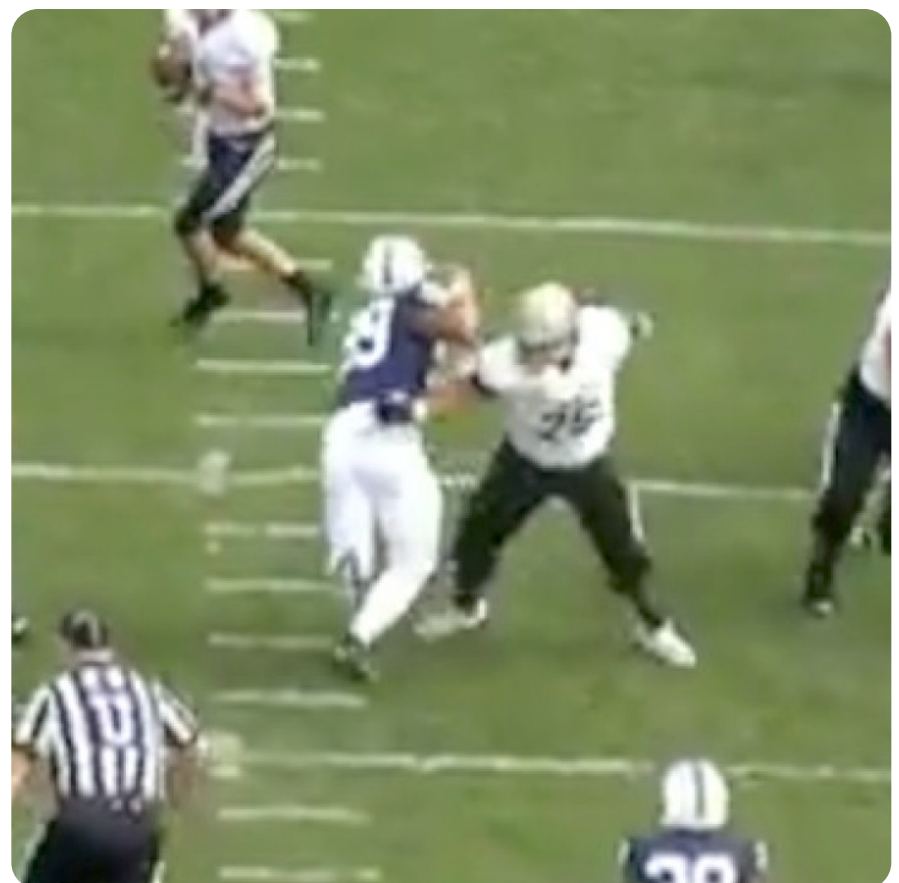
Many weightlifting programs these days primarily focus on building strength.

The thought is if you squat 500 pounds, bench 400 and power clean another 350 then you'll be an amazing athlete.

I disagree

This focus on "getting swole" has led to a generation of defensive linemen who can't bend.

You see D-Linemen need to get into weird positions...



..and without flexibility in the right places, you won't be able to bend without sacrificing strength or speed.

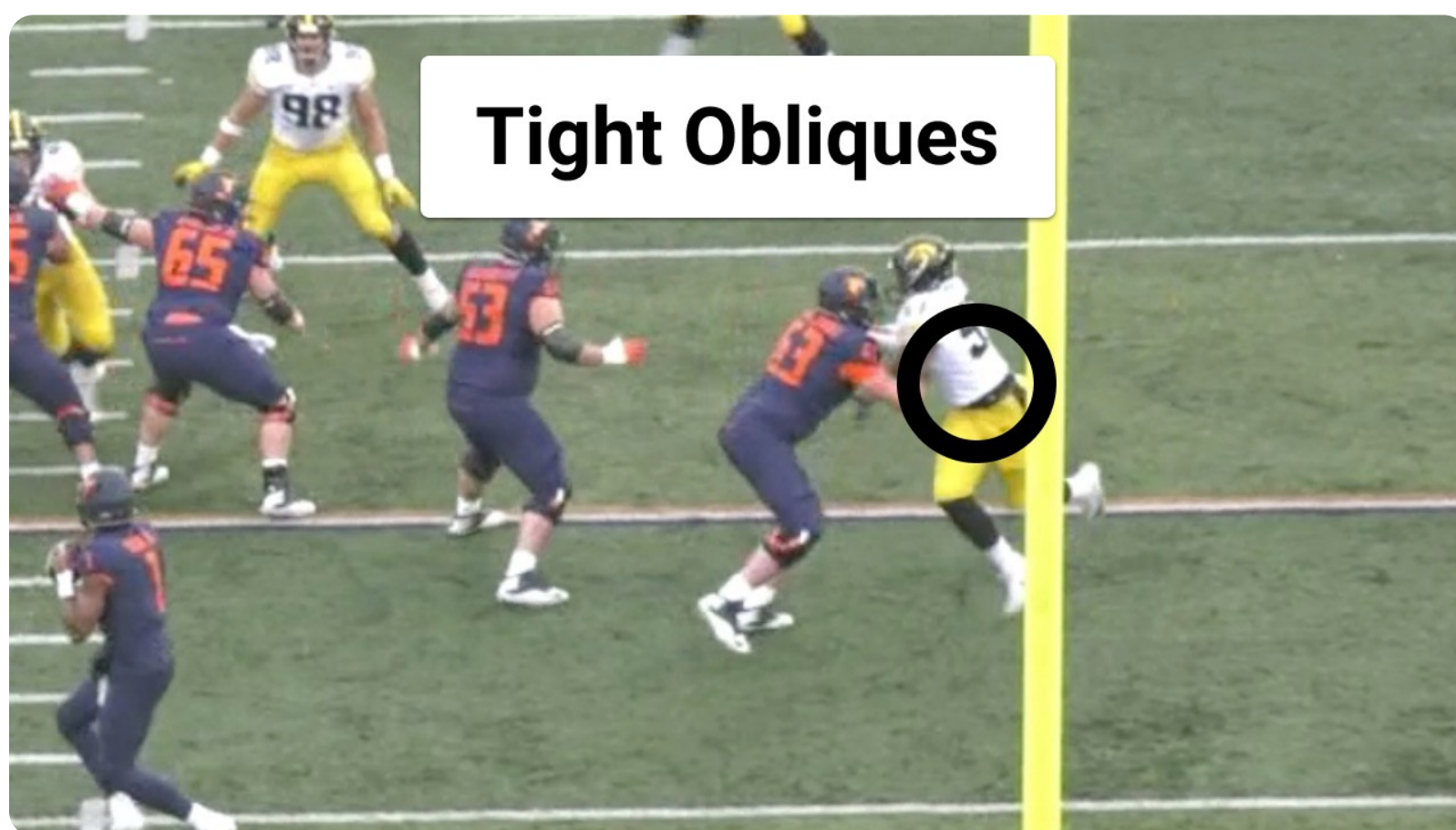
So then it's critical to develop your flexibility in your **core, ankles** and **hips**.

Core

Pass rushers need to be able to rotate their upper body sideways to reduce surface area and avoid the punch of the blockers.

However, if your obliques are tight you won't be able to rotate your upper body enough to avoid the punch of the blocker

click [here](#) to see example



Hips

On the other hand, tight hip flexors and glutes will prevent you from gaining max distance on your first step.

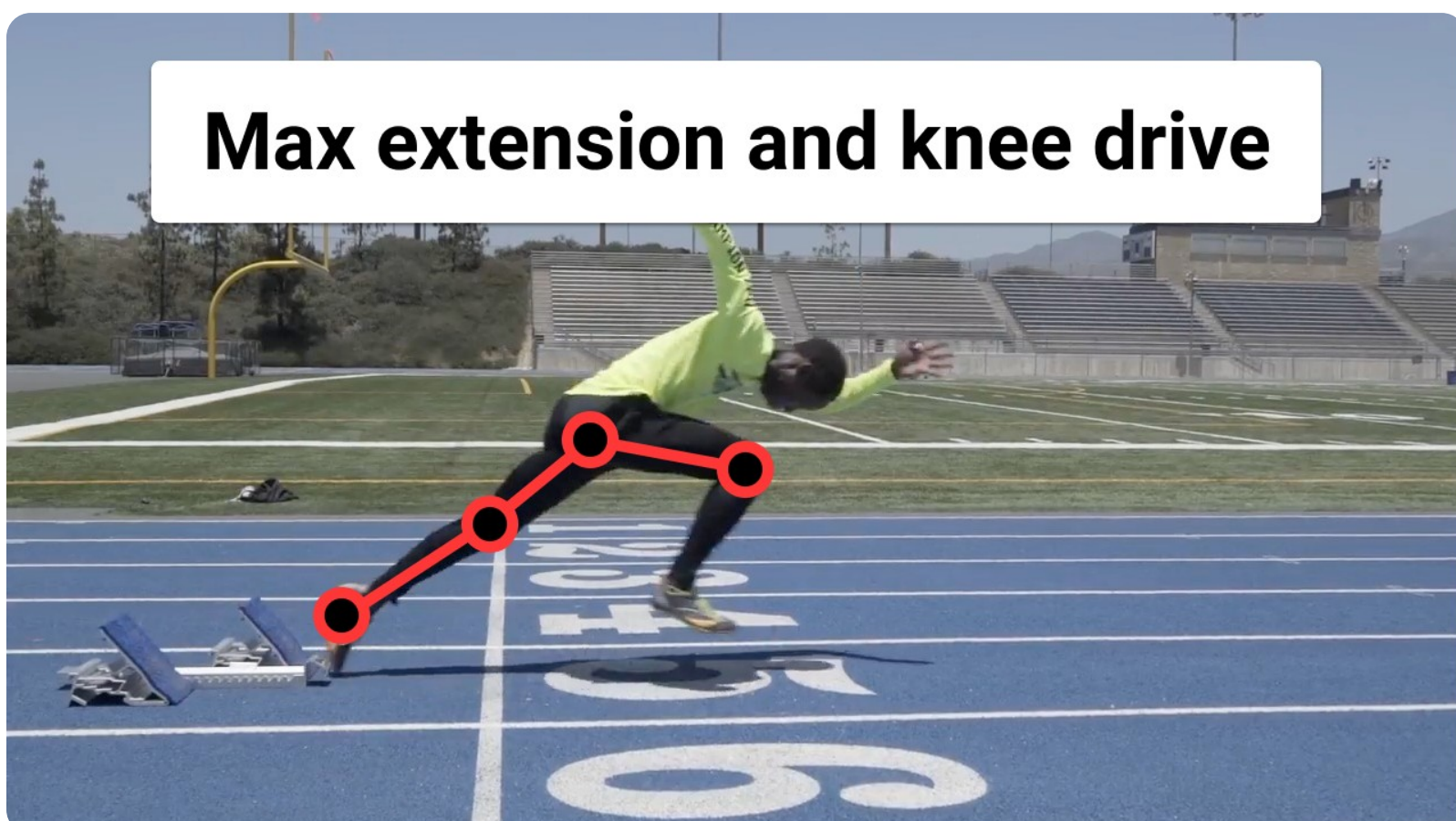
click [here](#) to see example



For example, #98 above can't fully extend his back leg or drive his knee because his muscles are preventing him.

On the flip side, sprinters with loose hip flexors and glutes are able to gain maximum distance with his first step.

click [here](#) to see example



Ankles

One of the biggest reasons why pass rushers slip is because they don't have enough ankle flexibility.

When you're turning the corner you need to have enough flexion to keep the bottom of your cleat in the ground.

Without this flexibility, the side of your cleat will hit the ground and you'll have 0 traction.

click [here](#) to see example



How to improve your flexibility

An easy way to improve your flexibility is to add Adam Bighill's big 5 stretches into your daily workout regiment.

click [here](#) to see example



By adding these 5 stretches you can easily improve flexibility in the key areas I listed about.

Adam is a 2 time CFL defensive player of the year, speed coach, and one of my closest friends so he knows what he's talkin about.

He also came out with an amazing speed program that you can check out [here](#) if you're interested.

Turning the corner

I've studied many elite pass rushers and one thing that always stands out to me is how the great ones can sprint full speed, on a curve, with a 300 pound blocker leaning on them. Here's an example from Joey Bosa.

click [here](#) to see example



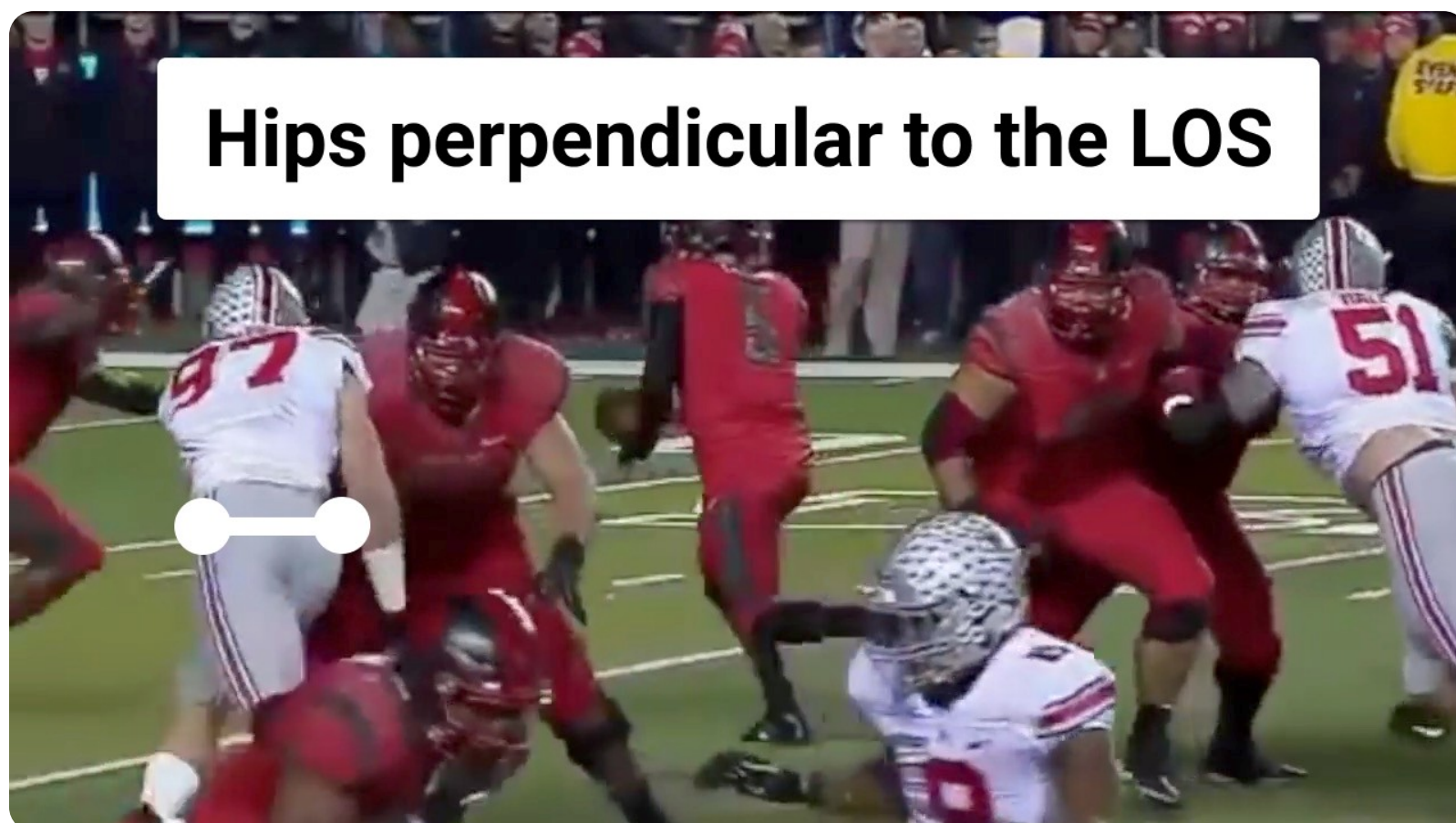
This my friends is called “turning the corner”. I’m sure you’ve heard of this term, but if you’re like me, I’ve never heard a great explanation of what exactly turning the corner involves so I included one below.

Turning the corner explained

In every rush, there is a point, after you execute your move, where you will need to “**flip your hips**”.

This involves turning them from parallel to the line of scrimmage to perpendicular so they face the QB.

click [here](#) to see example



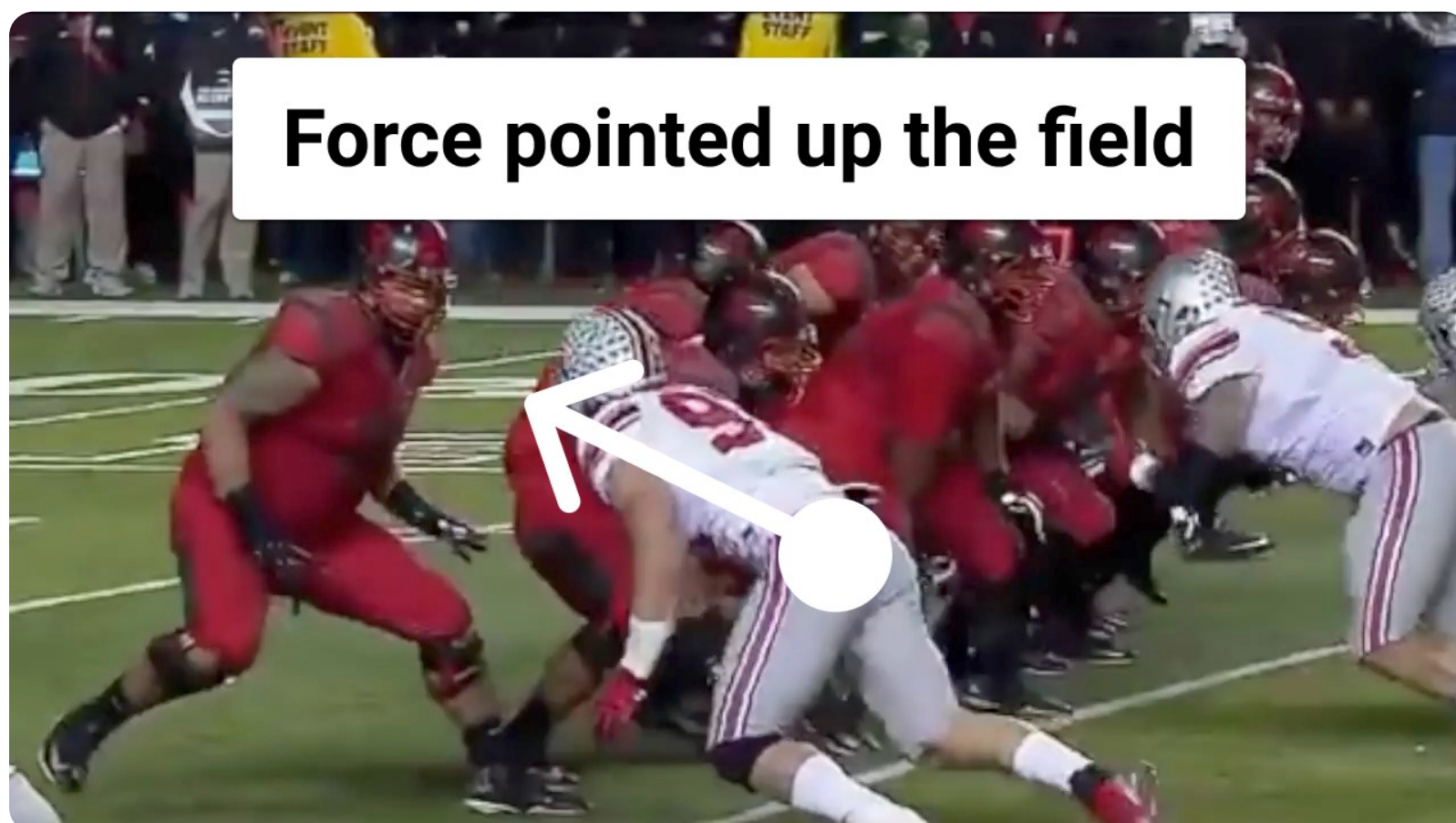
This has two purposes. The first being that when you flip your hips you **reduce the surface area** that a blocker can punch.

To put it plainly, It's harder for a blocker to get his hands on your when you are skinny vs. when you are square.

Flipping your hips also gets you **pointed in the right direction**. Kinesiology experts will say wherever your hips are pointed is where your force will go.

When you're hips are pointed upfield your force is going to go upfield, but when you're hips are pointed toward the qb it's going to be a heck of a lot easier to get to him.

click [here](#) to see example



In most cases, the blocker will still be leaning on you after flipping your hips and you will need to “**run the hoop**”. Meaning you need to keep closing distance to the QB without having the blocker push you out of your rush lane.

click [here](#) to see example



This part of the rush will often look like a curve because when you have 300 pounds leaning on you it's hard to run a straight line to the QB.

So, when someone says turn the corner all that means is **flip your hips** and **run the hoop**.

Ok cool, you know exactly what turning the corner means now, but there's still a problem.

Turning the corner isn't exactly a natural movement. Its very easy to slip or fall and I've personally have had to work years to keep myself off the ground when executing this technique.

I don't want you guys to fail as much as I did, so here are a few of the drills that have helped me improve my ability to turn the corner and stay off the ground.

Drills for flipping the hips

First we want to drill from a static position to emulate the feeling of flipping hips but without the momentum.

For this drill you want to step with your inside foot with the toe pointed inward and simultaneously twist your upper body and hips.

The goal here is to give the base level feeling of flipping your hips.

click [here](#) to see example



Once you're comfortable from a static position, add extra steps and different moves.

Here's a great [example](#) from [Coach Brandon Jordan](#) of what this progression should look like.

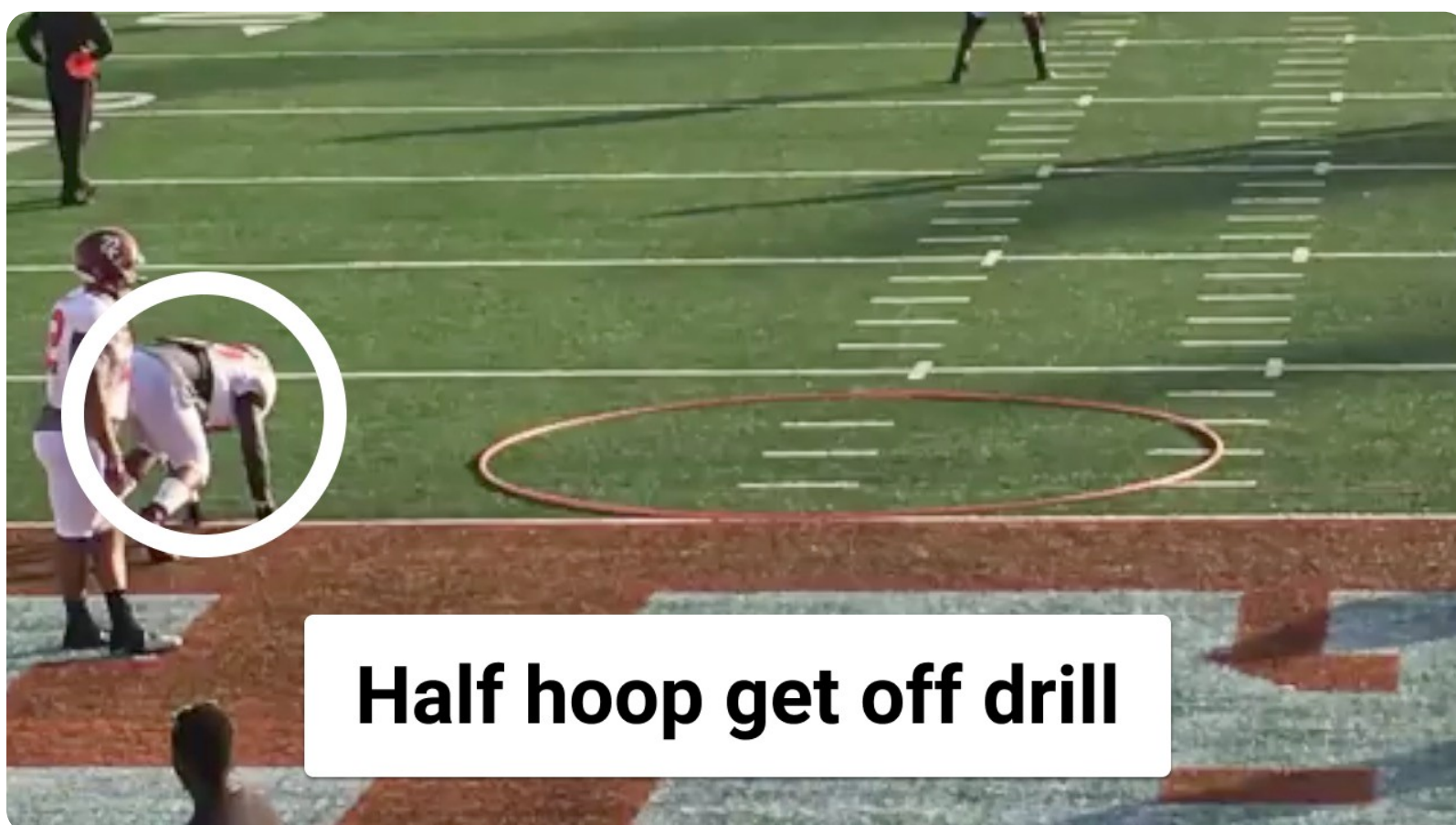
Drills for running the hoop

My favorite hoop drill is the half hoop get off drill because it most accurately reflects a game situation.

The key here is to concentrate on **leaning inward** and **dipping your shoulder**.

To reinforce the lean, make sure you grab grass with your inside hand at the half way point and end.

click [here](#) to see example



Final thoughts

If you're still slipping when turning the corner try **tilting your stance** inward and **reaching with your outside hand**.

With tilted hips you won't need to torque your body as much to get your hips around and an outside hand reach helps redirect your momentum toward the QB.

I personally love tilting my stance and reaching with the outside hand and recommend it for most D-Linemen.

**Step 2: Learn
the rush types**

Speed rush

Speed rushing is the simplest, but most difficult type of rush.

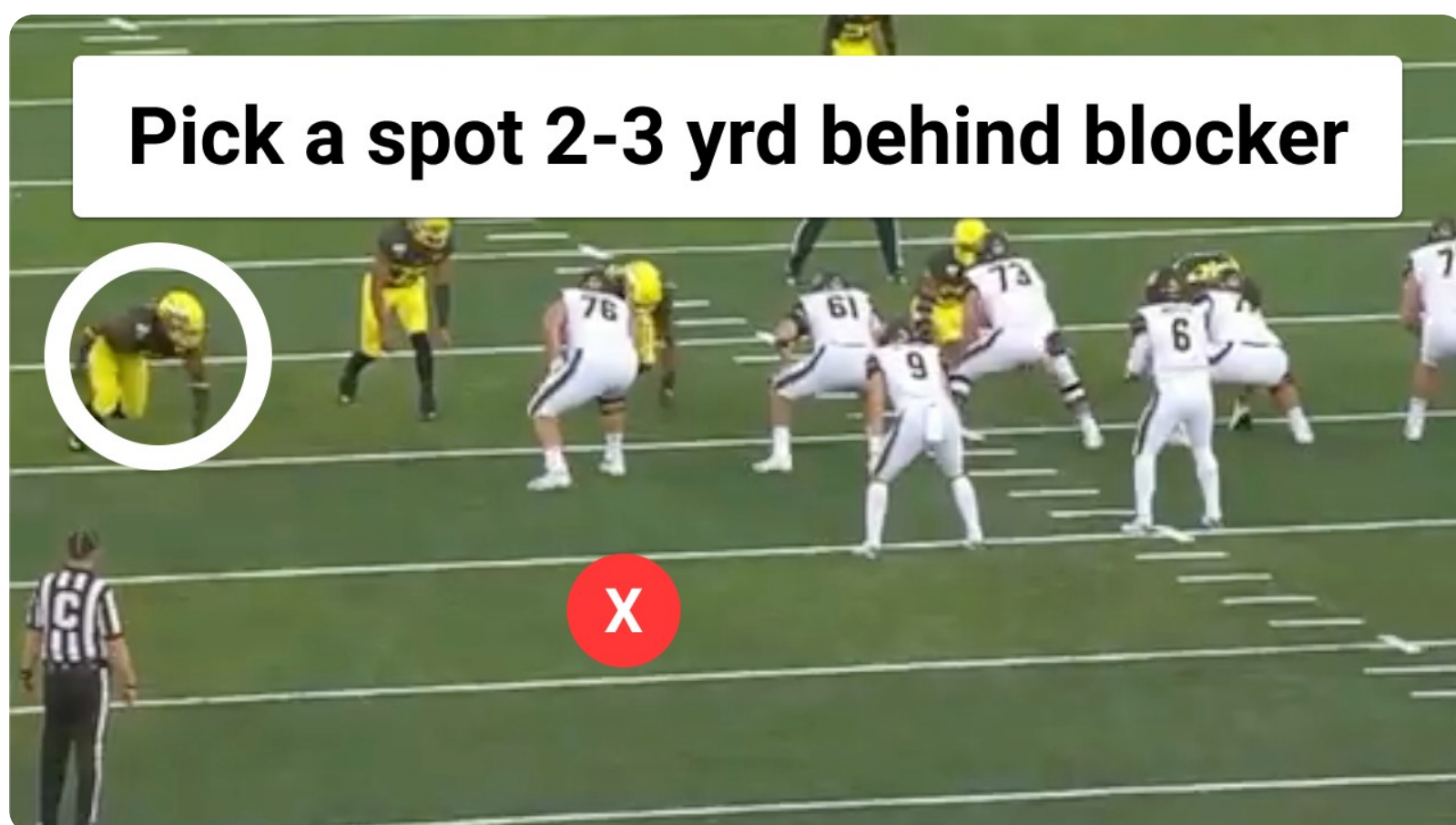
If you don't have elite level speed, it's very easy to get washed up the field by your opponent.

However, if you're a speedster using this type of rush simplifies the game and puts you in a great position to affect the QB.

How to speed rush

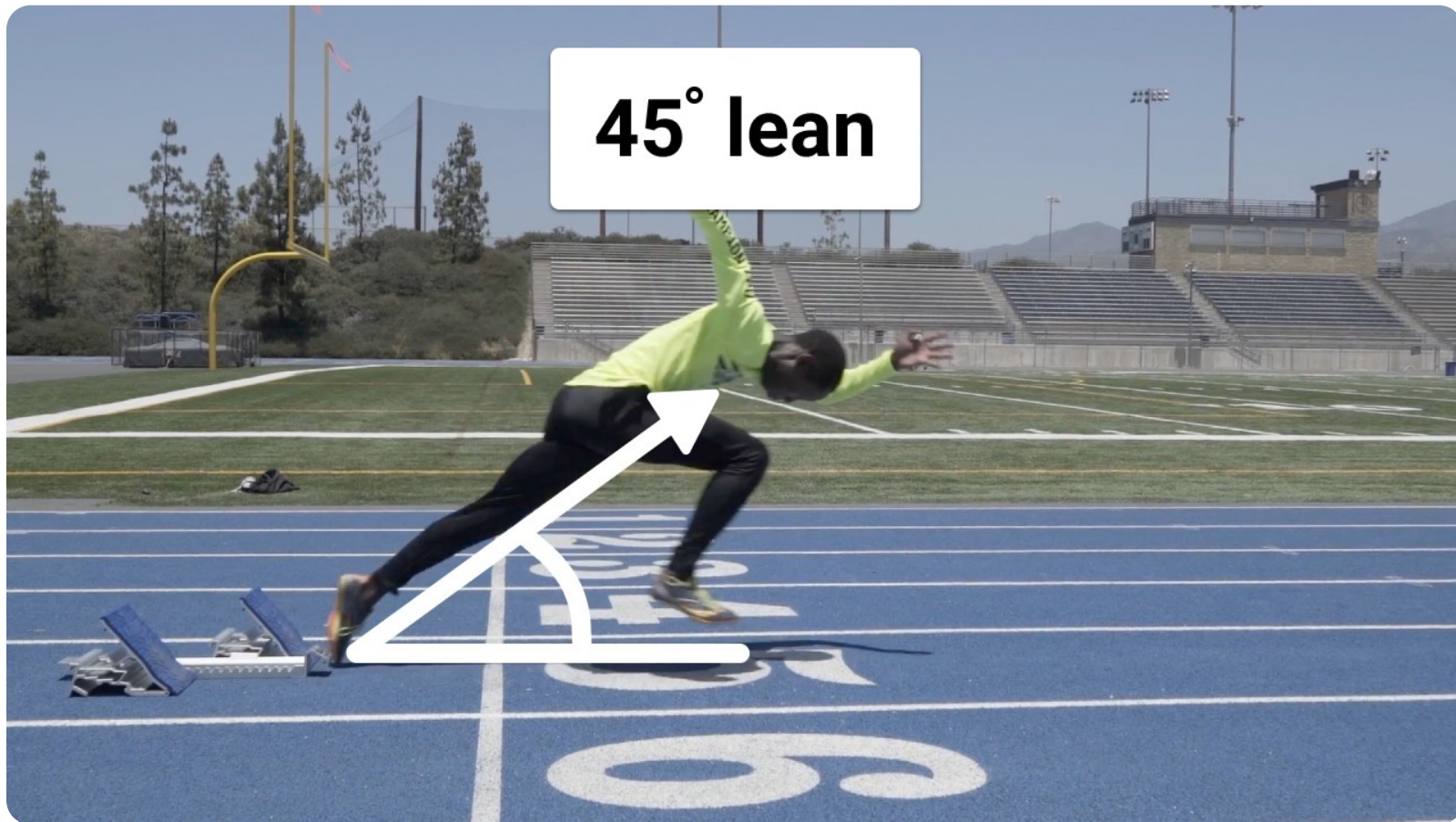
Pick a spot **2-3 yards** behind the blocker, the sweet spot, and beat him to that spot.

click [here](#) to see example



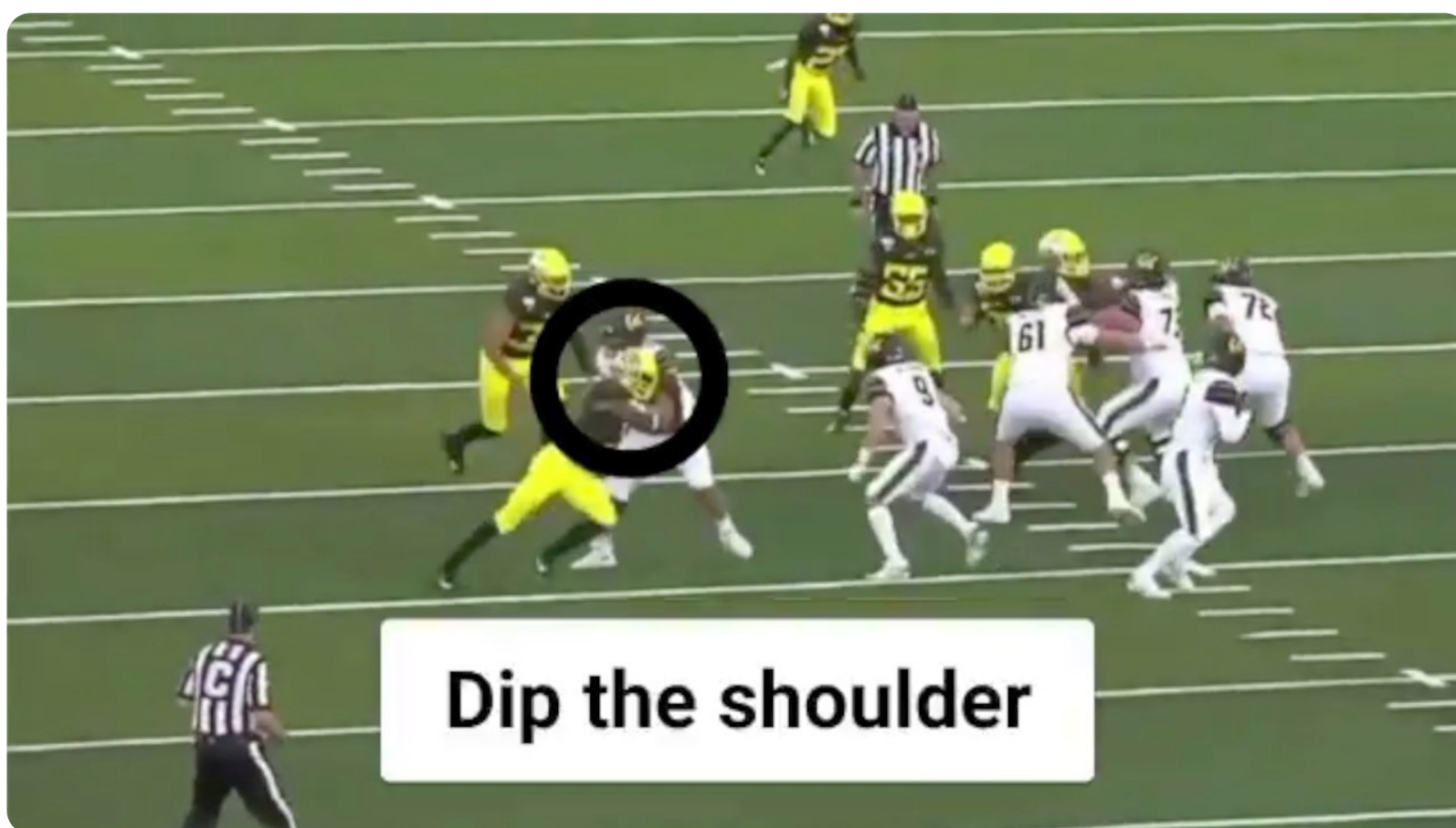
This type of rush is an all out foot race so your first 1-3 steps should look like a **sprinter coming out the blocks.**

click [here](#) to see example



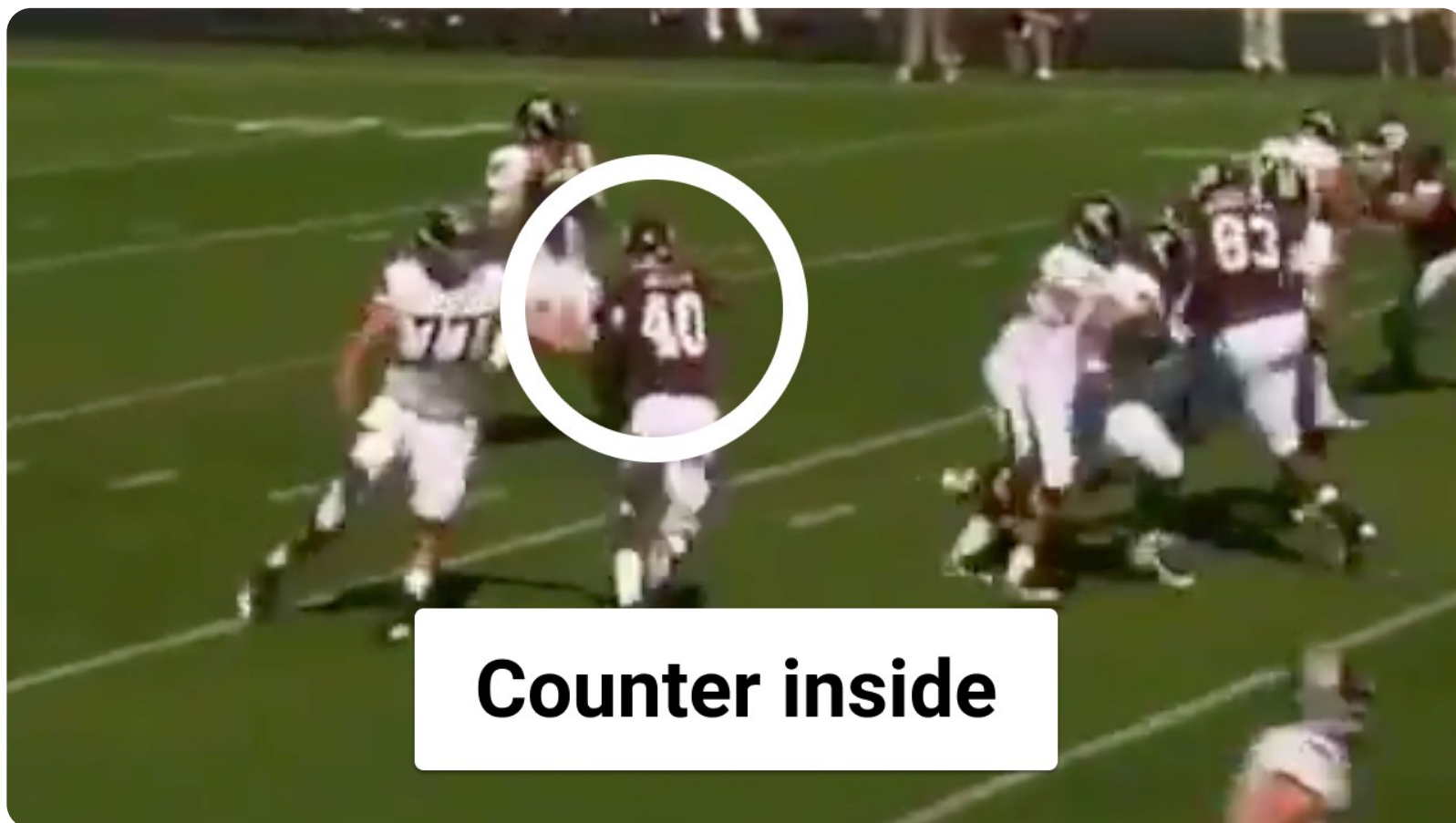
If you get shoulder to shoulder with your opponent simply **dip your inside shoulder** or **chop and rip**.

click [here](#) to see example



If your opponent beats you to the sweet spot, **counter inside** with a swim, club or spin.

click [here](#) to see example



Coaching points

- ① Pick a spot 2-3 yards behind your opponent
- ② Race your opponent to the sweet spot
- ③ If you beat your opponent dip your inside shoulder
- ④ If your opponent beats you counter inside

Edge rush

The edge rush is a close cousin to the speed rush.

But rather than racing your opponent to a spot, the idea is to **freeze** your opponent (stop his momentum) by **threatening** him with your approach and work an edge.

Here's an example:

click [here](#) to see example



How to edge rush

First, take 1-3 steps to **close distance between you and the blocker.**

The goal is to break the **blocker's bubble**, the area where a blocker will throw his punch.

click [here](#) to see example



Once you break the blockers bubble, **deflect** or **avoid** his punch and **turn the corner**.

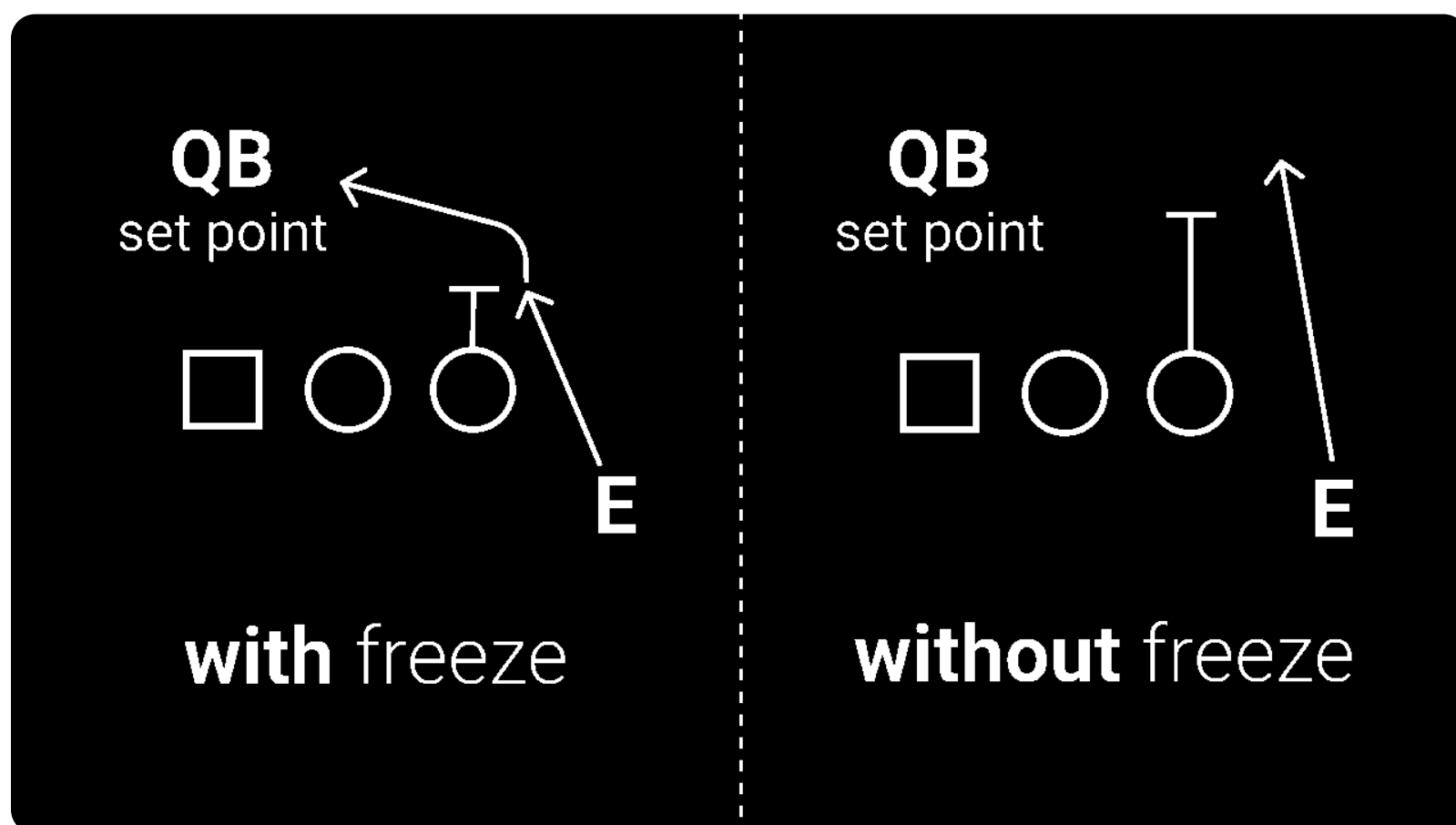
click [here](#) to see example



The freeze

Freezing your opponent is the key to any edge rush.

It **stops his momentum** and “**shortens the edge**” which gives you a greater chance to stay on a track to the set point of the QB.



Coaching points

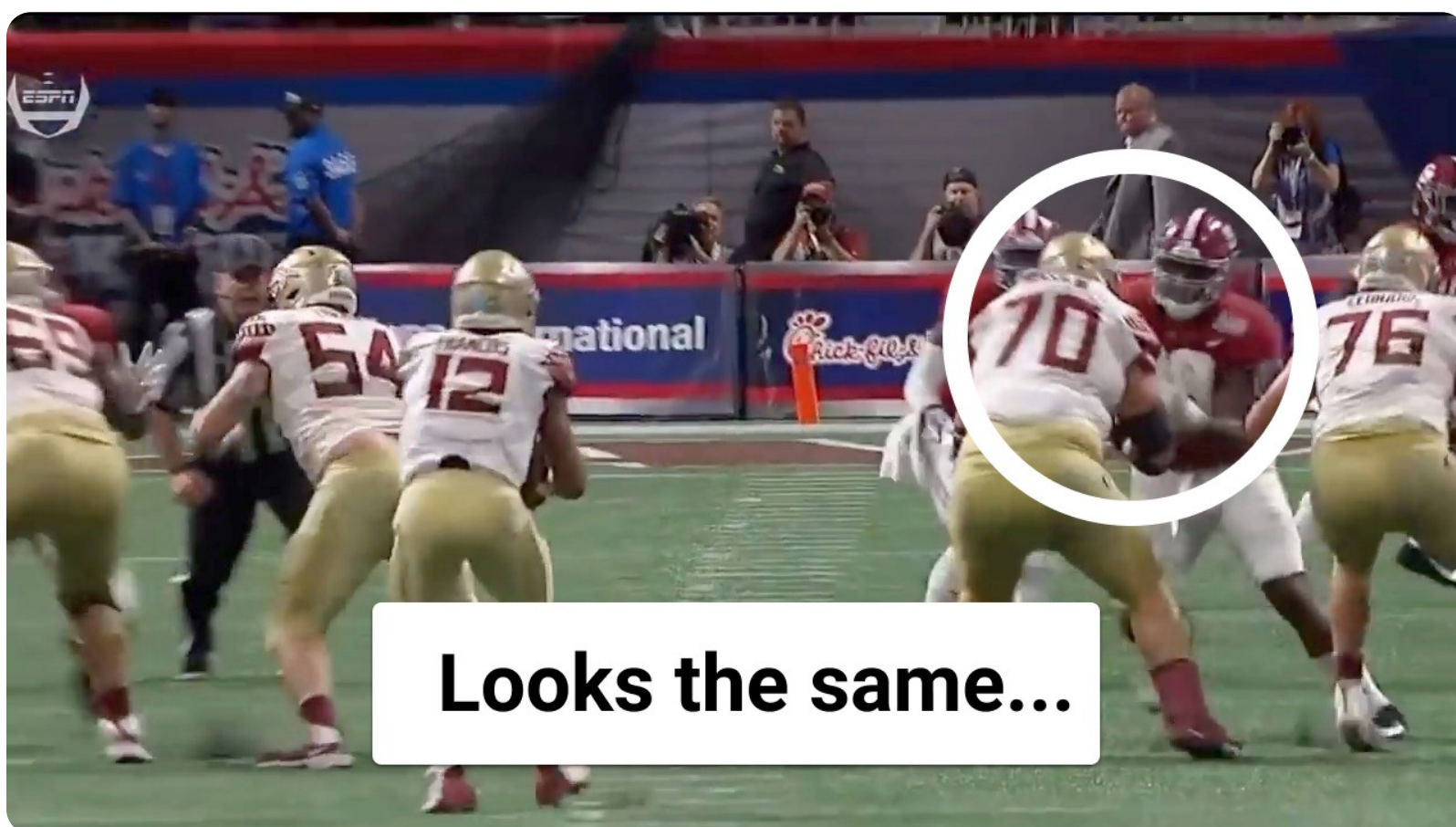
- ① Shorten the edge by “freezing” your opponent
- ② Do this by closing distance between you and your opponent
- ③ Break your opponents bubble
- ④ Deflect or avoid your opponents punch
- ⑤ Turn the corner

Inside rush

The secret to any good inside rush is to “**sell speed**” before making your move inside.

Selling speed tricks the blocker into thinking your speed rushing and opens up his hips, making it easier for you to win inside.

For example, the club rip (inside rush) will look exactly the same as the rip (speed rush) on the first 2 steps.



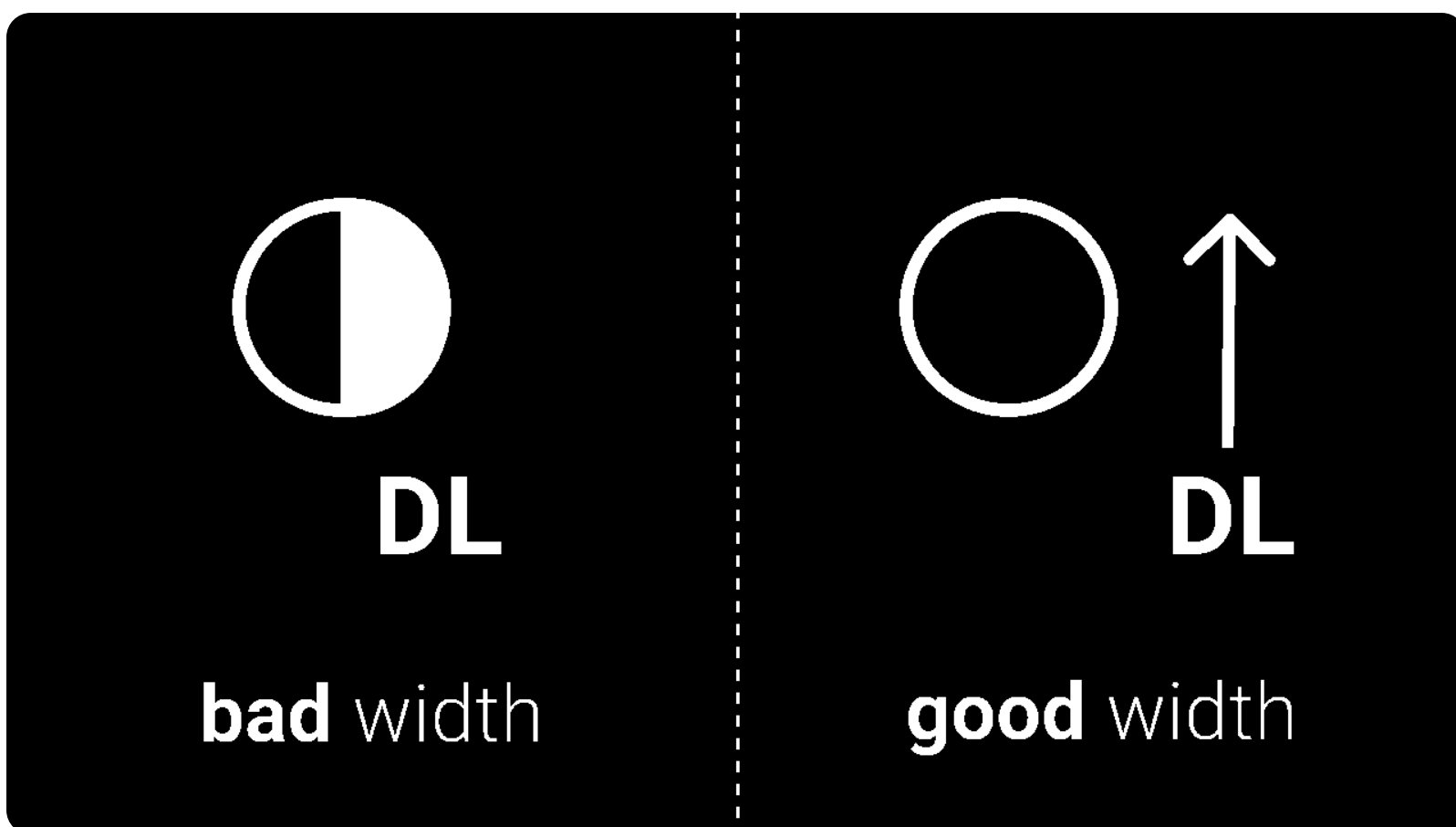
If your opponent does not believe you are speed rushing, his hips will stay square and he will catch you going inside.

click [here](#) to see example



How to inside rush

Make sure you have enough width in your alignment and point your rush path upfield.



Width will draw your opponent out to you and open up his inside.

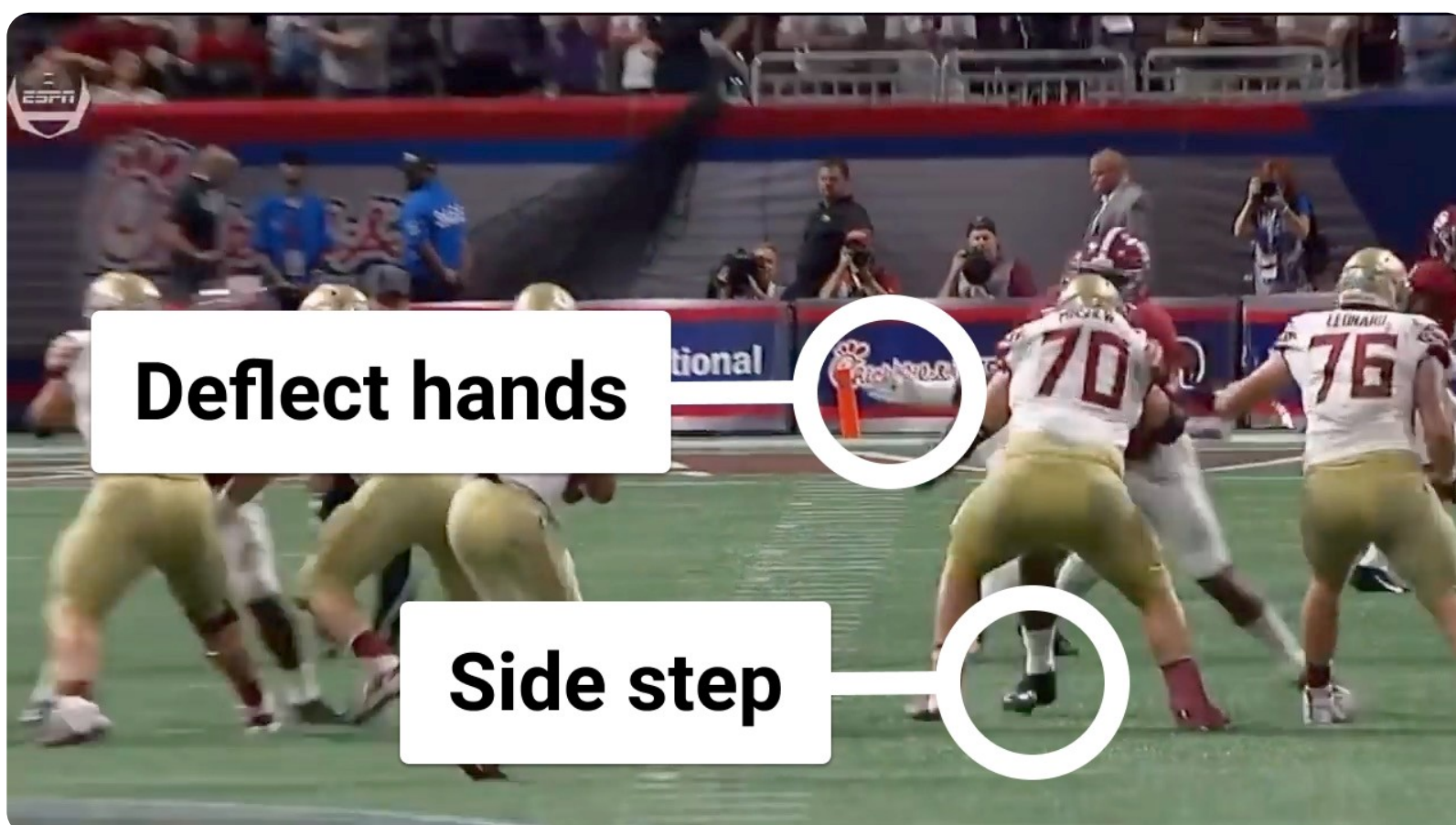
Then, sell speed up the field for 1-3 steps depending on position and stance.

click [here](#) to see example



Last, **side step** to your opponents inside, **deflect or avoid his punch** and **turn the corner**.

click [here](#) to see example



A final word

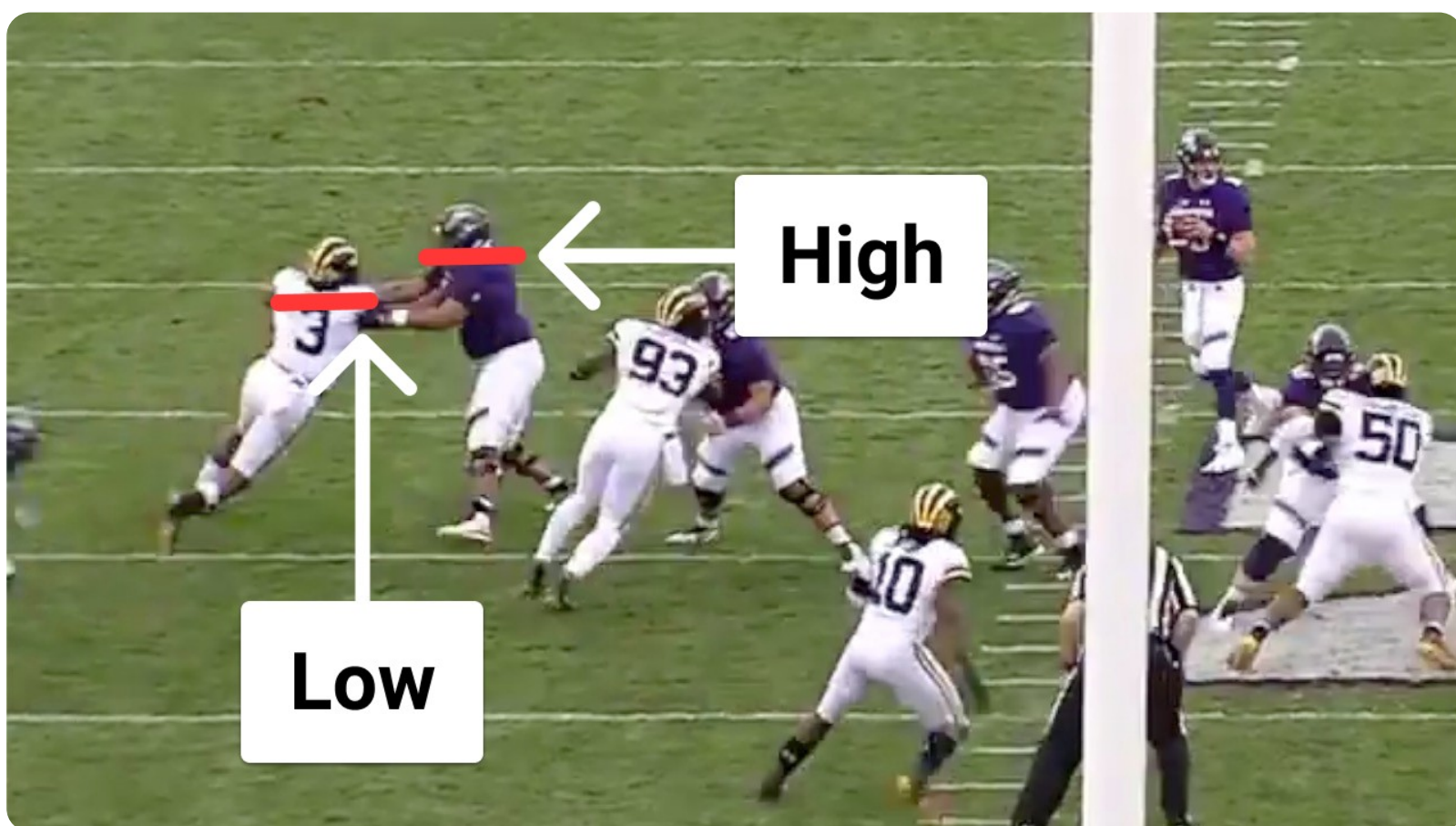
Inside rushes are high risk high reward rushes, so should only be used a few times a game for maximum effectiveness.

Power rush

The power rush is similar to the inside rush in that you also will need to “sell speed” before driving your opponent back with power.

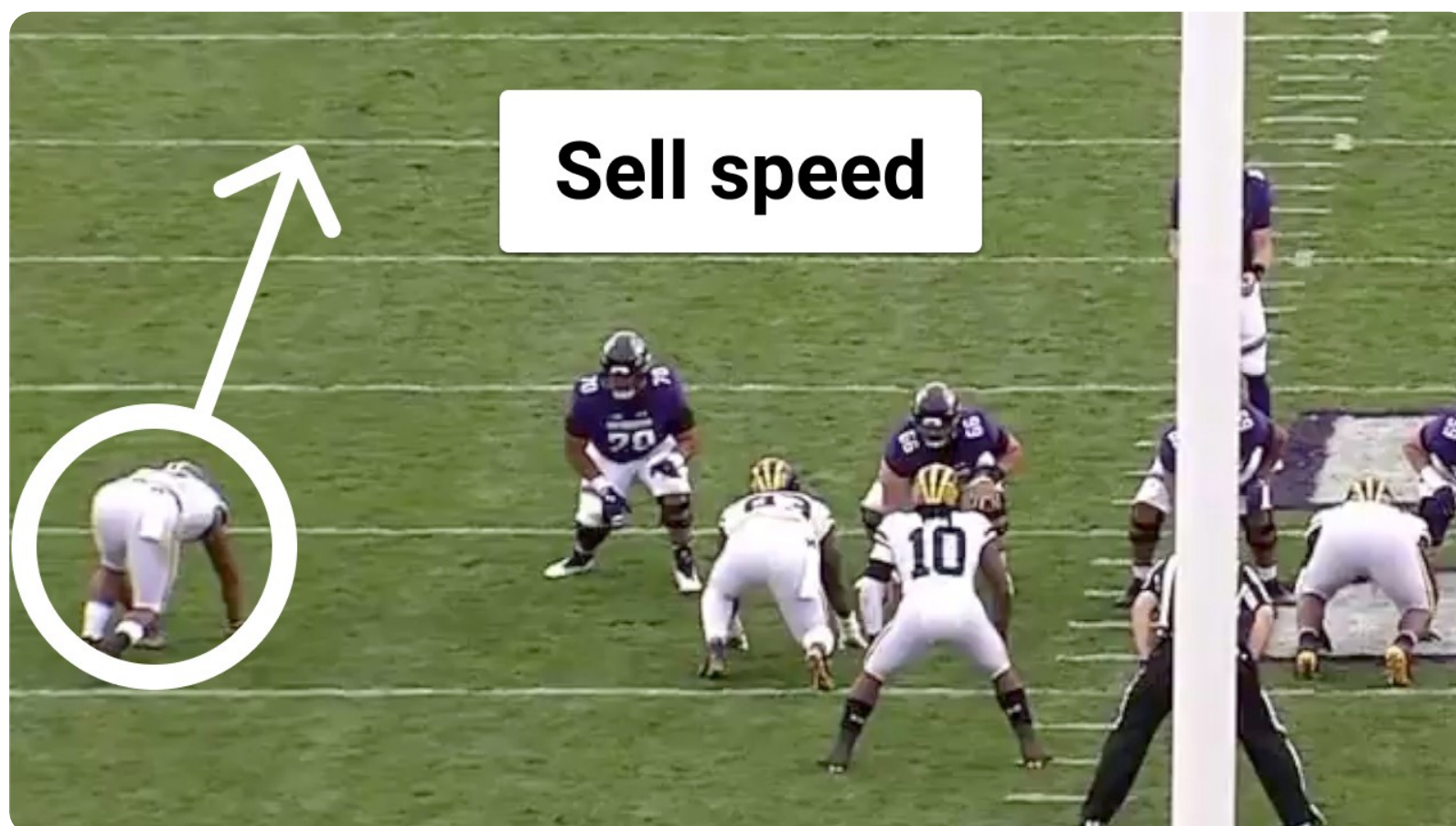
The key to any power rush is to **surprise your opponent** with power before he is able to lower his center of gravity.

click [here](#) to see example



First step is to point your rush path upfield as if you are speed rushing and “sell speed” for 1-3 steps upfield.

click [here](#) to see example



Then, **plant your foot** and **strike you opponent** with low pad level.

click [here](#) to see example



If you feel your opponent drop his weight, flip and pull away from his mass.

click [here](#) to see example



If you opponent doesn't drop his weight keep pushing him back into the QBs lap.

click [here](#) to see example



A final word

Power rushes are one of the safest ways to keep a QB contained while closing the pocket.

Just make sure not to use it too often or you won't be able to surprise your opponent with power.

Coaching points

- ① Point rush path upfield
- ② Sell speed for 1-3 steps
- ③ Strike your opponent with low pad level
- ④ Flip and pull away from force if the blocker drops his weight
- ⑤ Keep pushing if the blocker doesn't drop his weight

Counter rush

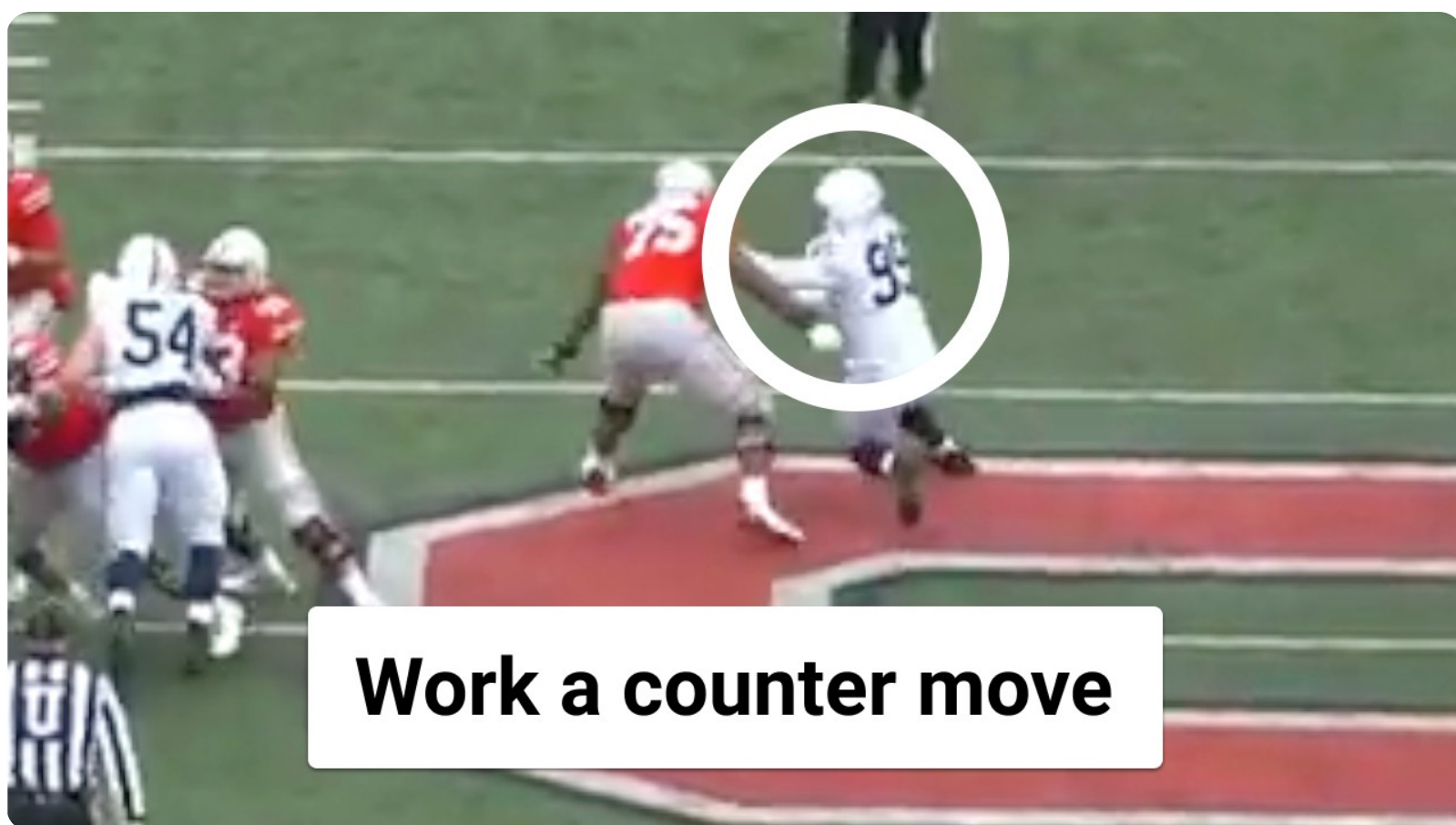
When rushing you may find that your move doesn't work exactly the way you had hoped it would.

And now you got a big fat offense lineman pushing you way too far upfield.

If you don't do something, the QB will have a huge lane to scramble and get the first down.

So what do you do? **You need to counter.**

click [here](#) to see example



To put it simply, a **counter move is a move you execute when your primary move doesn't work.**

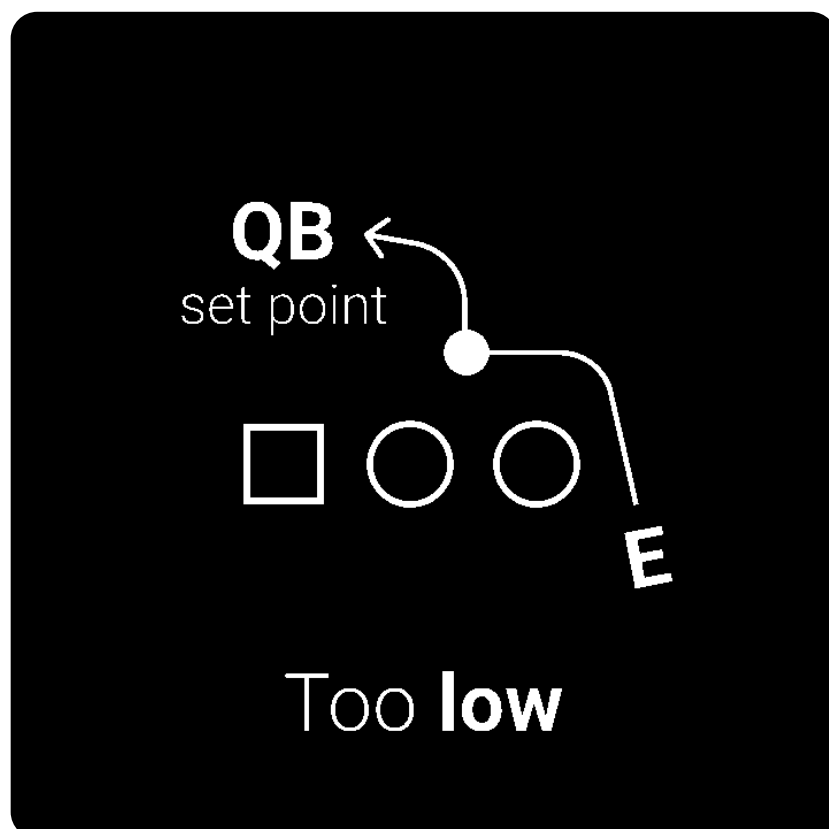
How to counter rush

Any counter move will occur at the decision point, the point at which a rusher decides whether or not to stick with his rush.

click [here](#) to see example



If you're getting pushed too far above or below the level of the QB you will need to counter back into your rush lane.



The most common ways to do this are to **squeeze the pocket** or **work the opposite edge**.

Squeeze the pocket

If your primary move doesn't work the safest way to counter is to squeeze the pocket.

You can do this by transitioning to a power rush when you feel you are too far above or below the QB's level.

click [here](#) to see example



This type of counter is great for reducing scramble lanes.

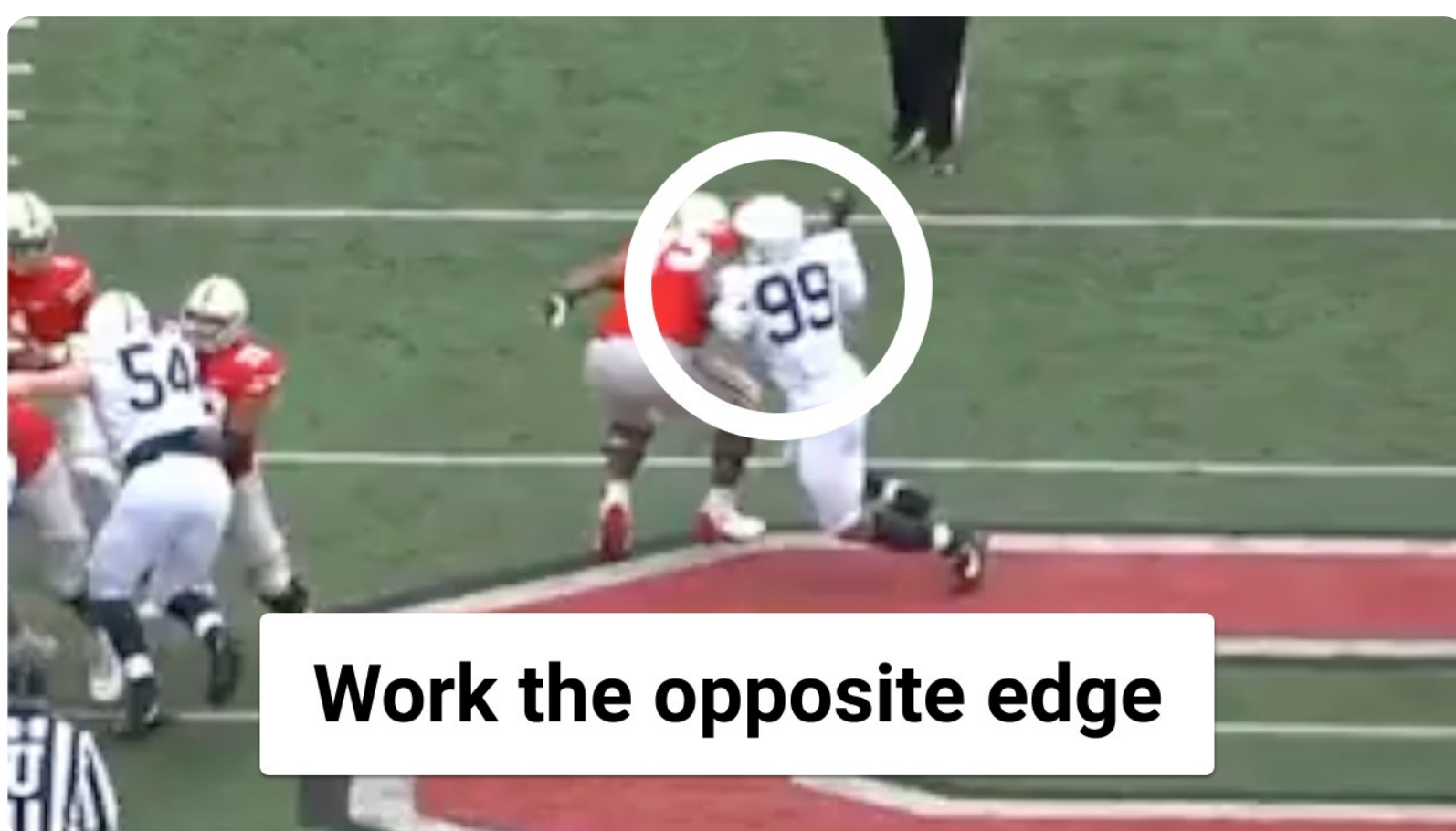
However, it will greatly give your opponent more than enough time to get his hands on you.

Work the opposite edge

A quicker, yet riskier counter is to work the opposite edge.

You can do this by **spinning**, **tossing**, or **clubbing** back to the opposite edge of your primary rush.

click [here](#) to see example



Even though this counter is a bit riskier, it can lead to more hits, sacks, and hurries because of its speed.

Coaching points

- ① Counter if your above or below the level of the QB
- ② Squeeze the pocket to reduce scramble lanes
- ③ Work the opposite edge if you can quickly beat your man

Step 3: Build a pass rush repertoire

How to practice new moves

I remember back in high school when I first saw Dwight Freeney do the spin. It was like a lightning bolt struck the top of my head.

The following day at practice I thought why don't I try this move out. How hard could it be?

So there I was in our team period sprinting upfield on a 3rd and long. I chopped my opponents hand and started spinning like the Tasmanian devil.

I thought, "maybe I'll be the next Dwight Freeney" that is until the blocker caught my spin and stopped me dead in my tracks.

I realized at that point that I had no idea what I was doing and that I needed to practice this move more.

But how should I have practiced this new move?

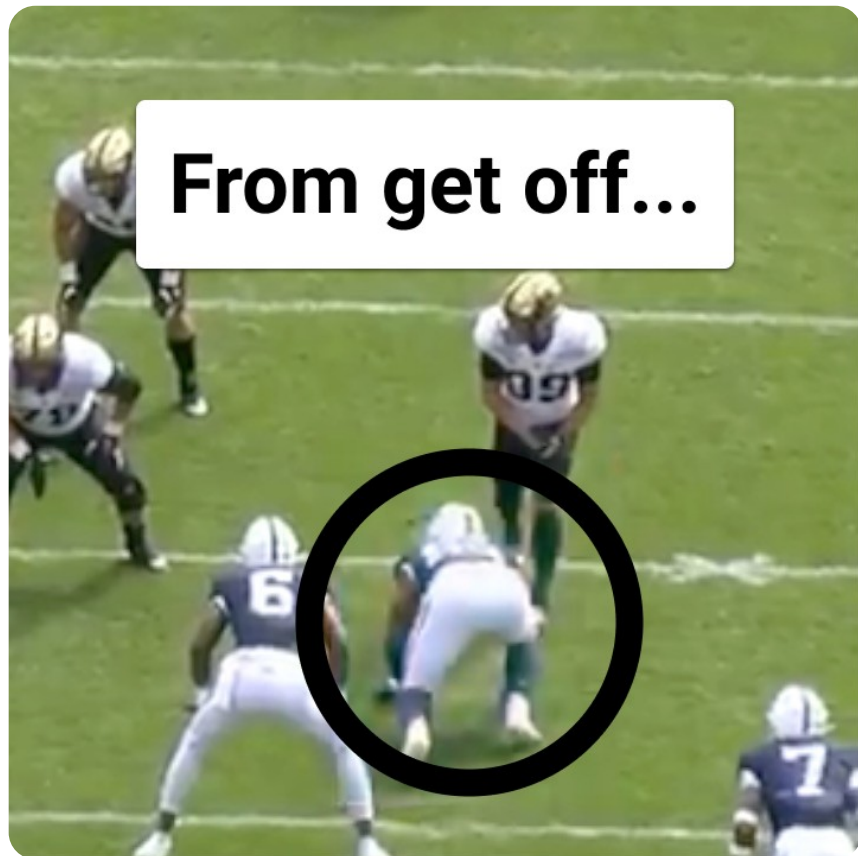
Break it into smaller pieces

Every pass rush move is easier to learn if you break it into 3 phases: the **approach**, **contact point**, and **decision point**.

Approach

The point at which the rusher gets off the ball, to the point where the rusher contacts the blocker.

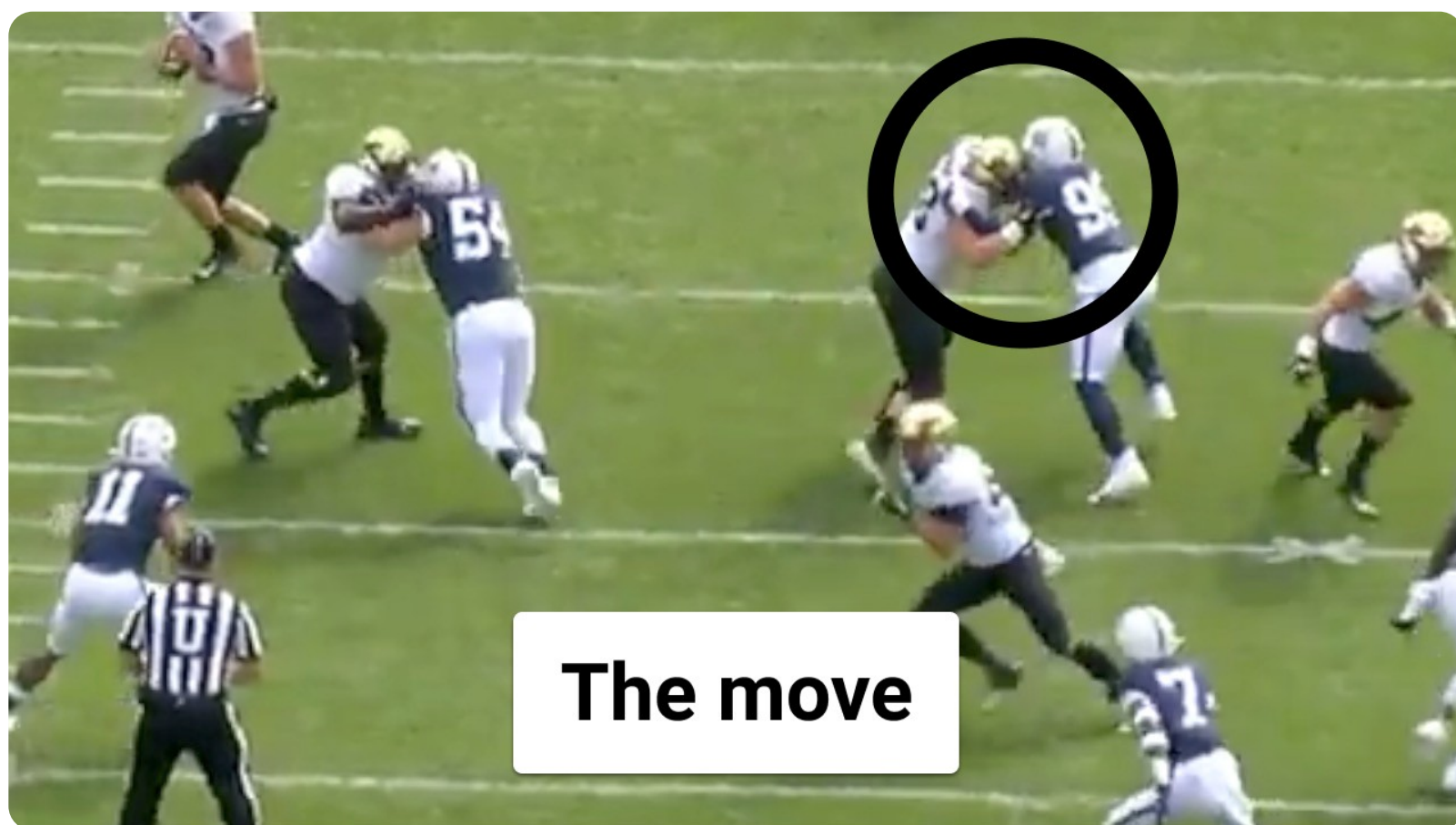
click [here](#) to see example



Contact point

The point at which the rusher executes a move on the blocker.

click [here](#) to see example



Decision point

The point at which the rusher decides whether to stick with the rush and “turn the corner” or counter.

click [here](#) to see example



Drill each piece separately

The next step is to drill each of these phases separately in order to create **muscle memory**.

Drill the approach

When drilling your approach, you'll want to drill a **1 step approach** if you play on the interior and a **3 step approach** if you play end.

This is because a blocker's set will change depending on what position you're playing.

At end, you generally will contact the blocker on the **3rd step**, but if you play DT or NT you will contact him on the **1st**.

Below, is an example of a 3 step approach drill. All you need to do to modify the drill for interior players, would be to have the blocker start closer to the line of scrimmage.

click [here](#) to see example

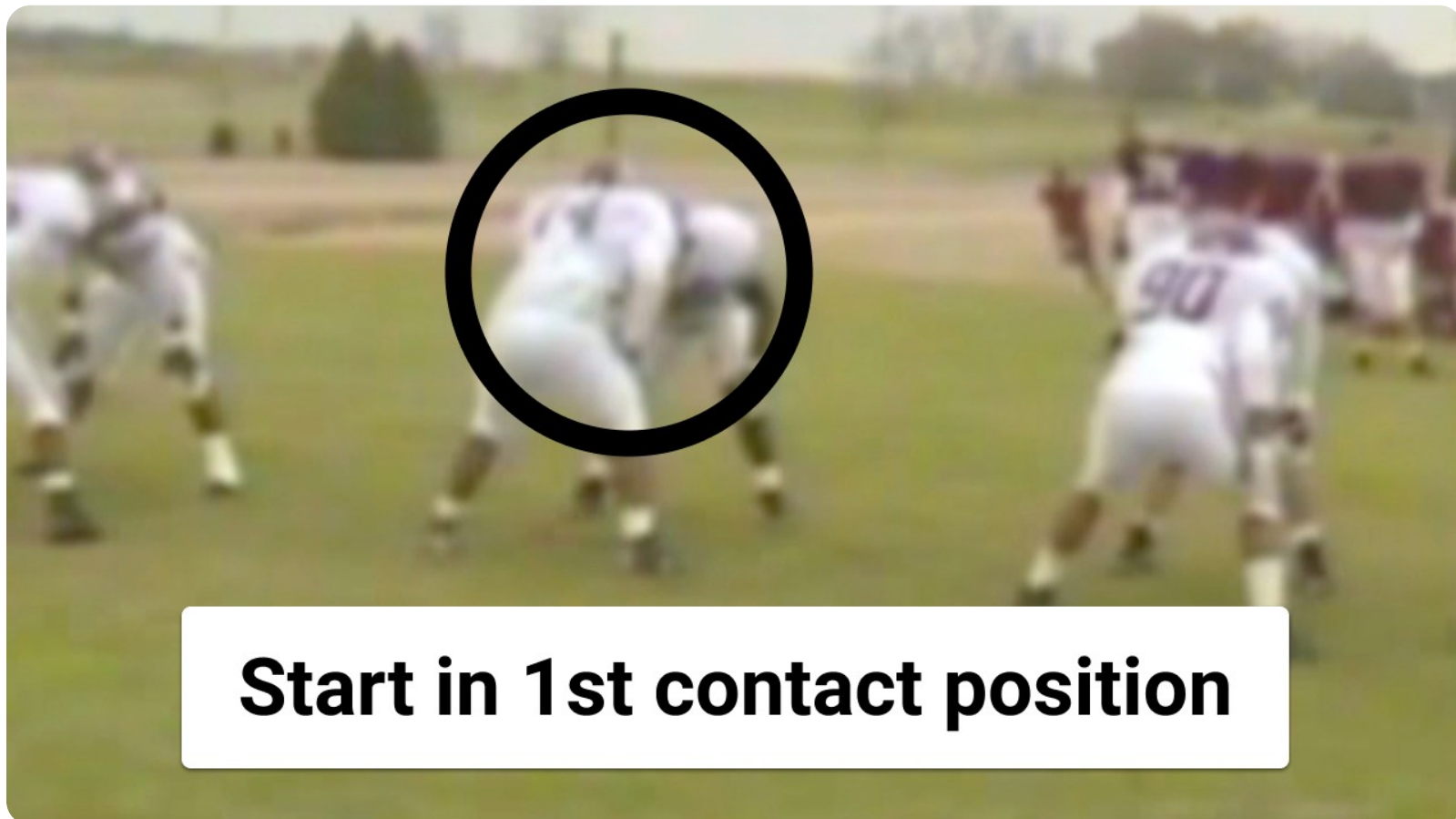


Drill the contact point

To drill the contact point, start in a position as though you have already **made first contact** with the blocker and execute the full move violently. That's it!

Below is an example of drilling the "pull slide" move from a first contact position.

click [here](#) to see example



Drill the decision point

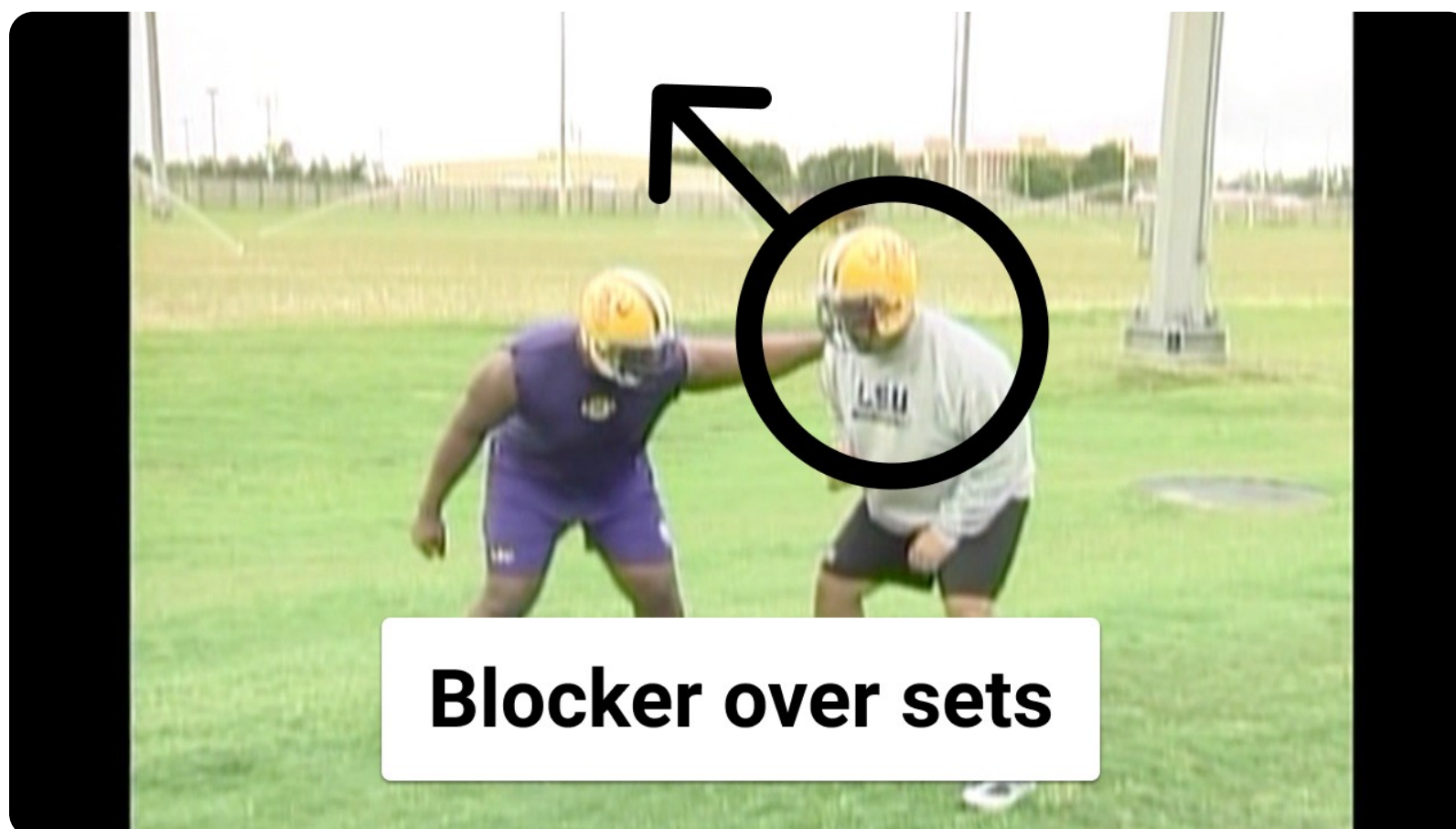
Lastly, **recreate the feeling** of the decision point in drill work.

In game situations, you will only have a split second to decide whether to counter or to stay on your path so you need to be able to make this decision without thinking.

So, **start from a contacted position** and have the blocker choose to either **overset** or **normally set**.

If the blocker oversets, you need counter, but if the blocker sets normal, execute your primary move as demonstrated in the example below.

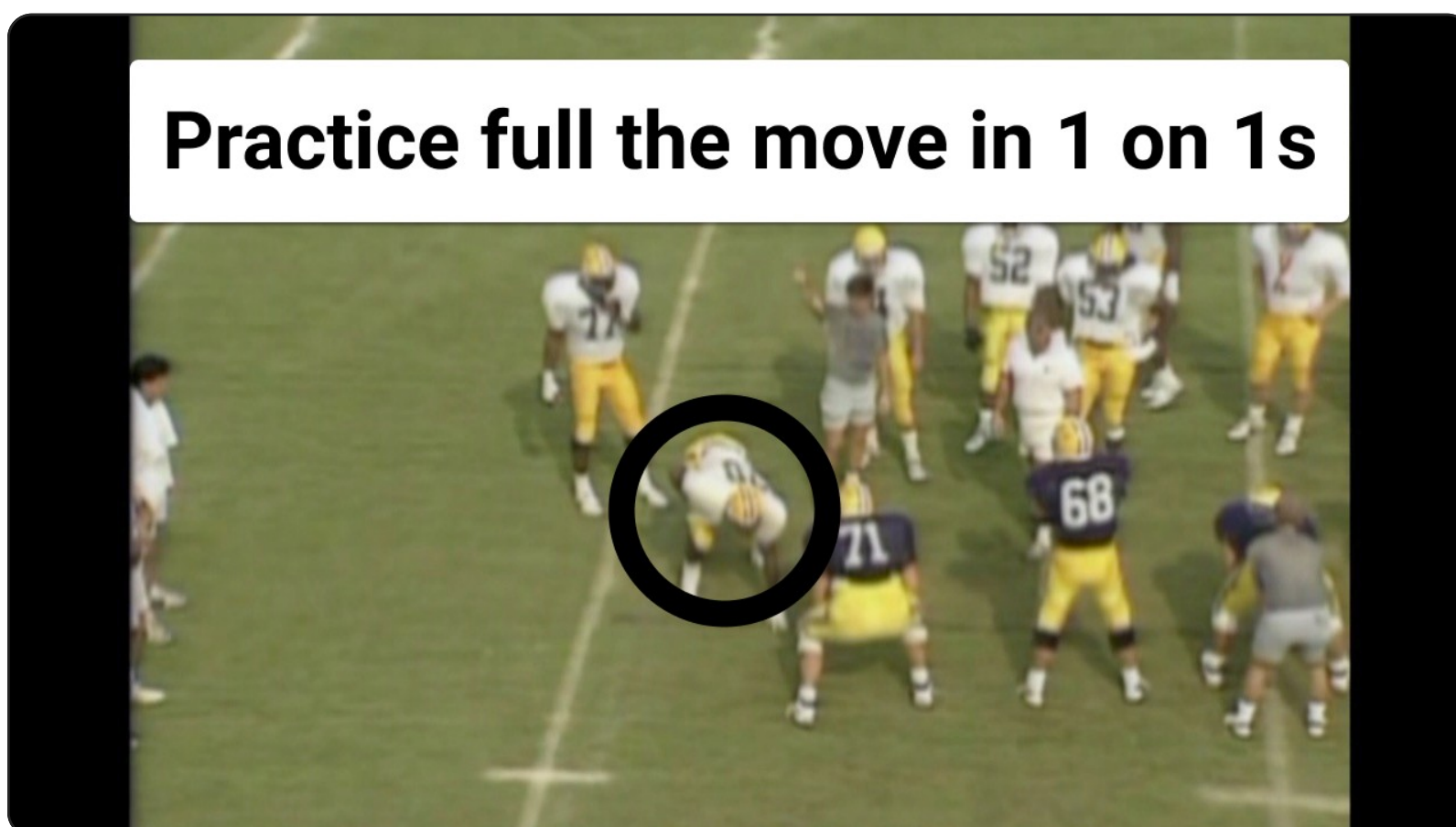
click [here](#) to see example



Drill entire move in 1 on 1s

Once you've drilled each phase of the pass rush move, now it's time to bring it all together in 1 on 1s.

click [here](#) to see example



There is going to be a lot of failure with any new pass rush move before success. That's why you should use 1 on 1s as testing lab for new pass rush moves.

Other than bruising your ego, loosing in 1 on 1s has literally no consequence.

If you're not using 1 on 1s to practice new moves, you're missing a huge opportunity to **unlock hidden potential**.

Use the move in a game

This is the fun part! Once you're comfortable with the move and have executed the full move successfully in practice, it's time to use it in a **game**.

Coaching points

- ① Drill the approach
- ② Drill the contact point
- ③ Drill the decision point
- ④ Practice full move in 1-on-1s
- ④ Use the move in a game

Build a tool box

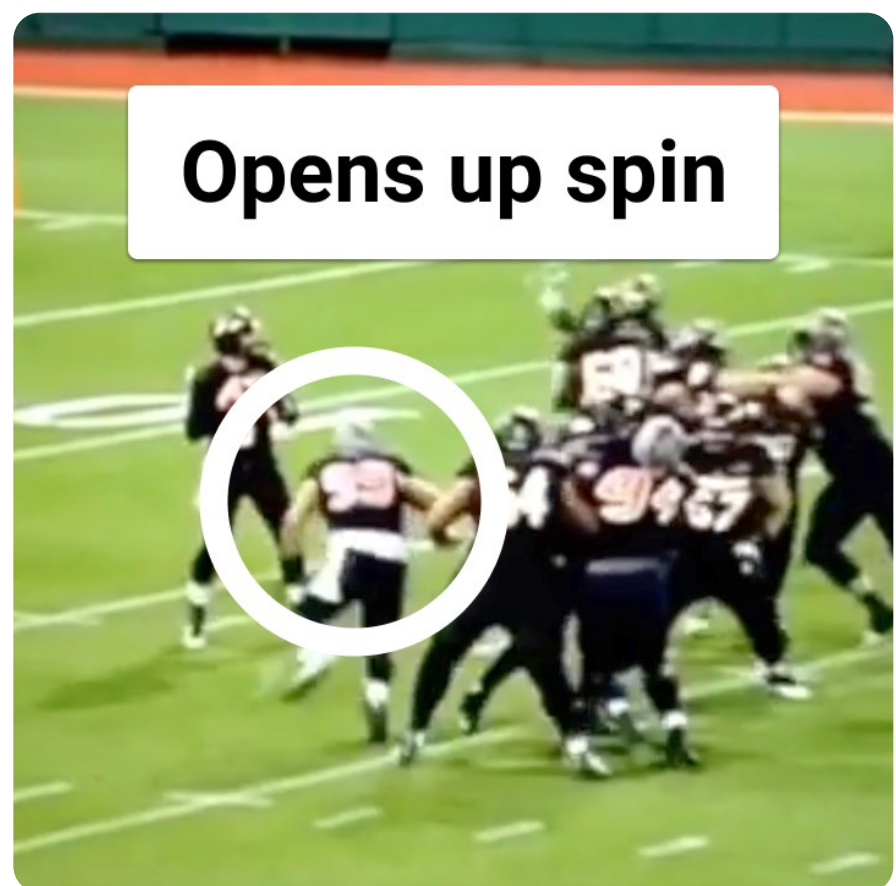
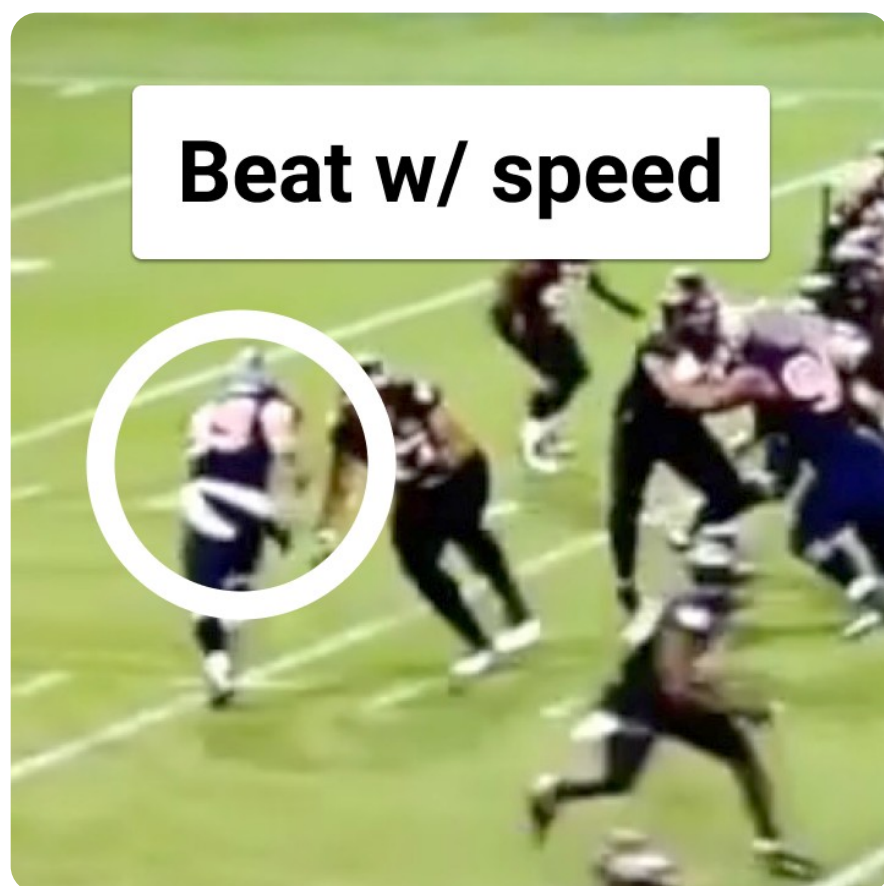
Over my career, I've used hundreds of moves.

Some of them worked really well and others got me pancaked.

What I found after a lot of trial and error is that **specific moves work in specific situations.**

For example, this spin (**move**) worked against my opponent because I had beaten him previously with speed (**situation**).

click [here](#) to see example



In this situation my opponent was **scared of my speed**, so he over compensated and turned his hips to make sure he didn't get beat.

Unfortunately for him, that **opened up his inside** and made it very easy for me to win with the spin on the very next play.

How to add moves to your tool box

After my successful spin move, I made a note that spinning works much better if I beat my opponent with speed first.

So, I ended up adding both the move and the situation in which the move was effective to my **tool box**.

To clarify, my tool box is an imaginary place where I store particular moves that worked in particular situations.

You see, **different situations require different tools** and my goal is to have a tool for every situation I run into.

For example, here are a few situations where I would use my **stutter bull** move...

When to use stutter bull

If my opponent is patient with his punch

If I'm stronger/bigger than my opponent

If I've been executing mainly speed rushes

If my opponent is vertical setting

And a few where I wouldn't...

When not to use stutter bull

If my opponent is slower than I am

If my opponent is stronger/bigger than me

If I've power rushed a couple times in a row

If my opponent is aggressive with his punch

The idea here is to use the speed bull in enough situations and **pay attention to the outcomes** that I know exactly when and where to use this move.

So, to add moves to your own tool box follow this process:

- ① Execute move in practice/game
- ② Identify if move succeeded or failed
- ③ If move succeeded identify why (the situation)
- ④ Add successful move and situation to tool box
- ⑤ If move failed identify why (the situation)

⑥ Try failed move in different situation

I've built my personal tool box over years of trial and error using this process.

There has been a lot of failure, and I'm sure you'll have to fail a lot too before you find moves that you can add to your tool box.

It can feel like trying to break down a wall with your bare fists, but when you find a move you can add to your tool box - **it's magic!**

So, put on your hard hat and keep testing different move in different situations and I promise you **it will be worth the effort.**

**Step 4: Choose
a rusher type**

Power rusher

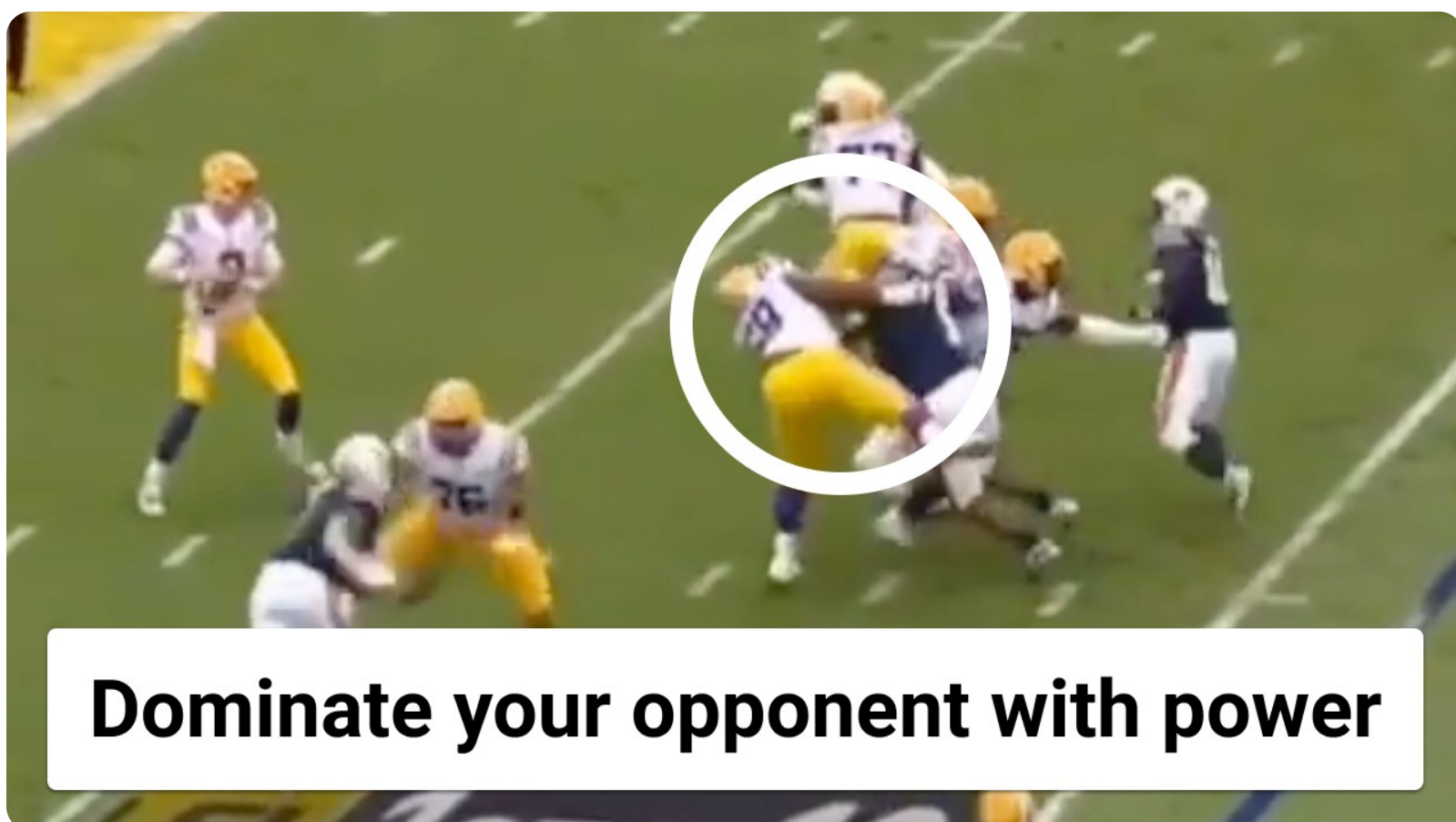
Have you ever met a guy who you thought could fight a lion with his bare hands? Who looks like he chops wood for a living? Who eats 10 lbs of steak for a snack?

I have.

When you play as long as I have, you run into guys who don't need to do anything fancy. All they need to do is **dominate** the guy across from them with their physical power.

These guys are **power rushers**.

click [here](#) to see example



Power rusher prototype

Let's dive into a bit more what a typical power rusher looks like...

Derrick Brown, the no. 7 pick in the NFL draft, is a great example.

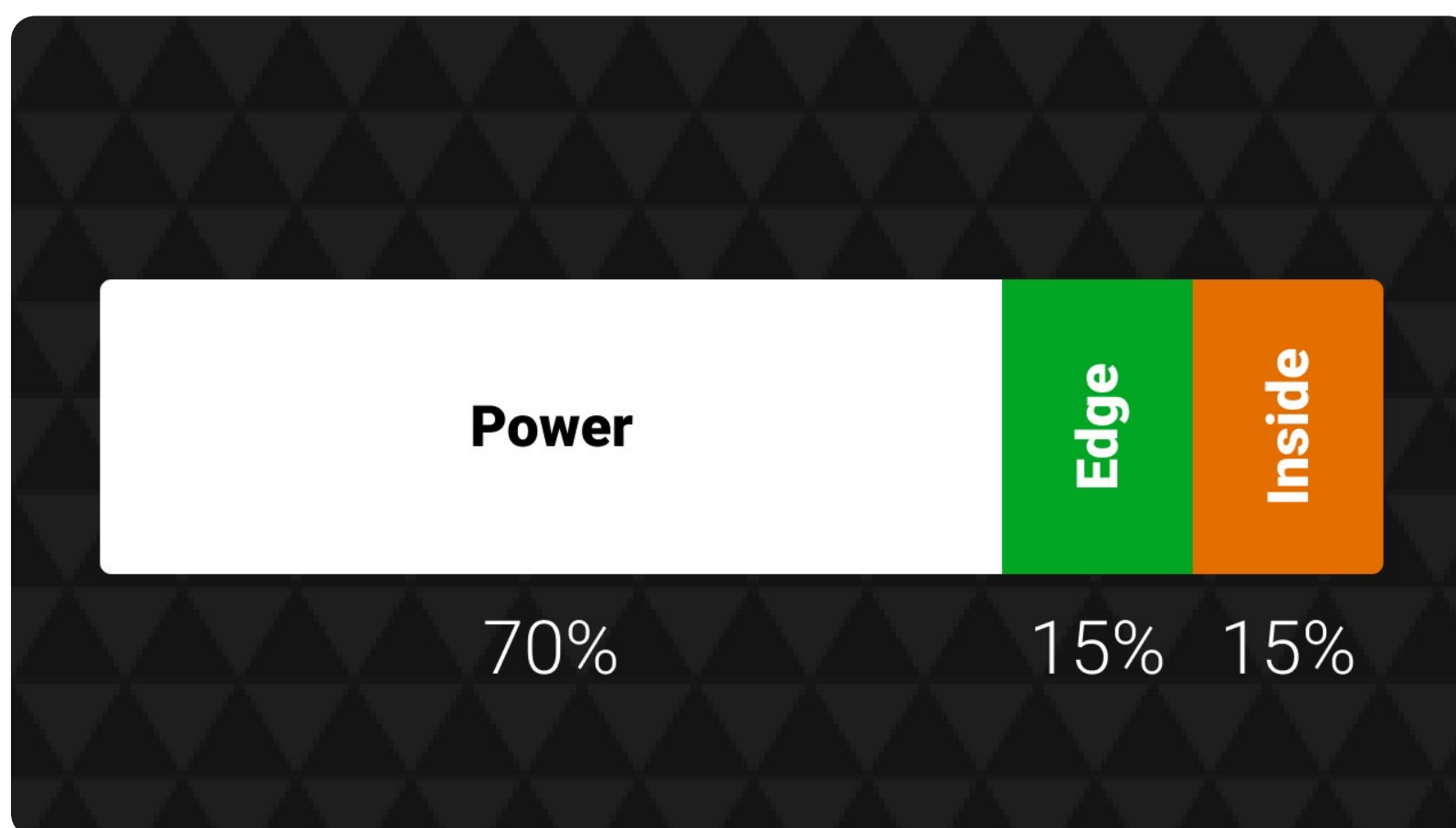
At 6' 4" 326 pounds Derrick is bigger than most blockers he faces and he has the strength to back it up. At the NFL combine he threw up 225 pounds **28** times. Here are a few more of his stats...



Now Derrick isn't exactly the fastest guy in the world, but he doesn't need to be. When you have the type of strength he has, you can get pressure on the QB using exclusively **power**.

Pass rush moves breakdown

If you were to take every rush that a power rusher executes throughout a game and plot it on a bar graph it should look like the example below.



You guessed it, the majority of rushes are **power** rushes.

To be clear, that doesn't mean a power rusher should run down the middle of their opponent every single snap.

They still should use a variety of power moves like the **stab** and **speed bull**. This helps you to not become predictable.

On the other hand, because power rushers aren't typically speedy guys they should only use edge and inside moves **sparingly** as a change up.

In game example

Here's what a typical game should look like for a power rusher.

Imagine, you've been bull rushing your opponent for 2 quarters.

You've been hitting him with the stab, speed bull and stutter bull and have been absolutely dominating him.

Now it's the 2 minute drill before the half, but instead of power rushing you use a **swim**.

It's inevitable that your opponent will fall flat on his face. Why? Because he's anticipating the bull.

Blockers who are getting crushed by bull will start to throw more of their weight into their punch which will get them more off their center of gravity.

That gives you a prime opportunity to **fake power** and **use speed**.

Are you a power rusher?

There's a few simple questions you can ask yourself to determine whether or not you're a power rush...

- ① Are you stronger than most your opponents?
- ② Could you beat your man using power rush all game?

If the answer is yes then you're a power rusher. Plain and simple.

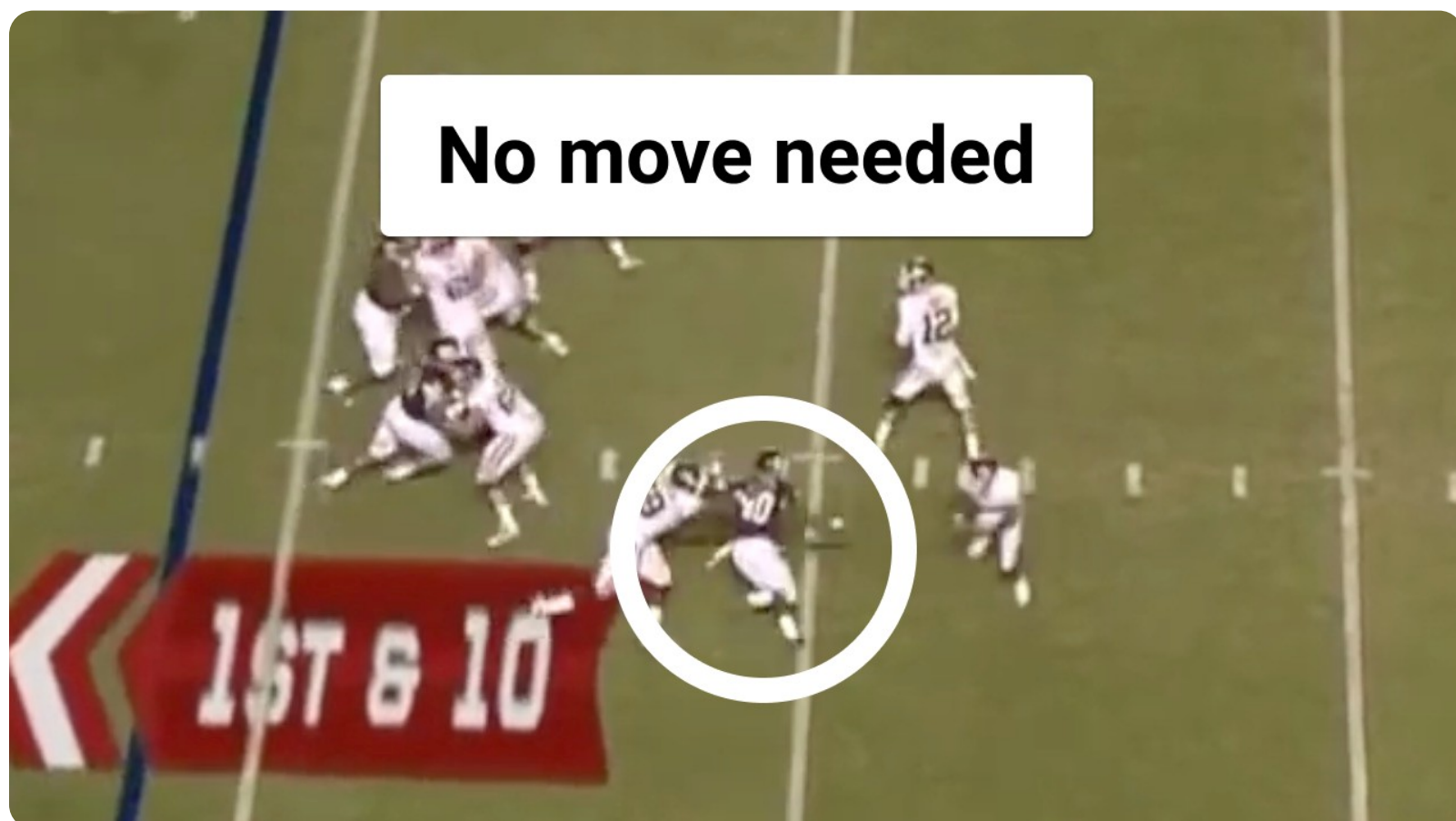
Speed rusher

Are you a track star? Have you never lost a foot race? Is your nickname Flash?

If the answer is 'yes' to any of these questions, then my guess is that you're a **speed rusher**.

Speed rushers are unique athletes who often don't even need to touch their opponent to beat them.

click [here](#) to see example



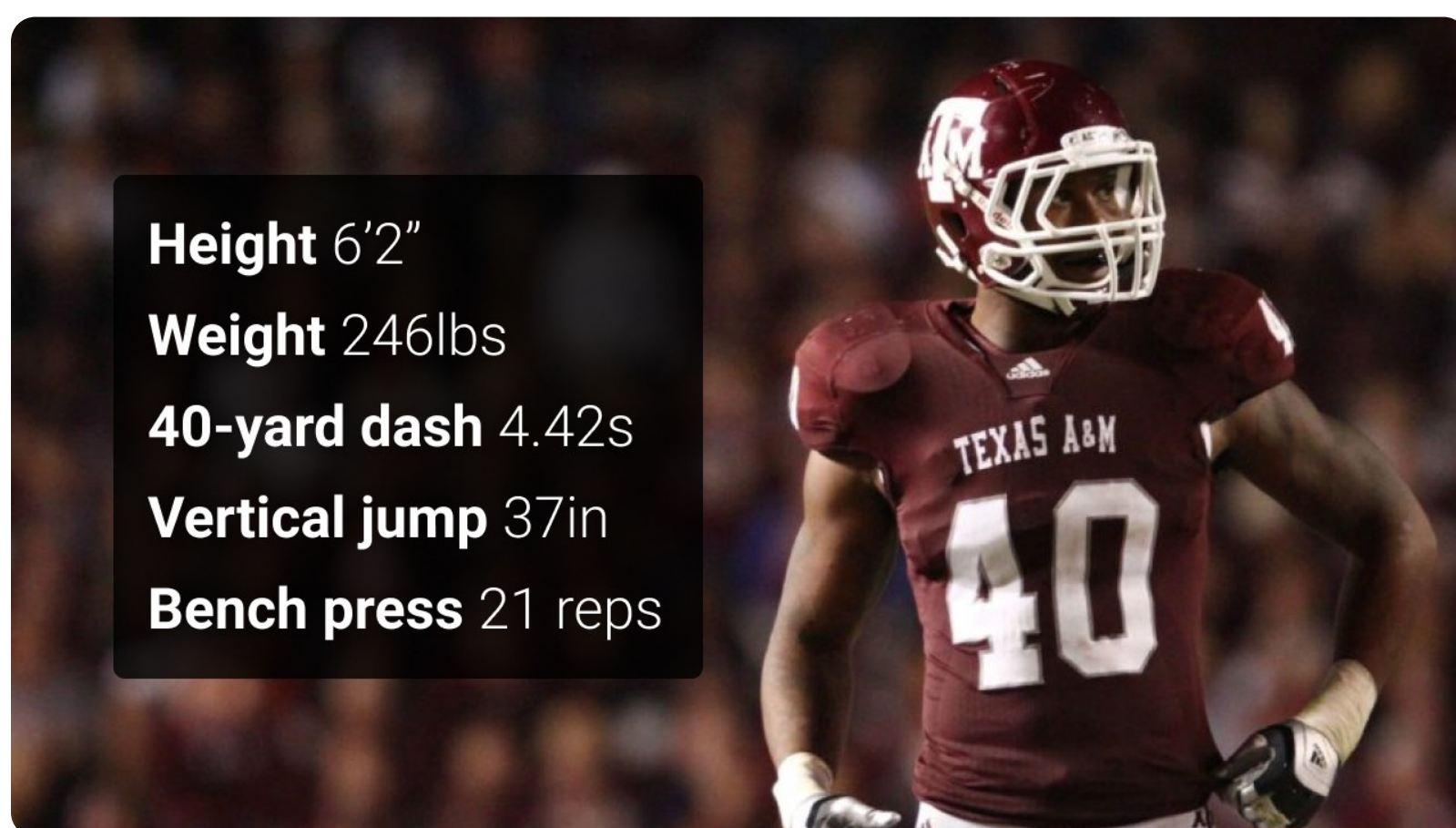
Speed rusher prototype

There are many great examples of speed rushers out there, but one of the best is **Von Miller**. Let's rewind back to 2010 when he came out of Texas A&M

Back in 2010, Von Miller put up some pretty amazing numbers at the NFL combine.

The most impressive was his 40 yards dash. The guy ran a **4.4 second** forty. That's laser time folks. Not uncle rico in the backyard with a stop watch.

Here are a few other stats from his combine...



At 6'2" 240 Von was lighter and shorter than most D-Lineman coming out that year who averaged around 6'4" 265 pounds.

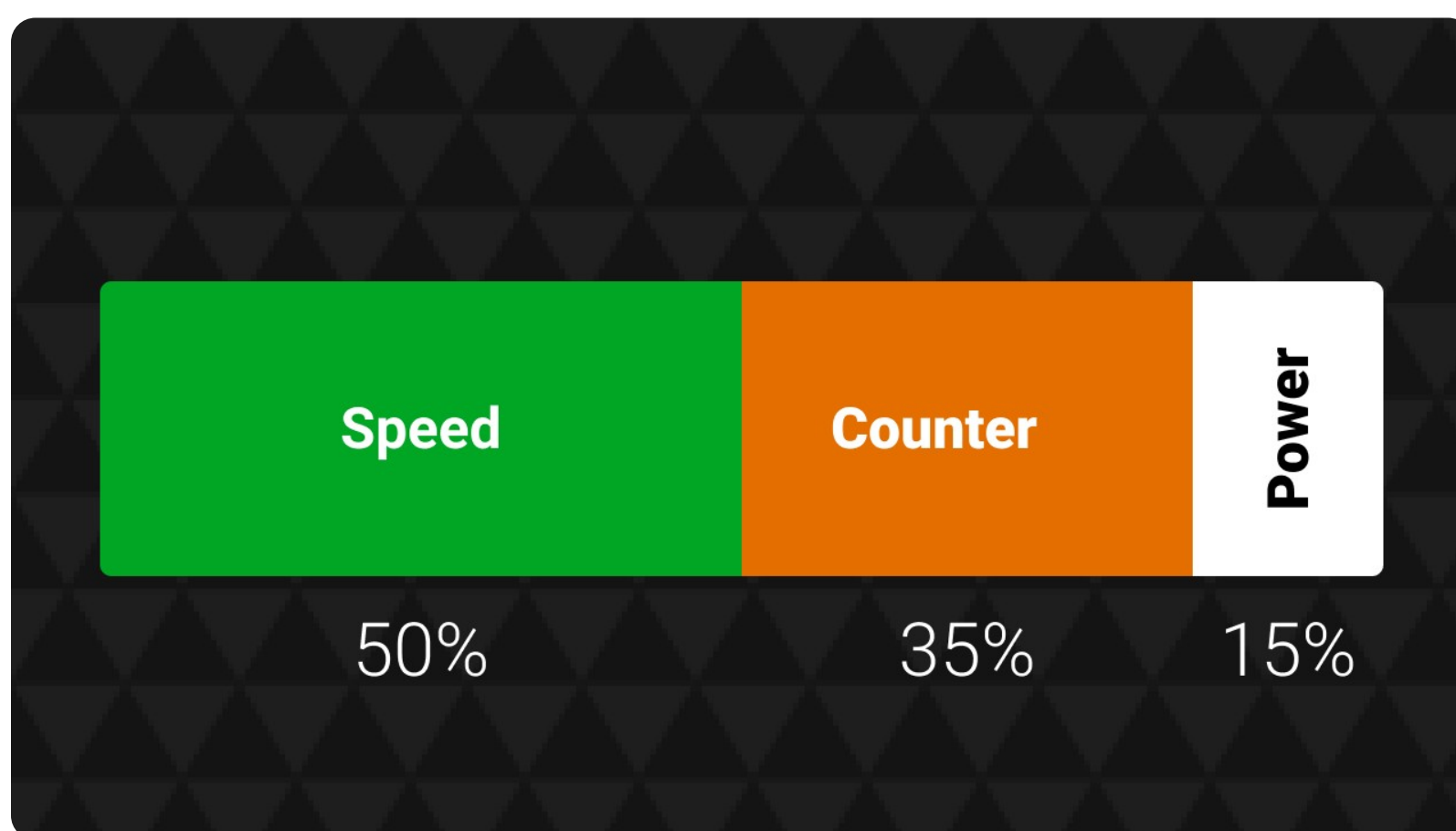
It's typical though for speed rushers to be **smaller**.

When you have speed you don't need the weight and height.

Speed rushers can create pressure and power with their speed.

Pass rush moves breakdown

If you were to break down Von's rushes in a game it would look like the below chart...



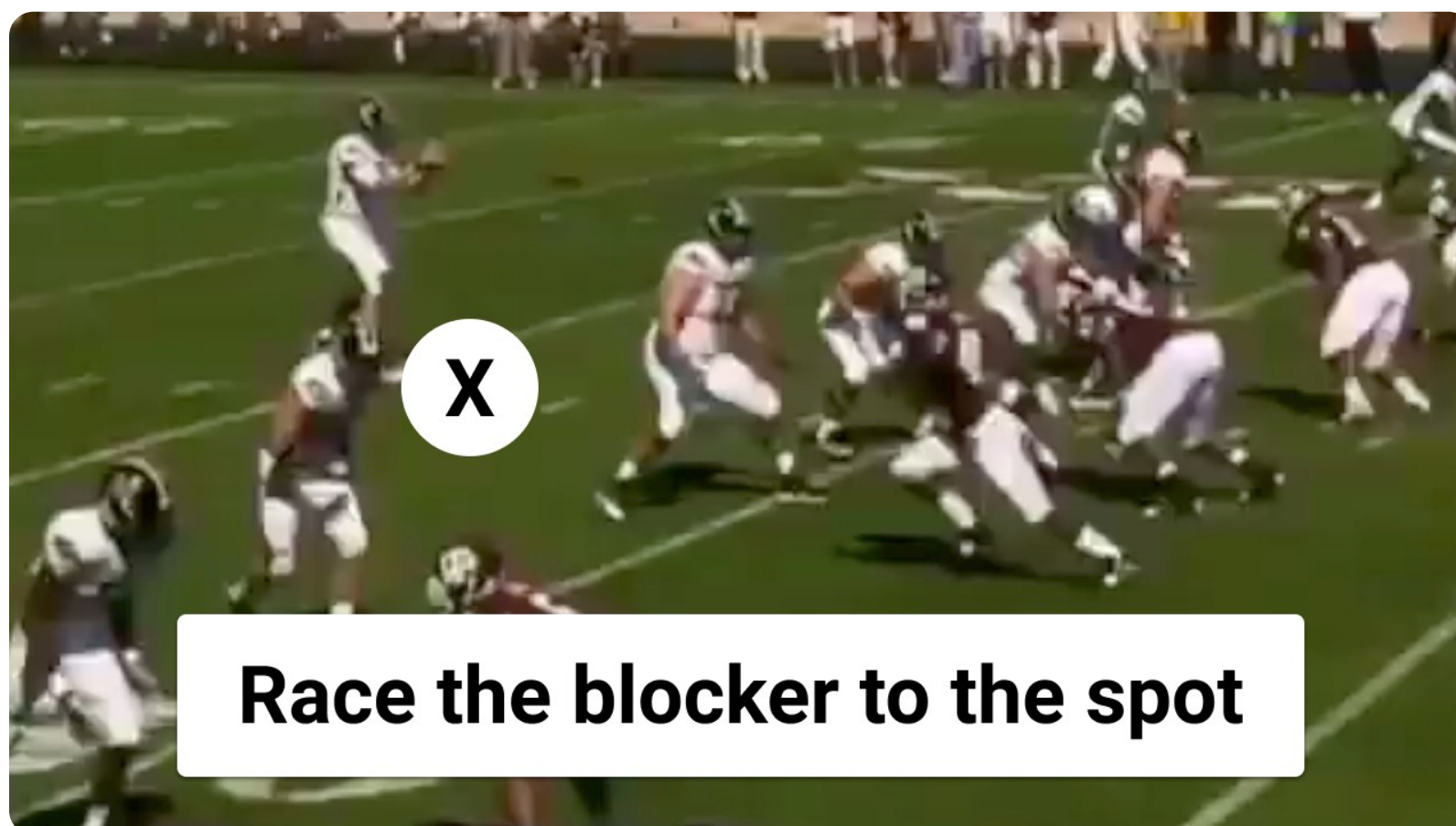
The majority of his rushes are **speed rushes**, however, he also has a fairly high amount of counter rushes.

That's because when you're a speed rusher, you can **race your opponent to a point**.

What I mean here is that a speed rusher can pick a point 2-3 yards behind his opponent and race him to that spot.

If he beats his opponent to the spot, he stays on his line to the QB. But, if his opponent beats him to the spot, he can simply counter inside.

click [here](#) to see example



The reason this works is because for a blocker to beat a rusher with elite speed to “the spot” **they will have to abandon square hips and balance to do so.**

This puts them in a vulnerable position and often opens up their inside.

If you don’t have elite speed this sort of technique doesn’t work because you don’t generate enough upfield momentum.

When it comes to power rushes, a speed rusher should only use them **a couple times** a game.

The key here is to sell speed and surprise your opponent with power. This can be a great change up that can often result in speedster throwing a 300+ pound man to the ground.

Are you a speed rusher?

Von Miller is a once in a decade sort of player, so if you're not running a 4.4 don't fret. It is still possible to be a speed rusher.

Ask yourself...

- ① Are you as fast as the skill players on your team?
- ② Could you beat your man using speed all game?

If you answered yes to either of these questions, then you are a speed rusher.

So, make sure to use this unique ability to your advantage.
Speed kills!

All-around rusher

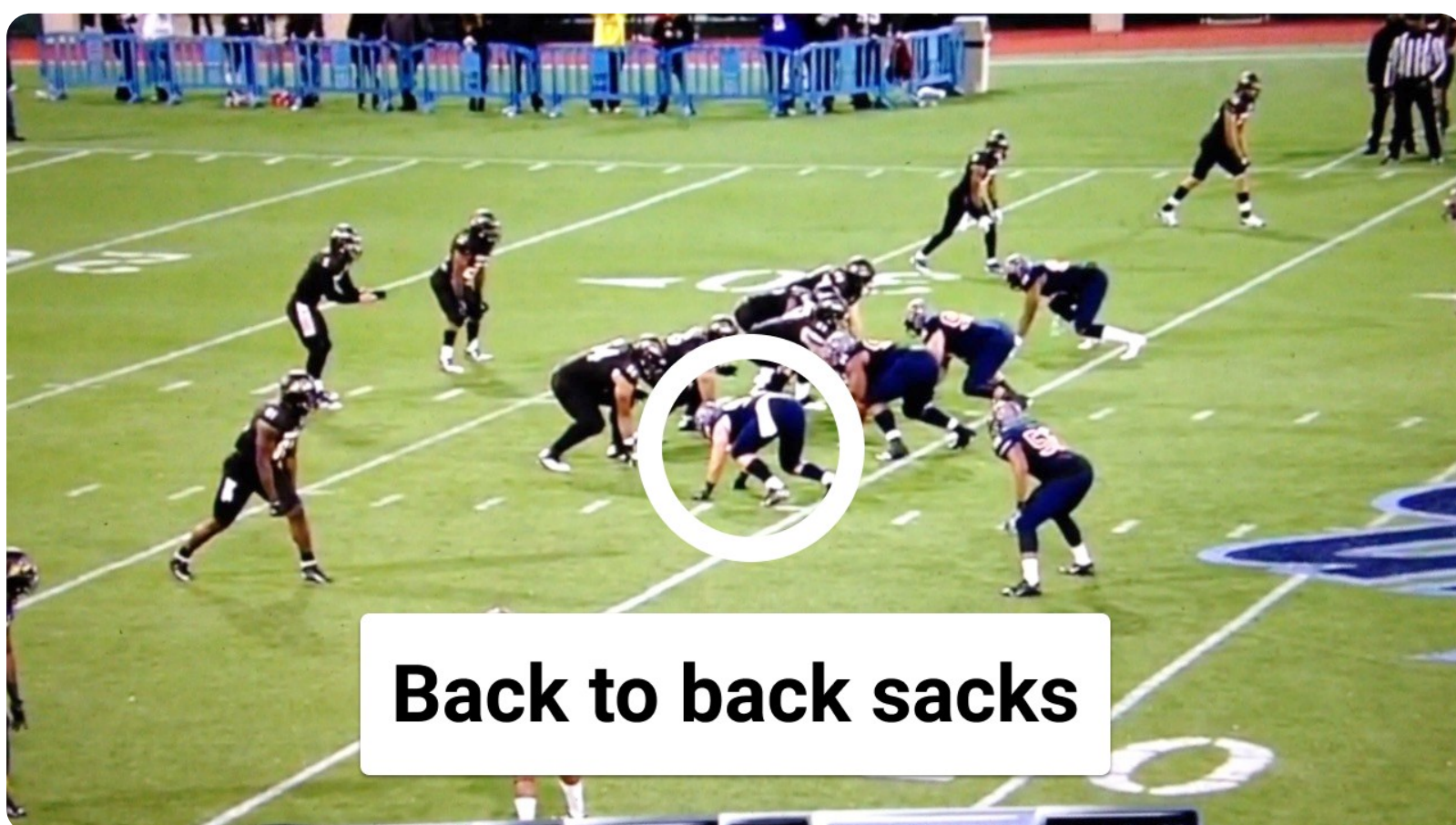
I've had many coaches tell me pick a spot 2-3 yards behind the blocker and try to beat him there. Unfortunately, this technique didn't work very well. **I wasn't fast enough.**

I had other coaches tell me that I needed to use power every rush, but that didn't work for me either. I couldn't sustain great knock back all game. **I wasn't strong enough.**

Then, I ran into David Tollefson. He told me **pass rush is chess not checkers**. Instead of bulling or speed rushing every play, he said to mix edge, power and inside rushes equally to confuse my opponent.

And this my friends did work. After applying this advice, I had my first **back to back** sack game.

click [here](#) to see example

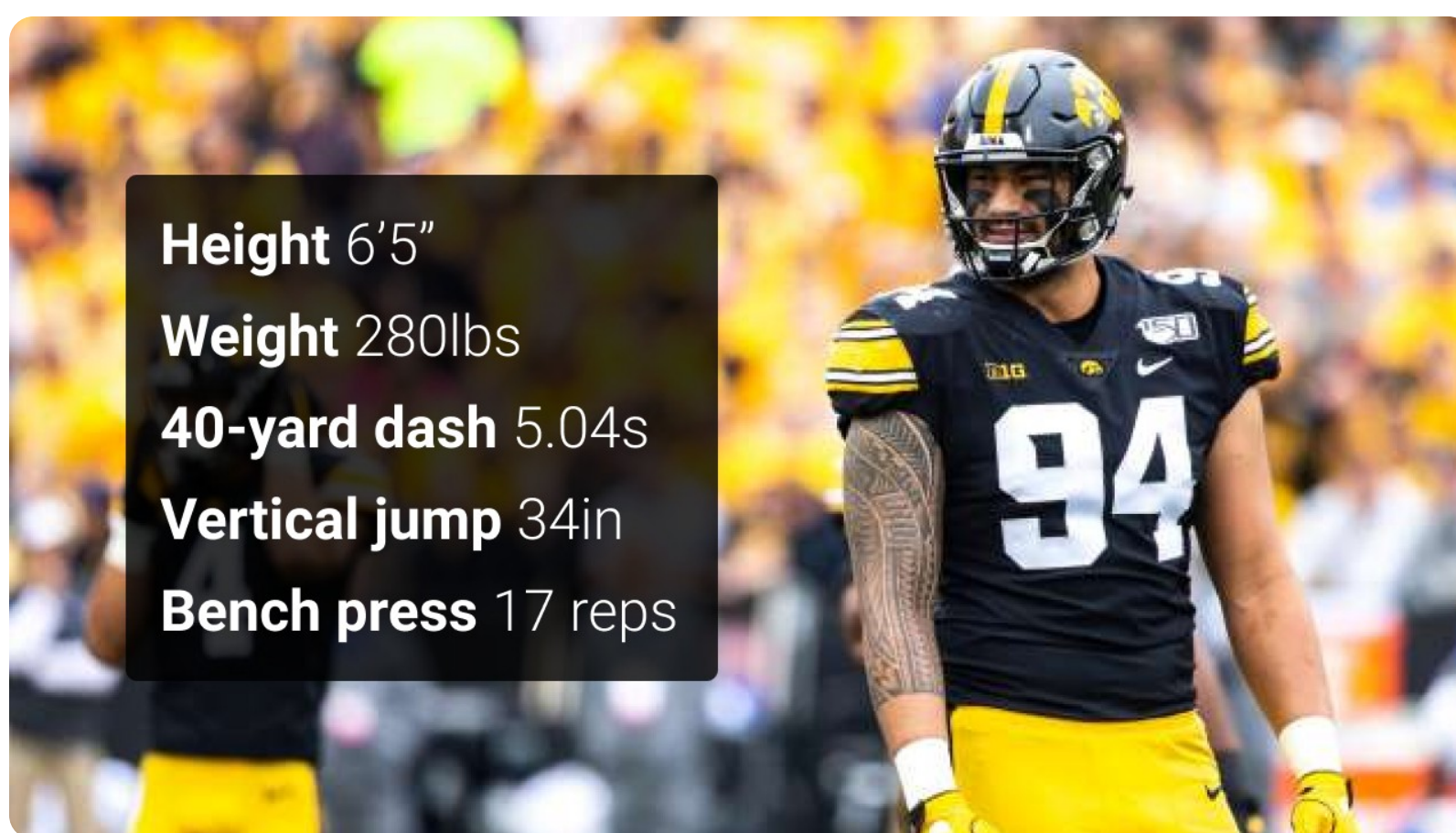


If you're someone like me who is fast, but not blazing. Strong, but not freaky, then you may also be an **all-around rusher**.

All-around rusher prototype

A great example of an all-around rusher is 2nd round draft pick **A.J. Epenesa**.

A.J.'s numbers won't blow you away. At 280 pounds, he ran a **5.04s** 40 and benched 225 **17 times**.

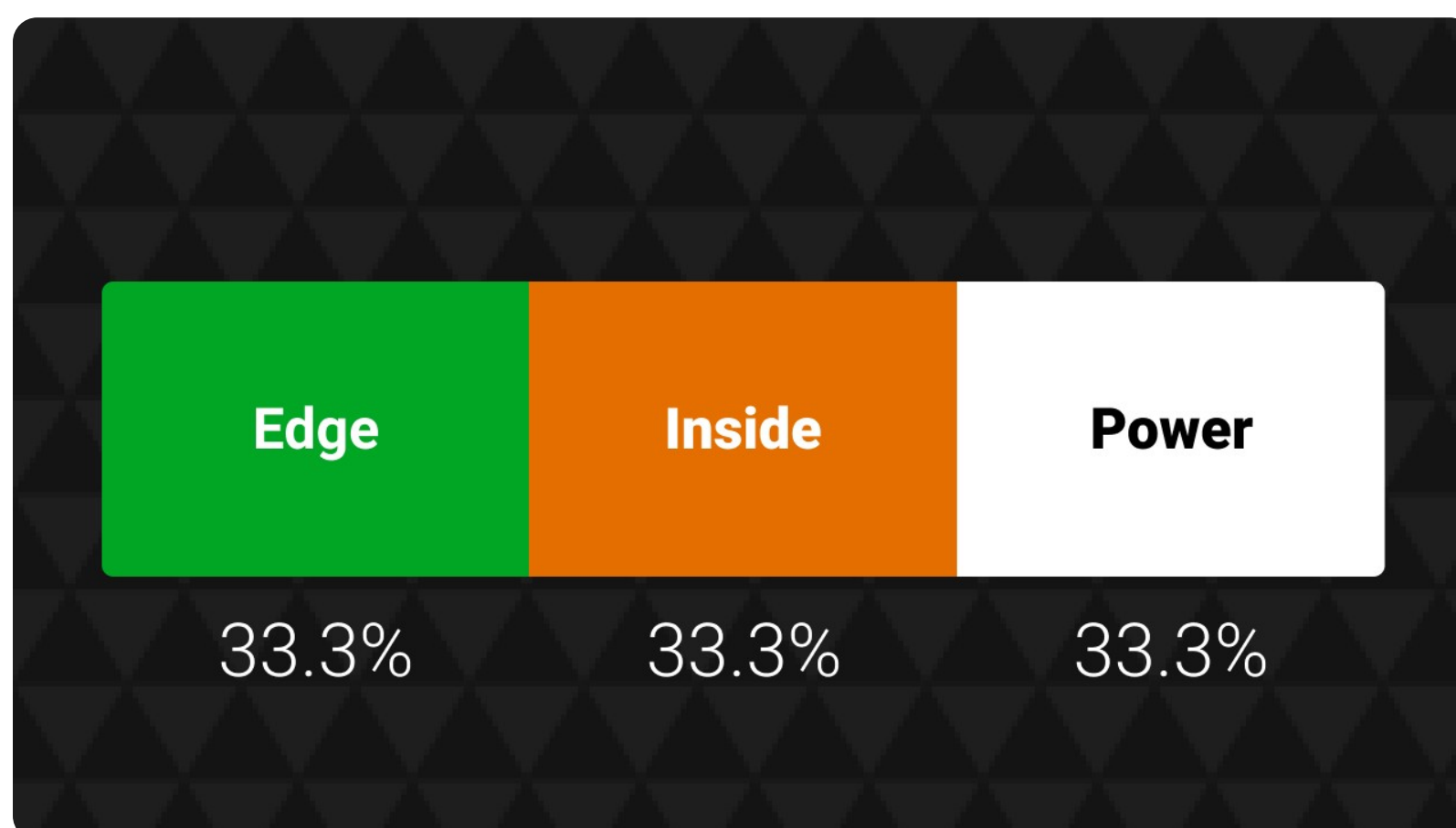


And although A.J. doesn't possess elite physical traits, he still had a very productive college career with **26.5 sacks** and **37.0 TFLs**.

This is because he leveraged his mind to make plays.

Pass rush moves breakdown

If you look at A.J.'s film closely you will notice that he uses edge, inside and power rushes **equally**. I'd recommend any all-around rusher to do the same.



The key is to not become predictable. All-around rushers are not fast and strong enough to do the same rush again and again.

Their opponent will get wise to what they are doing and make adjustments. **You always want to be one step ahead.**

In game example

In order to not become predictable an all-around rusher should use a **variety** of rushes. Their first four rushes will end up looking like this...

Rush #1: **Power**

Rush #3: **Inside**

Rush #2: **Edge**

Rush #4: **Effective**

Mixing power, edge and inside rushes will give you an opportunity to see what works and confuse your opponent.

On your 4th rush, use your most effective rush. Keep using this rush until it doesn't work. Then, when it stops working, go back into testing different pass rush moves until you find a winner.

Rinse and repeat this process for the entire game.

Are you an all-around rusher?

The majority of D-linemen will fall into this category. To be sure, ask yourself...

- ① Are you the same strength or speed as other D-Linemen?
- ② Are you not able to speed or power rush all game?
- ③ Do you like using strategy to defeat your opponent?

If the answer is yes to these questions you're likely an all-around rusher.

**Step 5: Become a
film study expert**

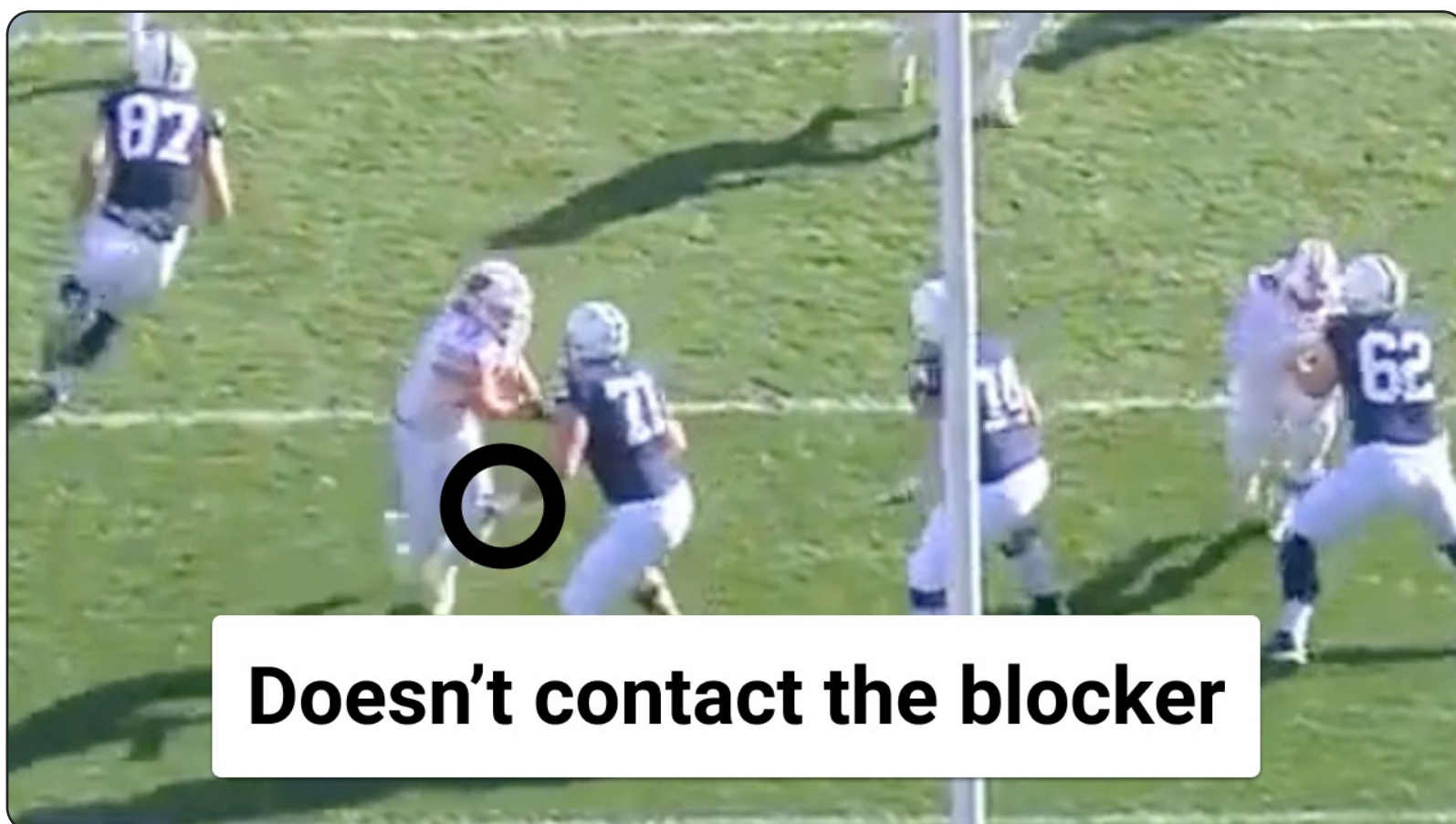
Hands

One of a blockers most powerful tools is his hands. If he can latch those big mitts onto your chest you're going to have a tough time getting around him. That's where film study comes in.

In order to beat the hands, we need to understand **how** the blocker uses his hands. All too often I see guys use moves that won't work because they don't understand **how** the blocker punches.

For example, #17 here on Wisconsin tries using an outside chop. It's a good move if done correctly, but he doesn't get close to hitting the blockers hand. Why? Because he didn't turn on the film and study his hands.

click [here](#) to see example



So what should you be studying? The first step is to identify a blocker's **hand type** and **aiming point** to determine what pass rush move to use

Hand Type

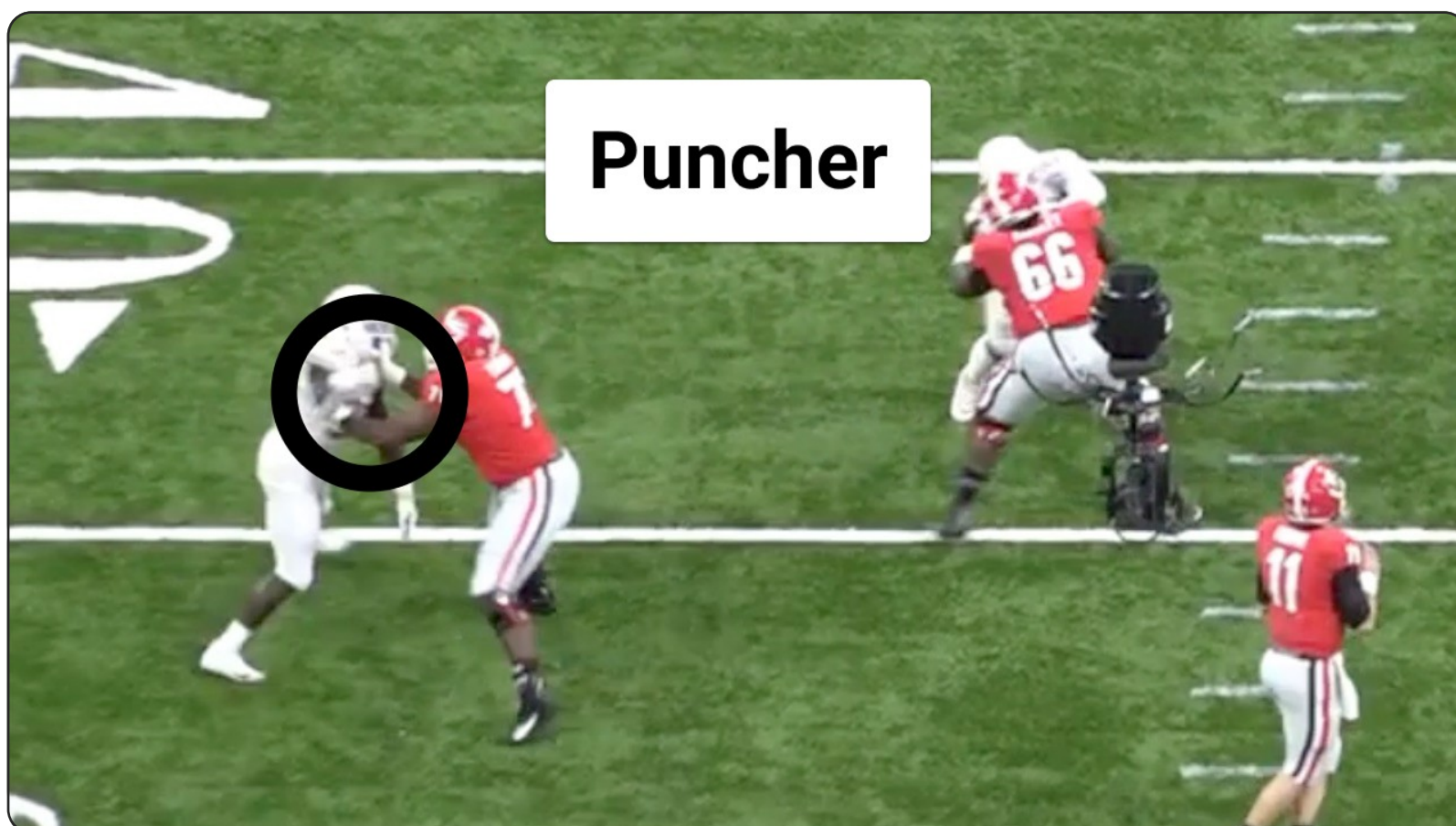
To identify hand type you're going to want to look at the path and speed with which a blocker's hands travel.

This is actually simpler than you would think because there are only 2 hand types. The puncher and grabber.

Puncher

These guys will shoot their inside hand, outside hand, or both hands directly at their target with violence.

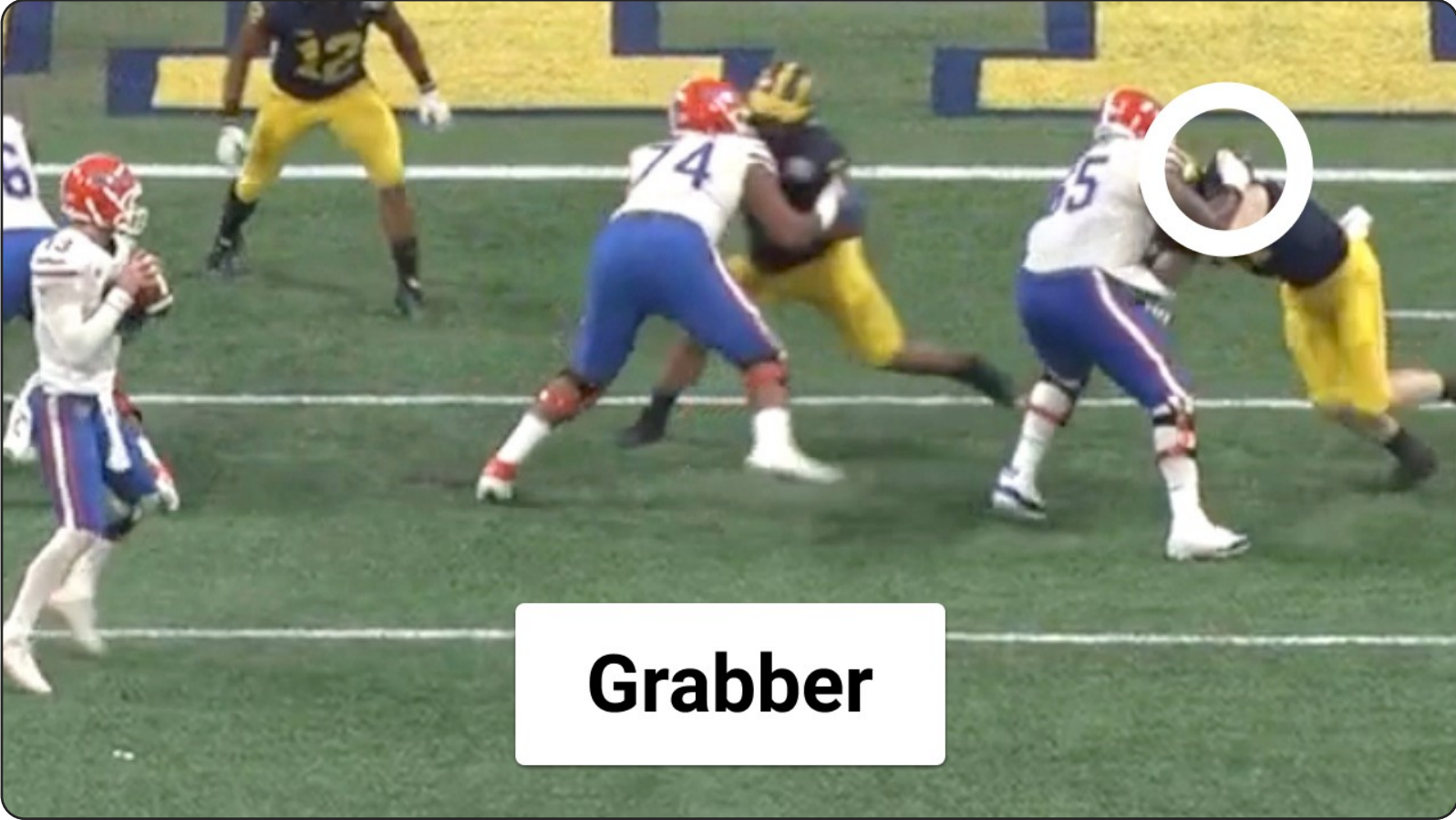
click [here](#) to see example



Grabber

These guys will wait for you to make the first move and then loop their hands outside at their target.

click [here](#) to see example



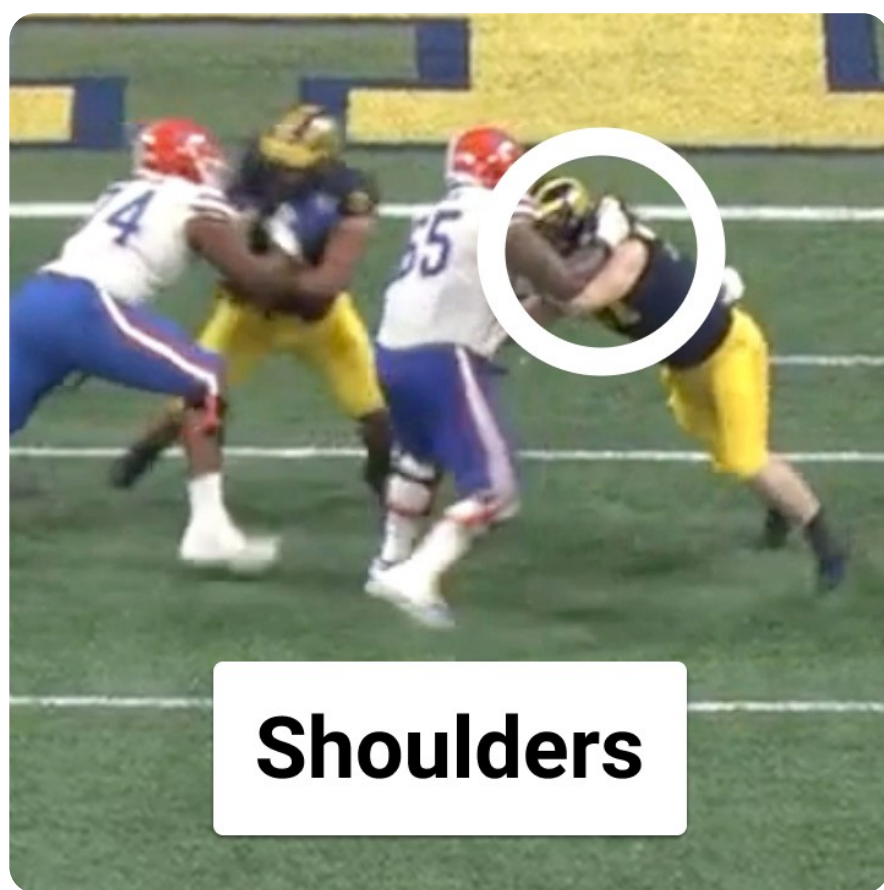
Aiming Point

Next, identify where the blocker aims his punch.

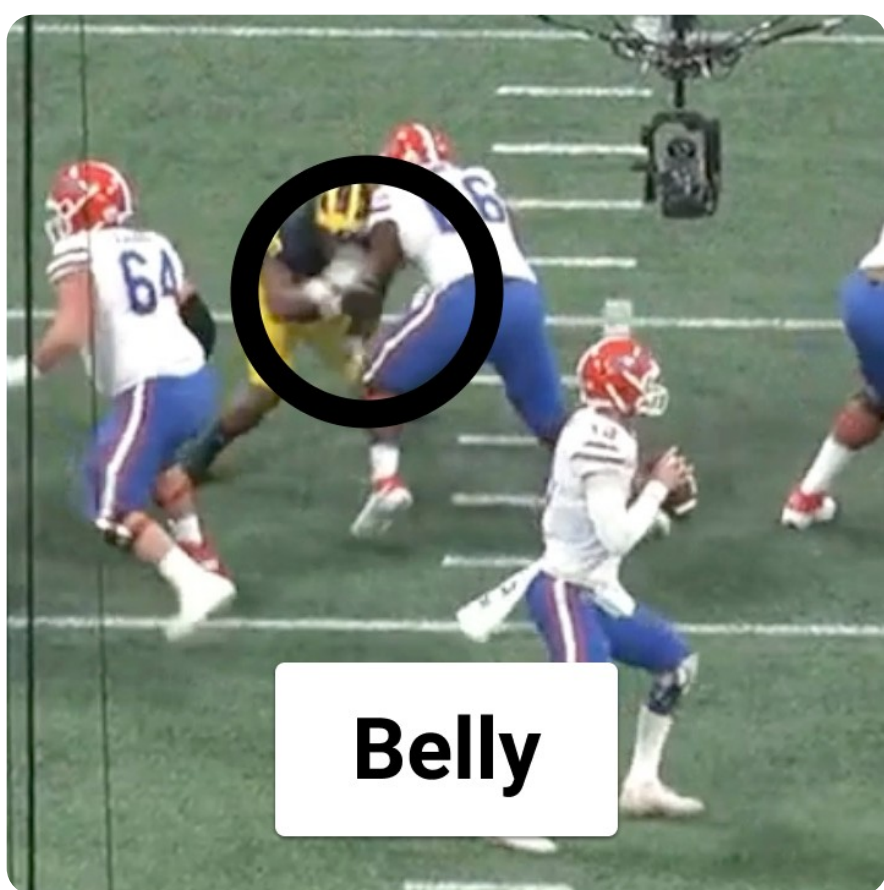
Generally, blockers will aim at the **chest**, **shoulders**, **belly** or a **mix** of the 3.



click [here](#) to see example



click [here](#) to see example



click [here](#) to see example



click [here](#) to see example

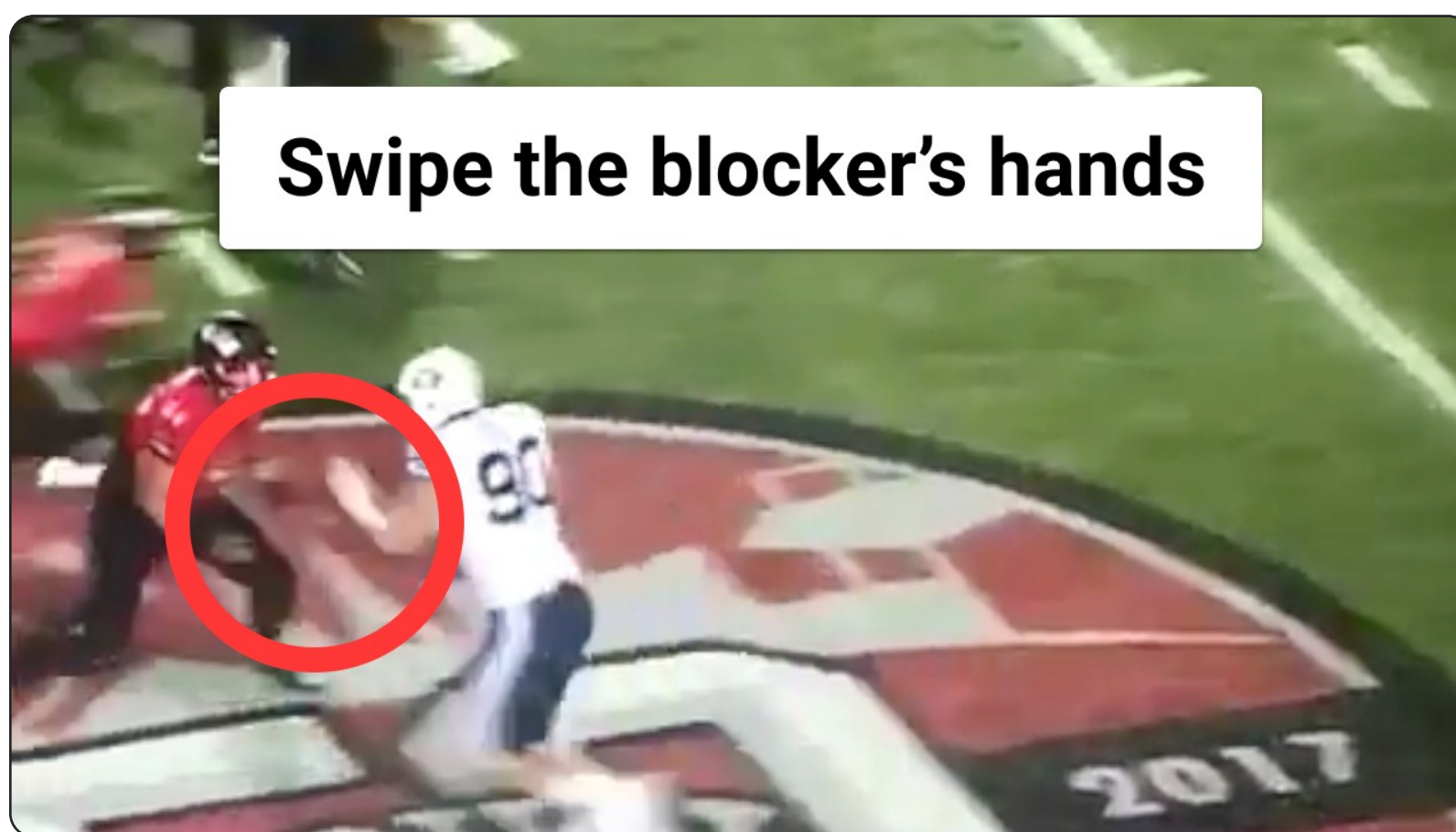
Deciding on a pass rush move

Now that you know the hand type and aiming point of your opponent, you can decide on what pass rush move to use.

As a general rule of thumb, the **aiming point** should determine what pass rush move you use and the **hand type** should determine the speed of that move.

For example, if your opponent **punches** (hand type) the **chest** (aiming point) you could use a quick double swipe to protect your chest from the aggressive punch of the blocker

click [here](#) to see example



Conversely, if your opponent **grabs** (hand type) the **shoulders** (aiming point), you should use a ghost technique to dip beneath the grab of the blocker.

via [@dlinevids1](#)

click [here](#) to see example



One more point

There is never one perfect pass rush move for every pass rusher, but by understanding how a blocker punches you can give yourself a great chance to defeat his hand and get the sack!

Set

The job of the blocker is to stay in front of you and he can choose a variety of ways to do so.

These different “ways” are the different types of sets he can use.

The kicker is that every set has its strengths and weaknesses

And if you can identify how your blocker is setting you, you can avoid his strengths and capitalize on his weaknesses.

The 3 types of sets

First step is to understand what your opponent is trying to do with different types of sets.

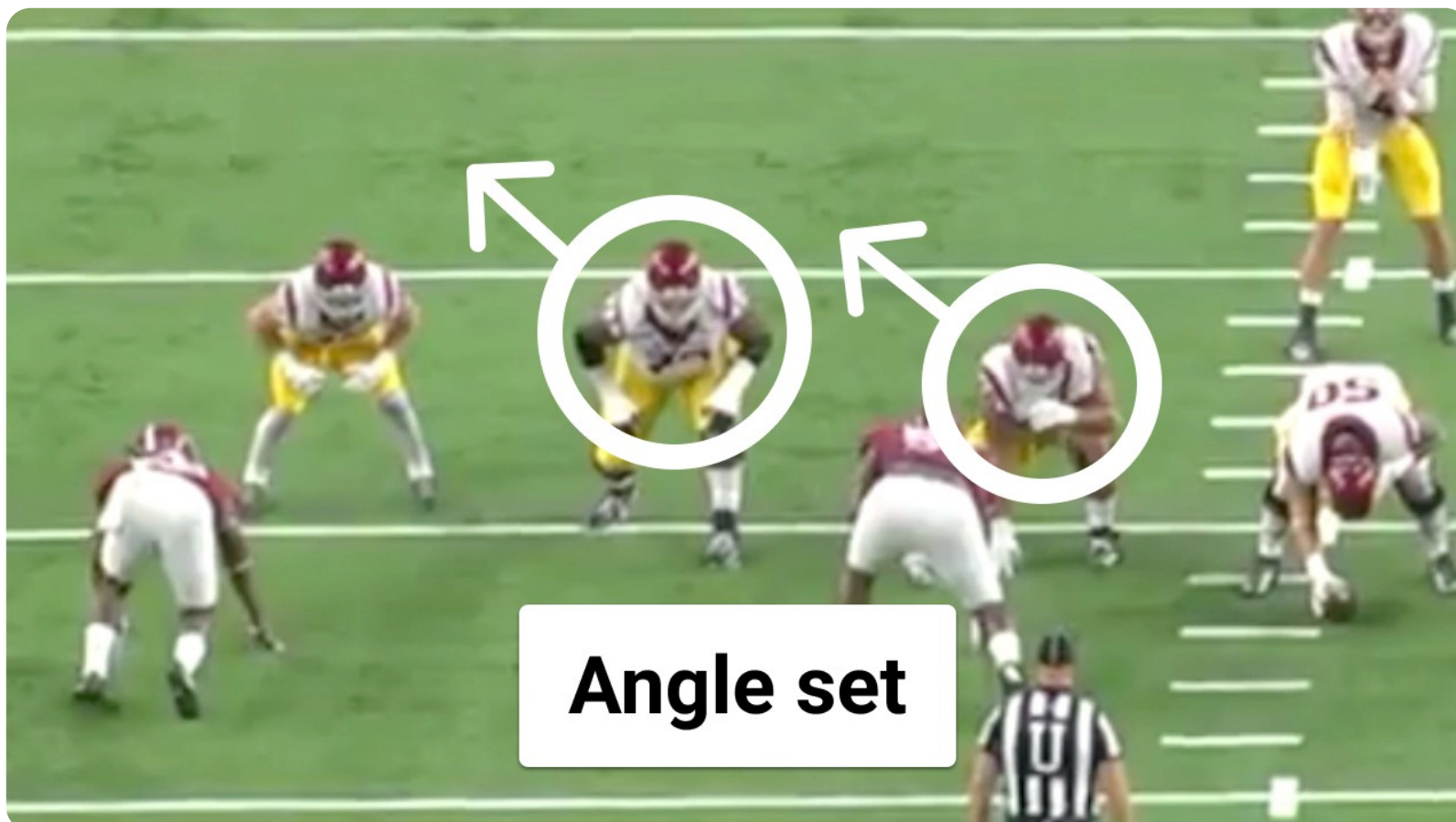
Some blockers love to play aggressive and others are just fine with letting you come to them. Every blocker is different so you need to understand the different ways in which they will set you.

So, the 3 types of sets you will typically see when facing your opponent are the **angle**, **jump** and **vertical** set.

Angle set

This type is the most common. Your opponent will come out on an angle to meet you on your rush path.

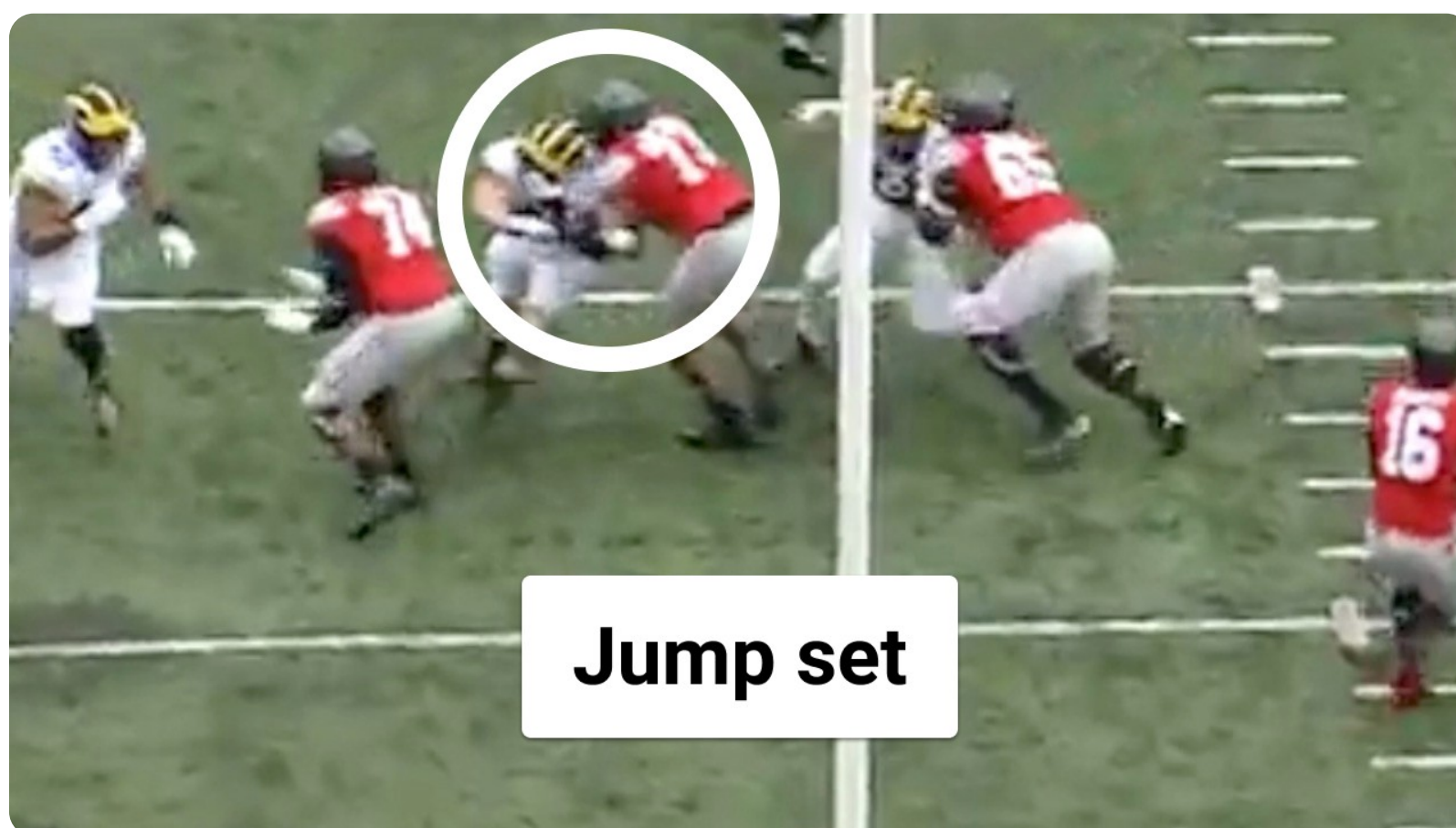
click [here](#) to see example



Jump set

This type of set is used as a change up to surprise you. Your opponent wants to get his hands on you right now and stop you at the line of scrimmage.

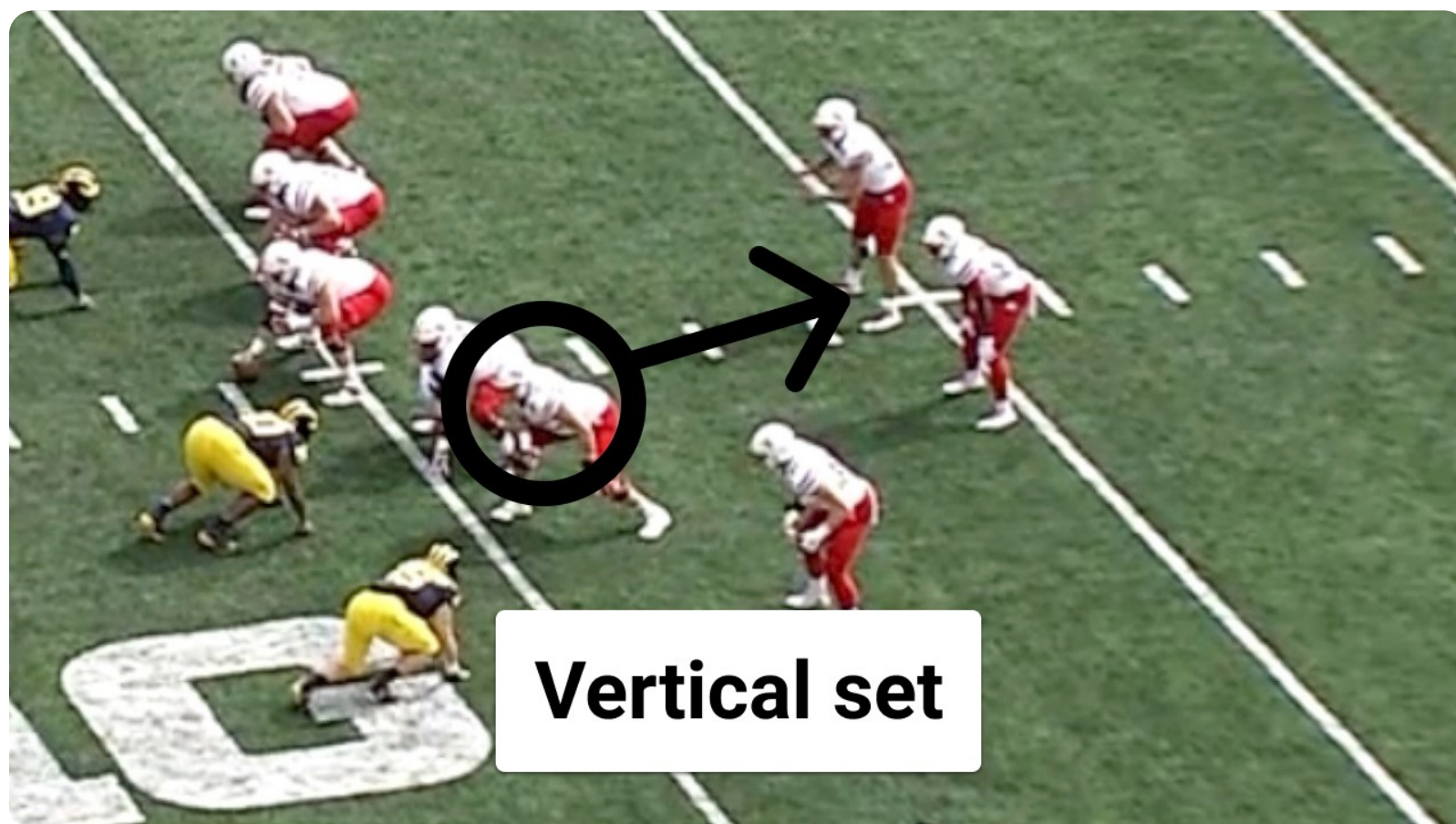
click [here](#) to see example



Vertical set

This type is for extremely patient blockers. Your opponent will set straight back and wait on you to throw the first move.

click [here](#) to see example



Understand the situation

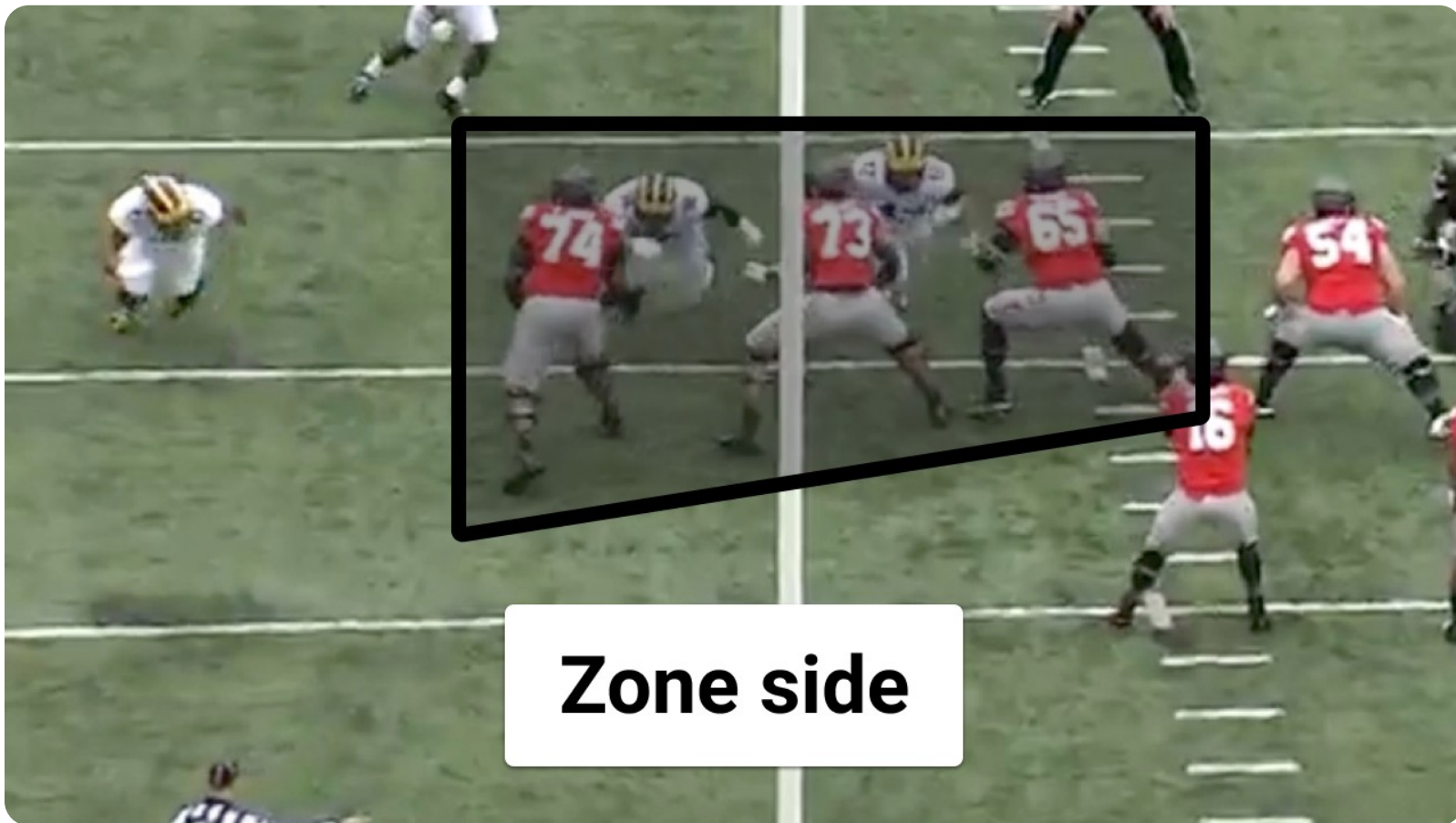
Next step is to identify what kind of set your opponent will use when on the **man** and the **zone** side of the protection.

Zone side

When your opponent is to the zone side he knows he has inside help so he typically will be on an aggressive angle to make sure he doesn't get beat outside.

DO NOT I repeat DO NOT rush inside. The guard or center will be waiting to knock your socks off!

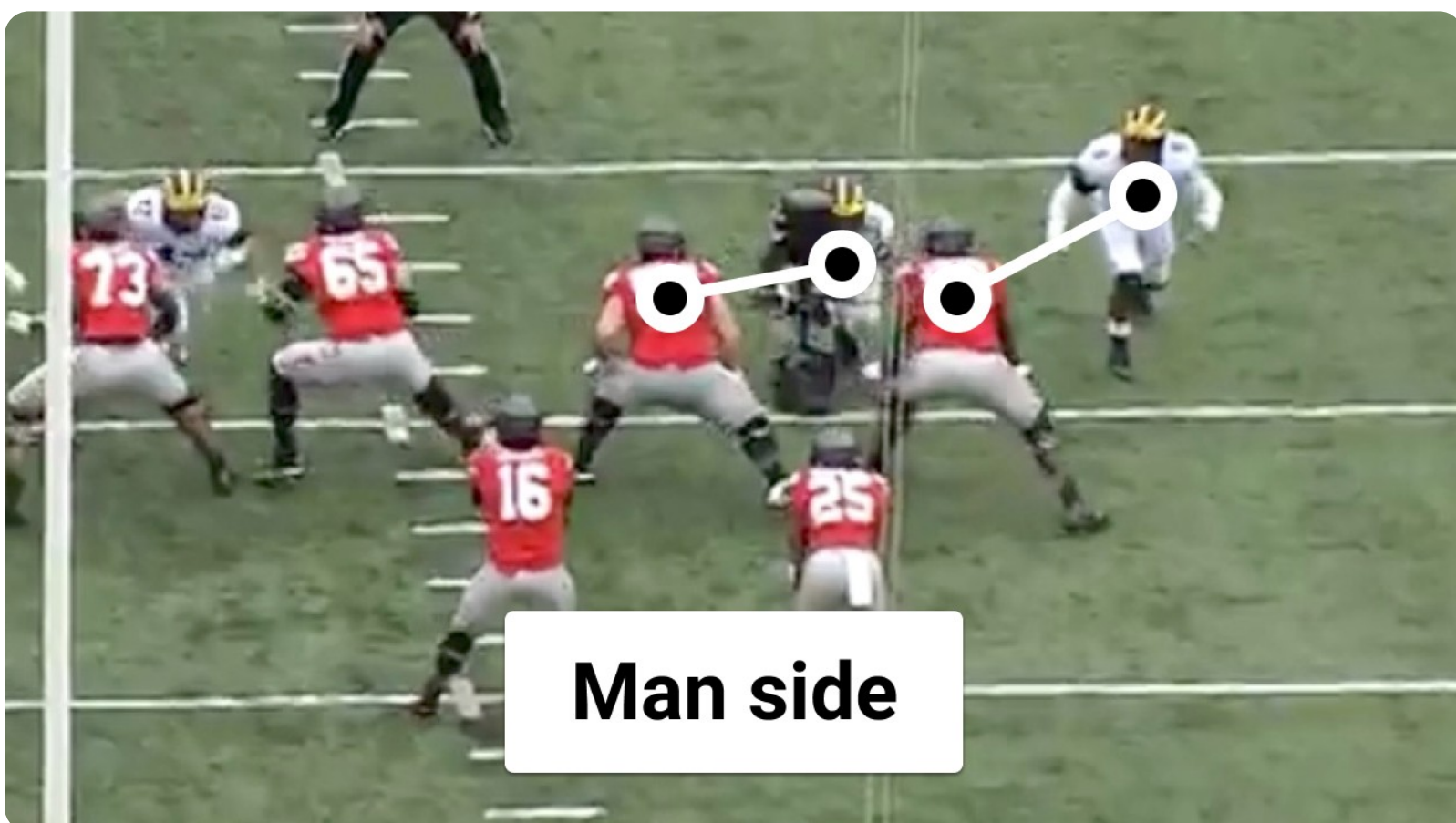
click [here](#) to see example



Man side

On the other hand, when your opponent is to the man side, he knows he's on an island. So he will execute whichever set is most comfortable for him.

click [here](#) to see example



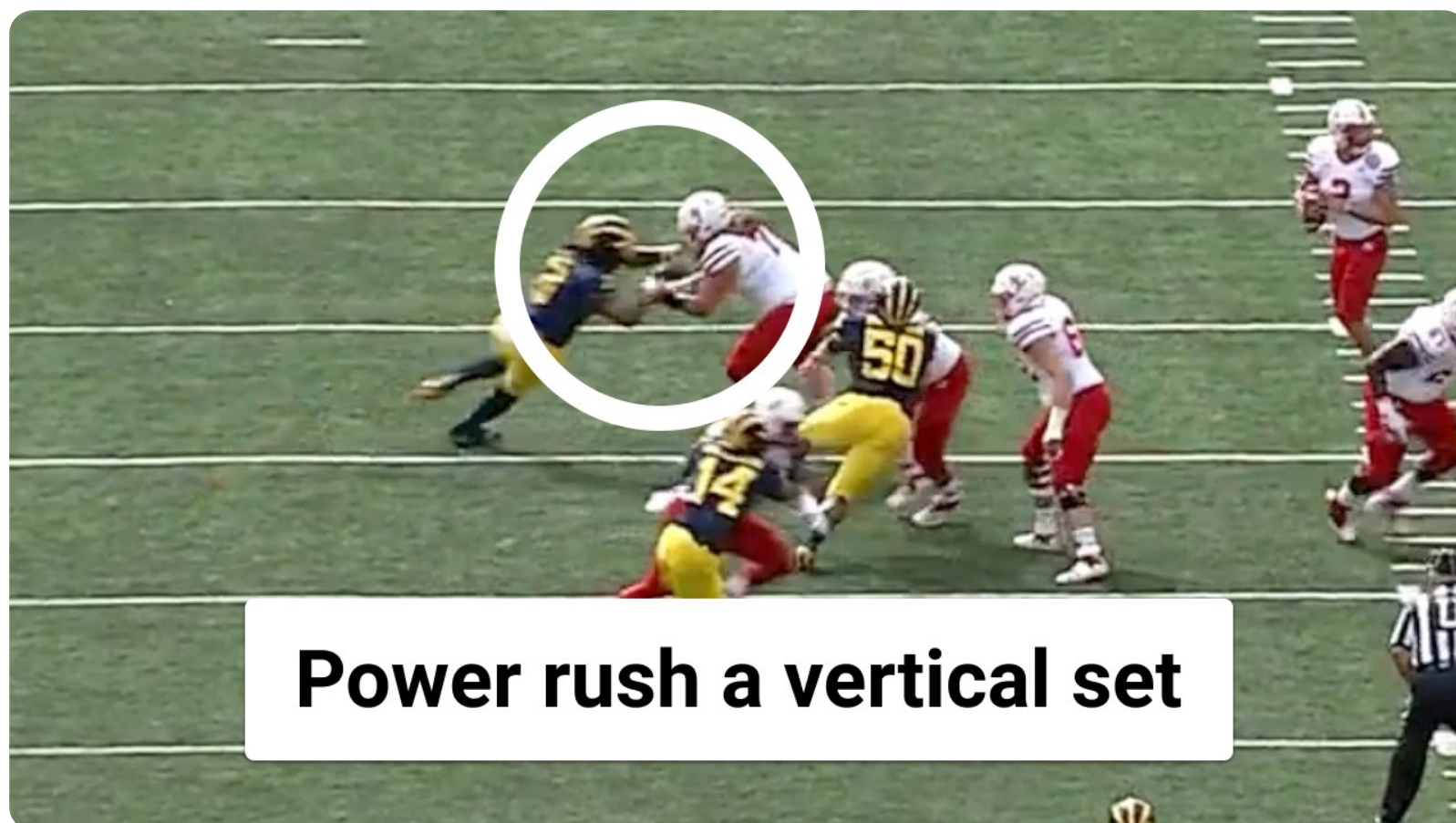
Exploiting weaknesses

Now every set has its weakness and I've laid out below the weaknesses in each of them.

Vertical set weaknesses

A vertical set does help a blocker defend against speed; however, if they're too light they won't be able to sit on a power rush.

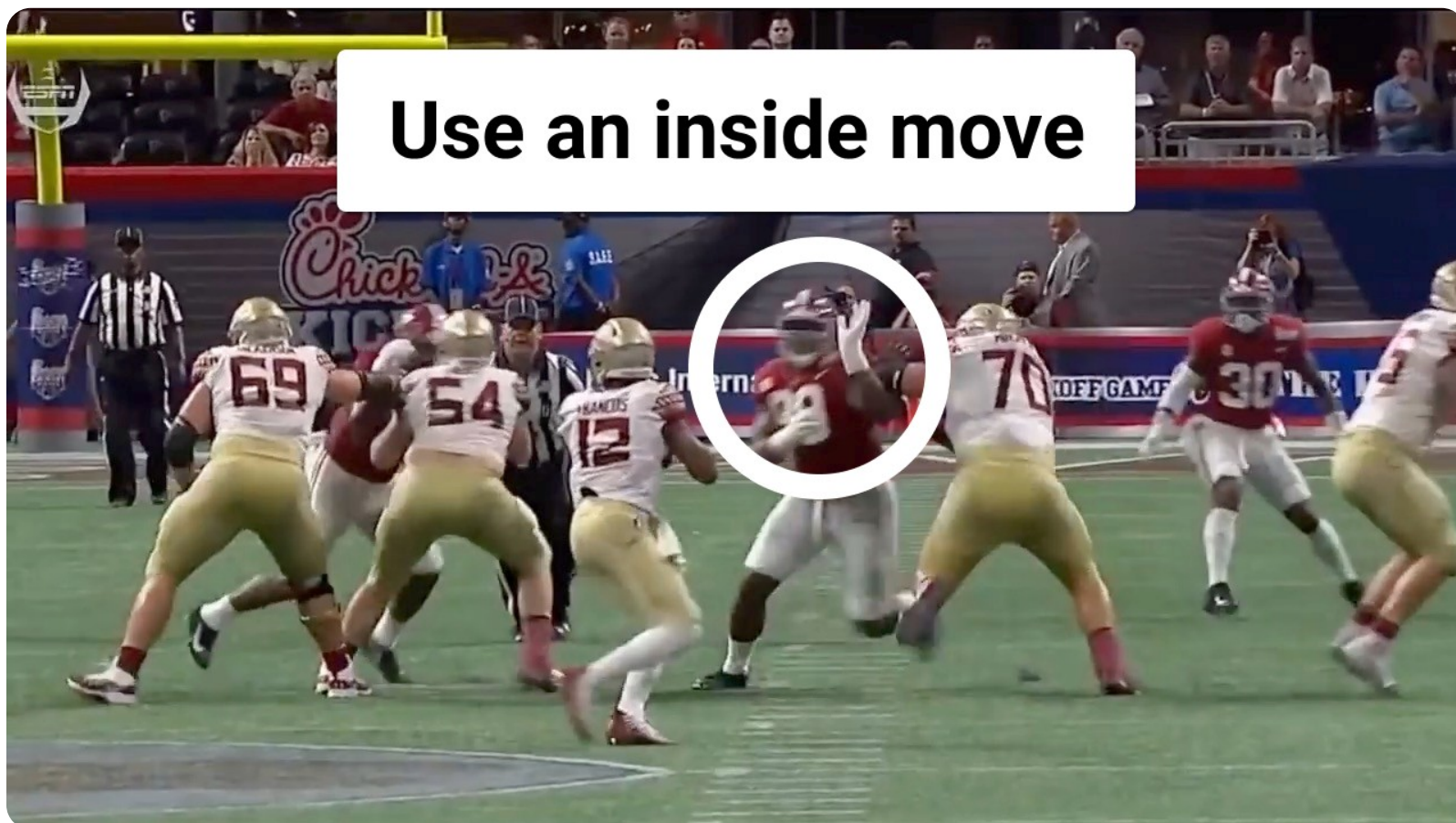
click [here](#) to see example



Angled set weaknesses

An aggressive angle opens up your opponents inside and makes it easy to use an inside move.

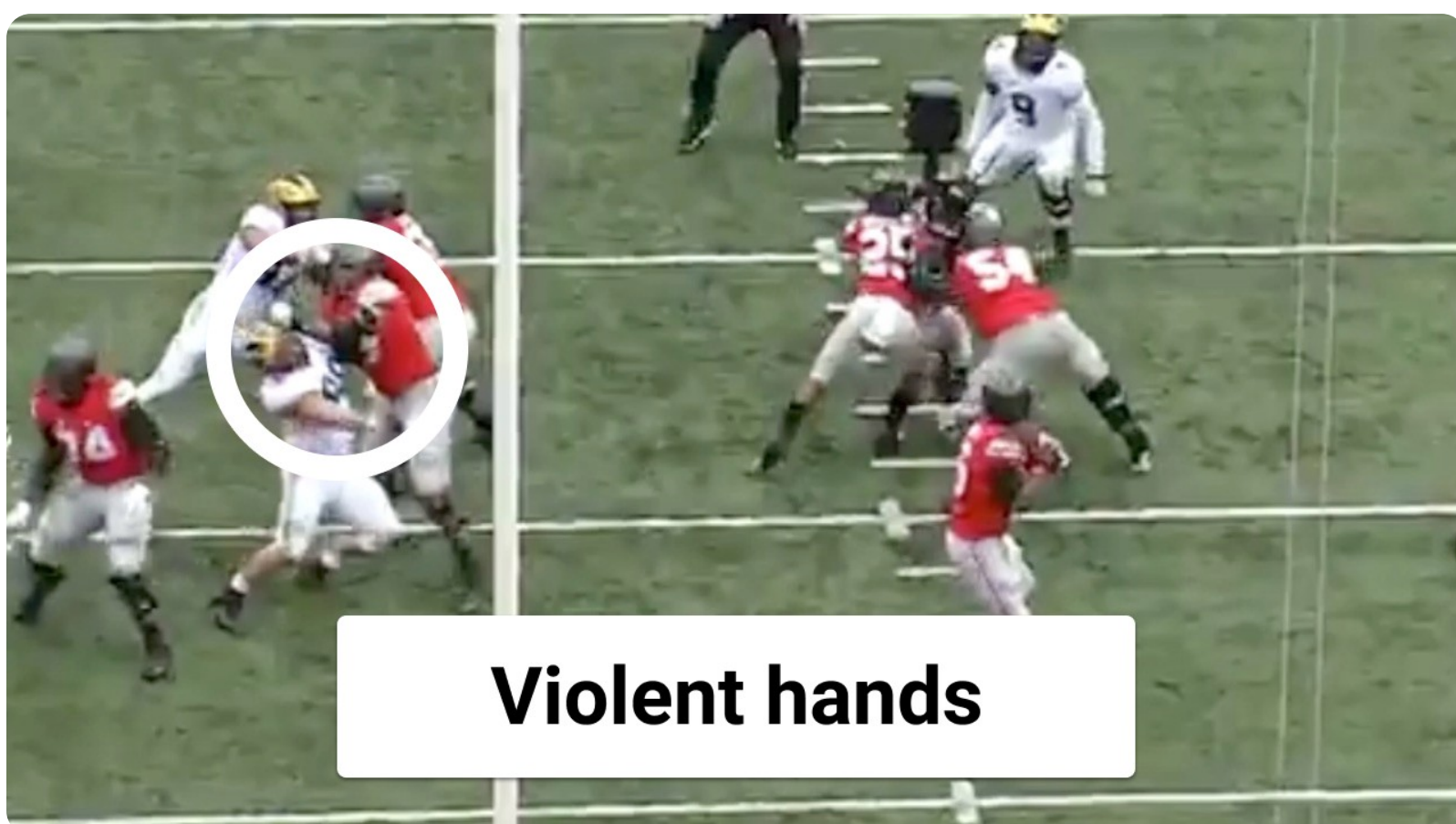
click [here](#) to see example



Jump set weaknesses

Since your opponent is trying to get his hands on you from the jump, if you defeat him quickly with speed of violent hands he won't be able to recover.

click [here](#) to see example



Pre-snap indicator

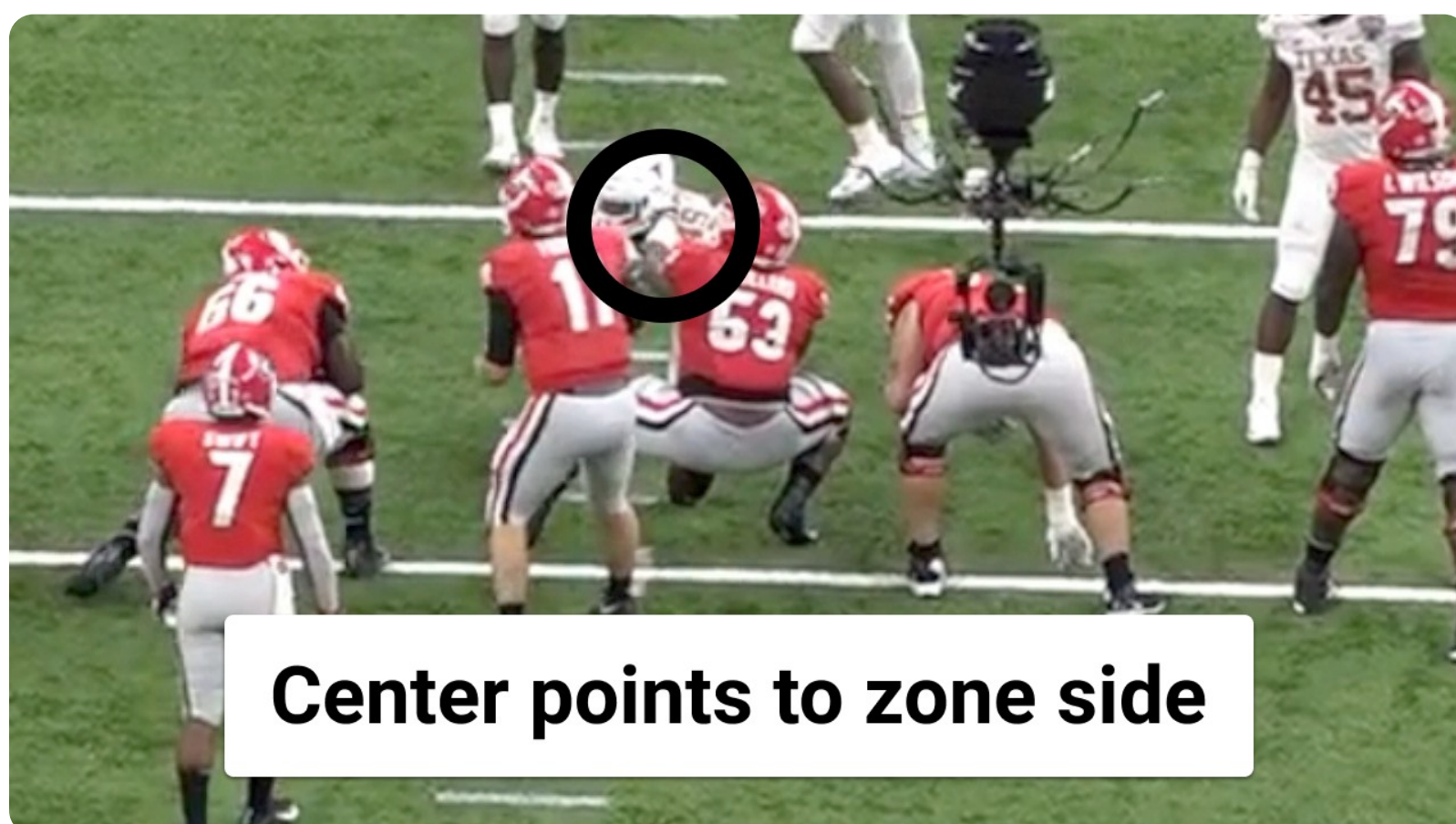
Finally, in your film study look out for pre-snap indicators that show which side is the zone or man side of the protection.

The two that have worked the best for me are the **center point** and **back position**.

Center point

Pre-snap a center will usually point out the mike (for blitz protection) and turn to the side he points meaning that where the center points is where the zone side is

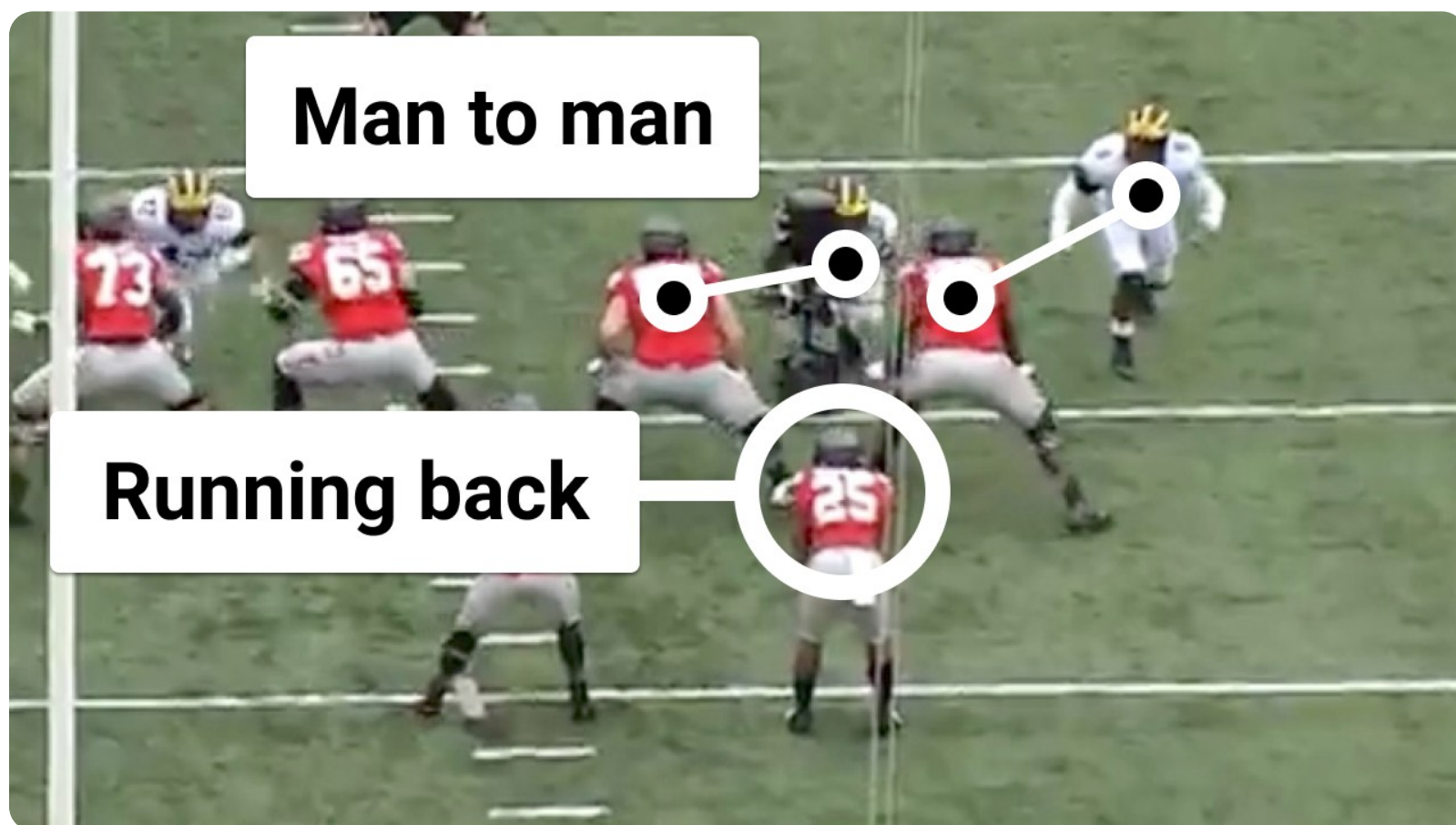
click [here](#) to see example



Back position

If the back is off set to your side it's almost always man protection.

The offense will go man to the side of the back because he can help clean up any leakage through that side.



It may be overwhelming to start looking and analyzing all these different keys, but all the greatest D-Linemen I've played with have this level of detail in their film study.

So the question really is do you want to be great or naw?

Coaching points

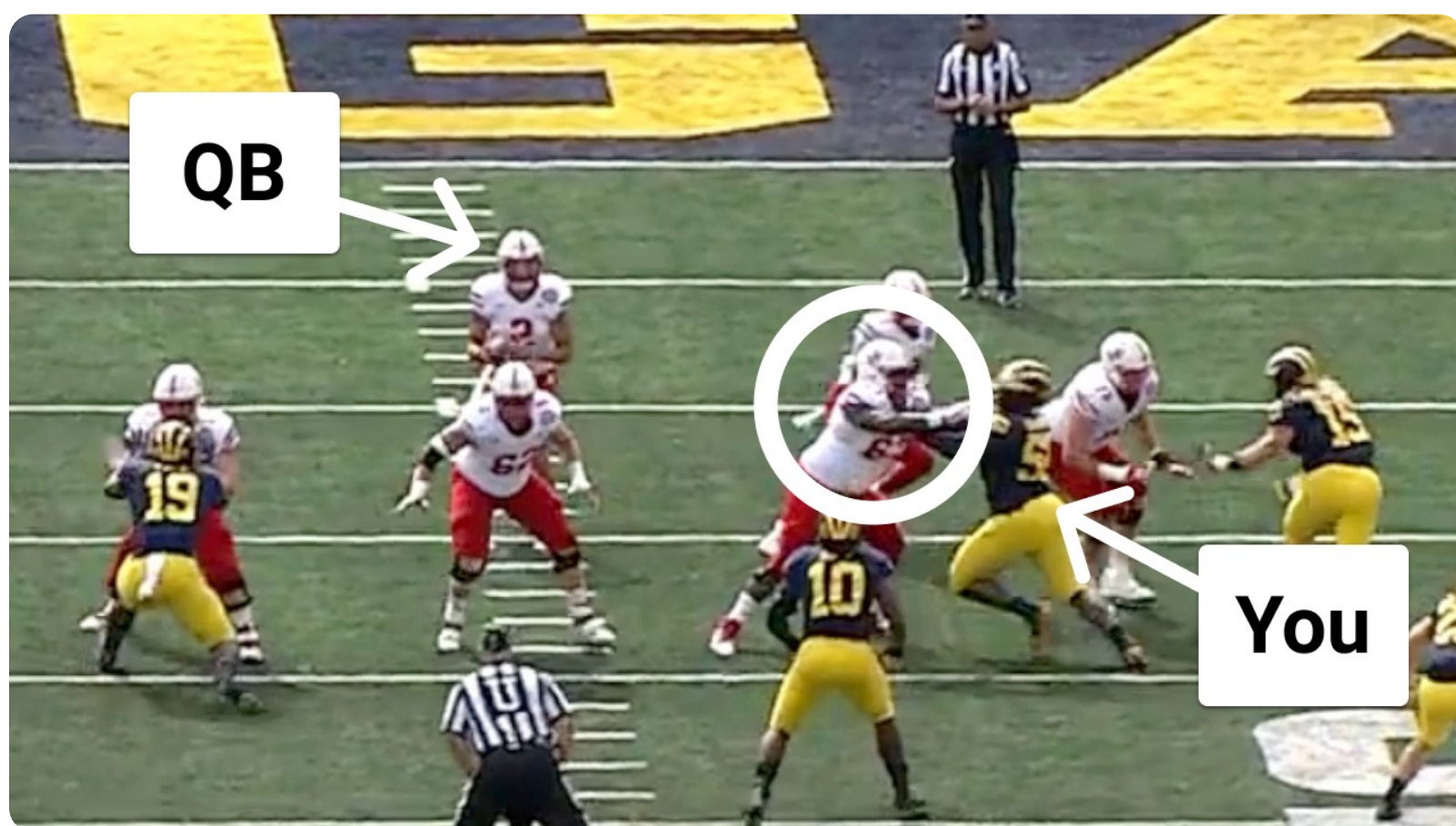
- ① Learn the 3 types of sets
- ② Understand how the O-Line sets to the man and zone side
- ③ Exploit the weaknesses of each type of set
- ④ Identify a pre-snap indicator

Calculate your rush path

It may not seem like it, but pass rushing is actually very mathematical.

Just think you're job is to affect the quarterback. Simple right? You just need to go from point A to point B.

The problem with that is you have a big ole' offensive lineman between you and the quarterback.



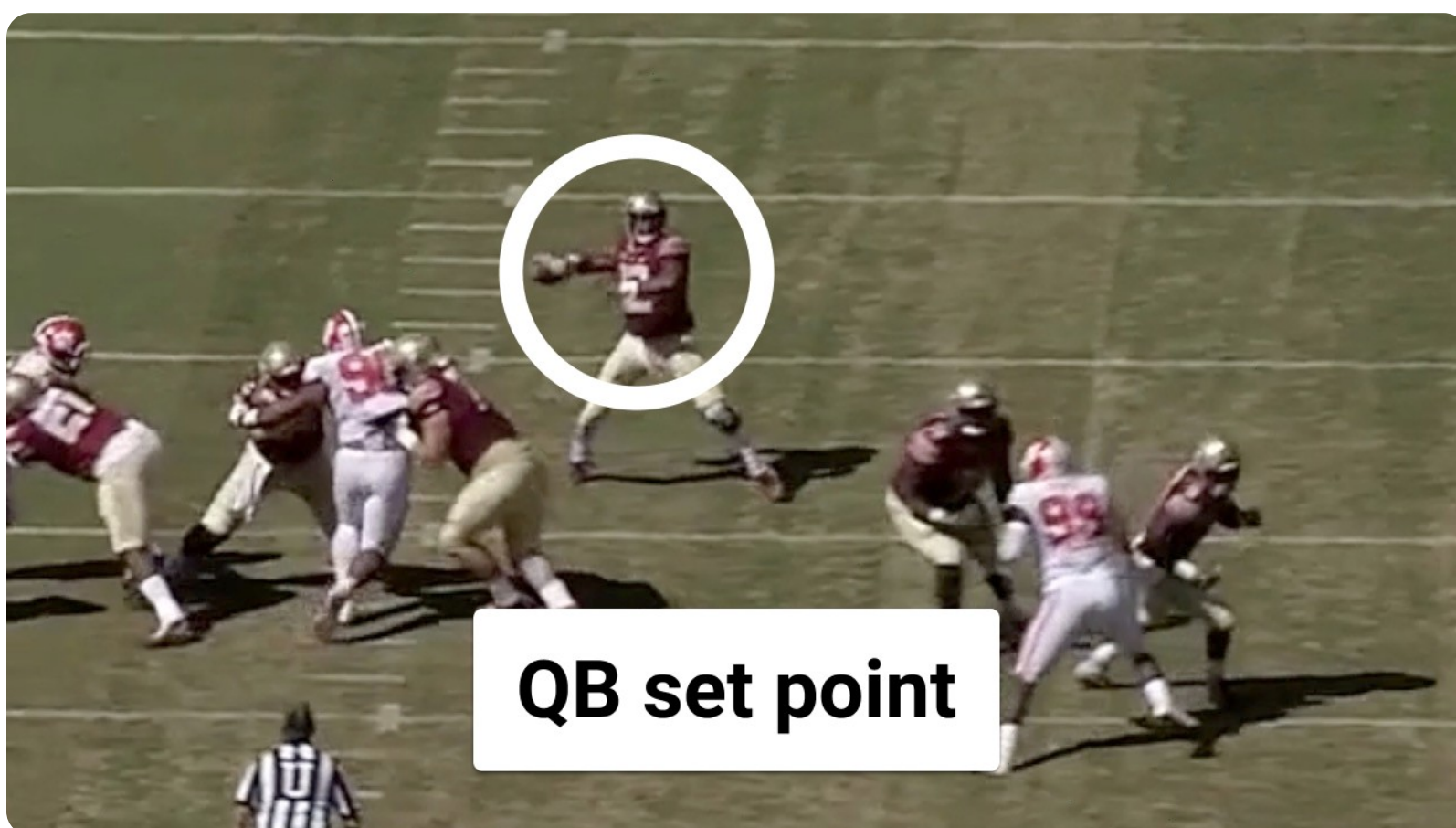
So unless you're the hulk, you won't be able to run a straight line through your man to the QB every single rush.

That is why every rusher must calculate their rush path.

Identify the QB set point

The first step to determining your rush path is to figure out where the QB will set up to throw the ball. This is called his **set point**.

click [here](#) to see example



Studying the Qb set point is relatively simple. First, segment all your opponents passes into down and distance ranges.

Your 3rd down segments should look like this...

3rd and 1-3

3rd and 4-6

3rd and 7-10

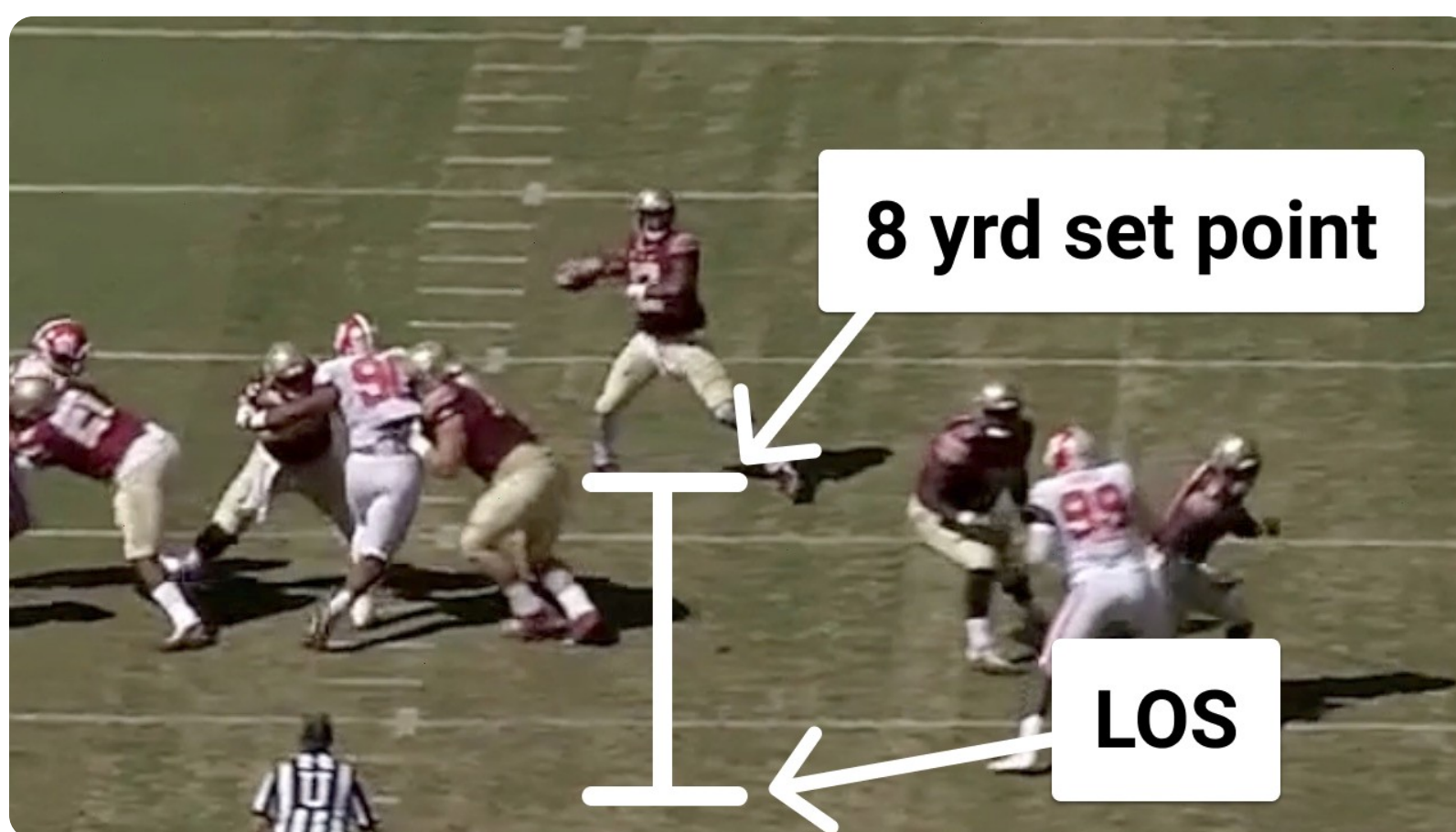
3rd and 10-15 and

3rd and 15+

Next, take a look at every clip in a segment and take note of where the QB sets up to pass.

For example, in this 3rd and 5 clip the QB sets up at 8 yards...

click [here](#) to see example



Once you've gone through each clip in a segment and have taken note of the QB's set point, now you need to determine his **most probable set point**.

So, if you watched 4 clips in the 3rd and 7-10 segment and the QB's set point was at 7 yards for clips 1-3 and 9 yards for clip 4 his most probable set point would be **7 yards**.

That is because you have a 3/4 (75%) chance of the QB's set point being at 7 yards vs. a 1/4 (25%) chance at 9 yards.

Clip #1: 7 yards
Clip #2: 7 yards
Clip #3: 7 yards
Clip #4: 9 yards

7 yards = MPSP

The **most probable set point**

The diagram features a dark background with a repeating diamond pattern. A list of four clips is shown, with the first three highlighted by a red box. A red line connects the '7 yards' text of the third clip to a separate red box containing the text '7 yards = MPSP'. Below the list, the text 'The most probable set point' is displayed in a larger font.

Choose your track

Once you've studied the QB set point you need to choose a track.

The two you can choose from are the tilt or speed track.

QB set point

QB set point

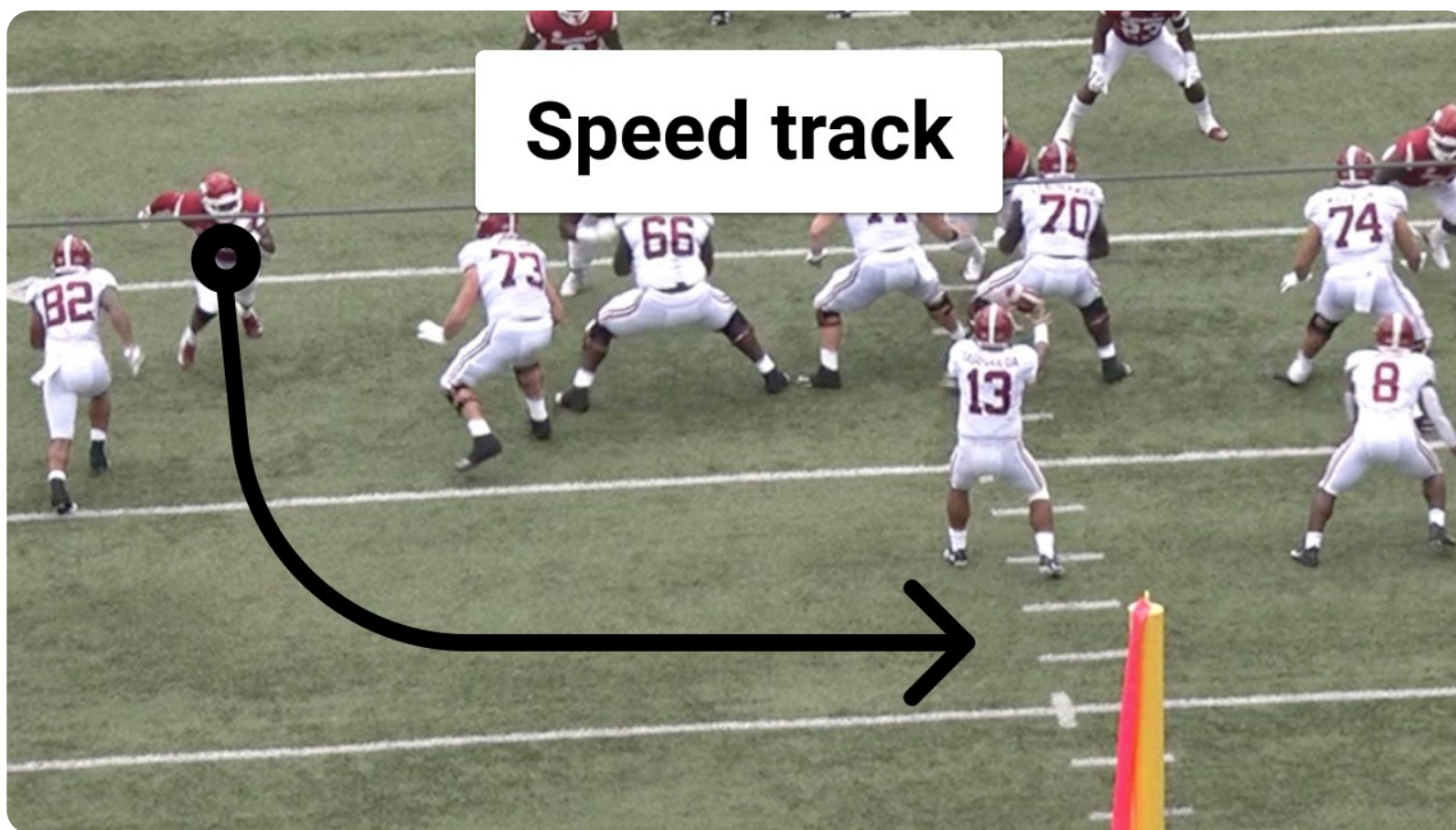
Tilt track

Speed track

The diagram is split into two panels by a vertical dashed line. Both panels show a QB set point (represented by a square) and an end point 'E' (represented by a circle). In the 'Tilt track' panel, a dashed line shows a path from 'E' that curves upwards and then left towards the QB set point. In the 'Speed track' panel, a dashed line shows a path from 'E' that curves more sharply upwards and then left towards the QB set point.

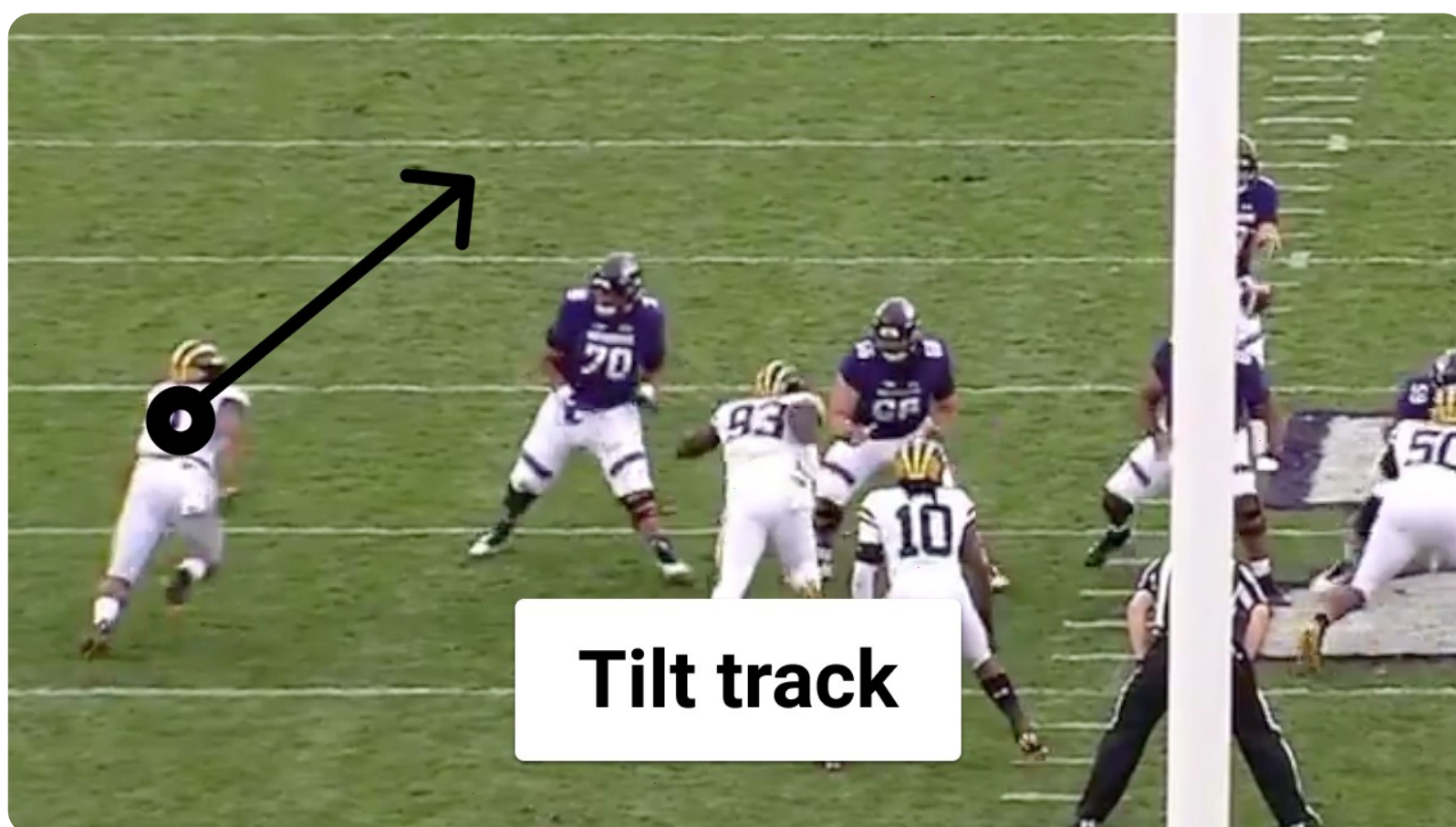
The **speed track** is a 90 degree upfield rush that should feel like racing in a 100M dash.

click [here](#) to see example



The **tilt track** on the other hand uses an angled approach to get to the QB. Your angle can range anywhere from a 45 - 75 degrees

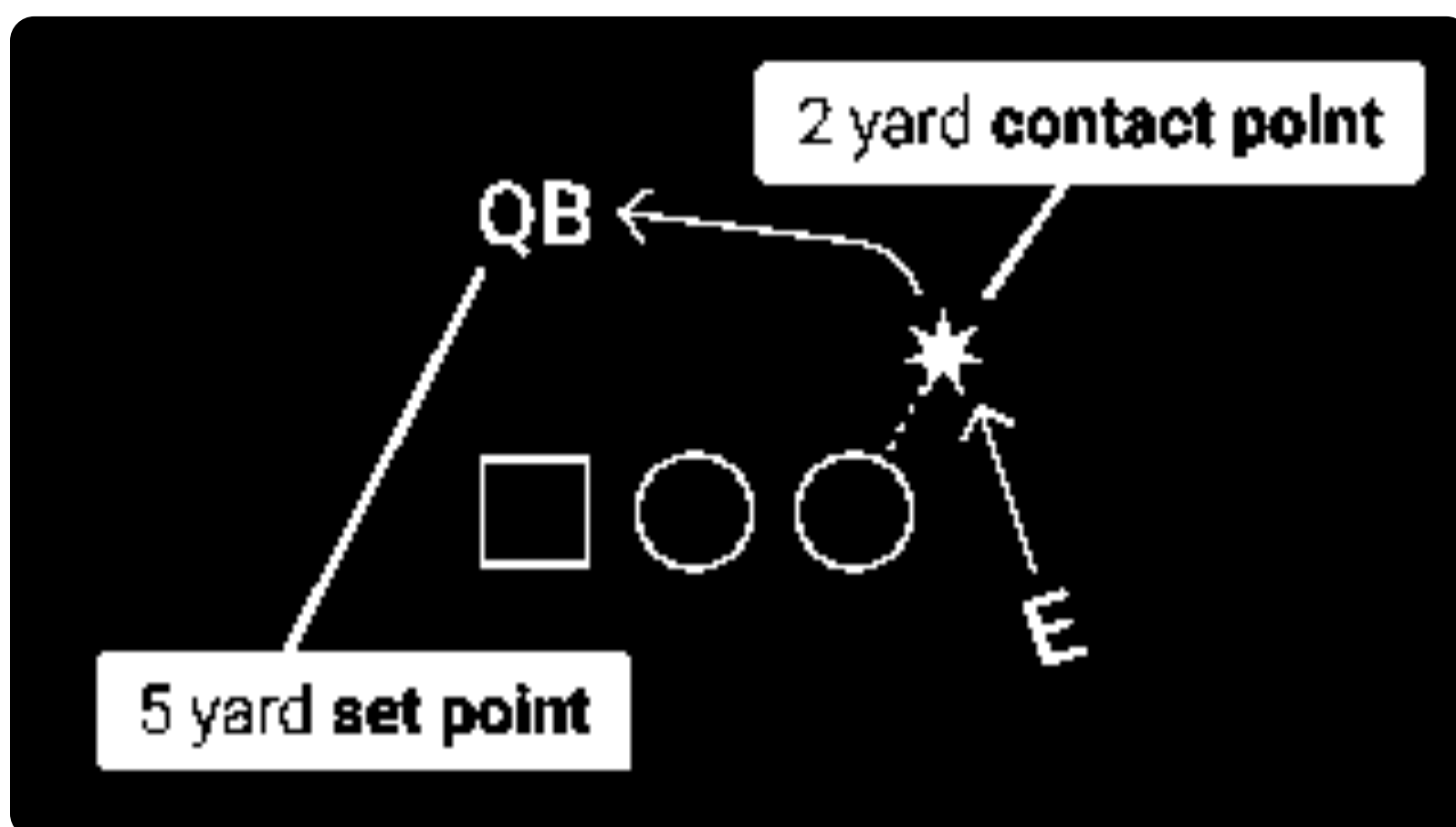
click [here](#) to see example



What track you choose will ultimately be determined by where you contact your opponent (the contact point)

And where you contact your opponent will be determined by the QB's set point.

For example, if the QB's set point is at 5 yards in a 3rd and 4 - 6 you will need to contact your opponent at 3 yards.

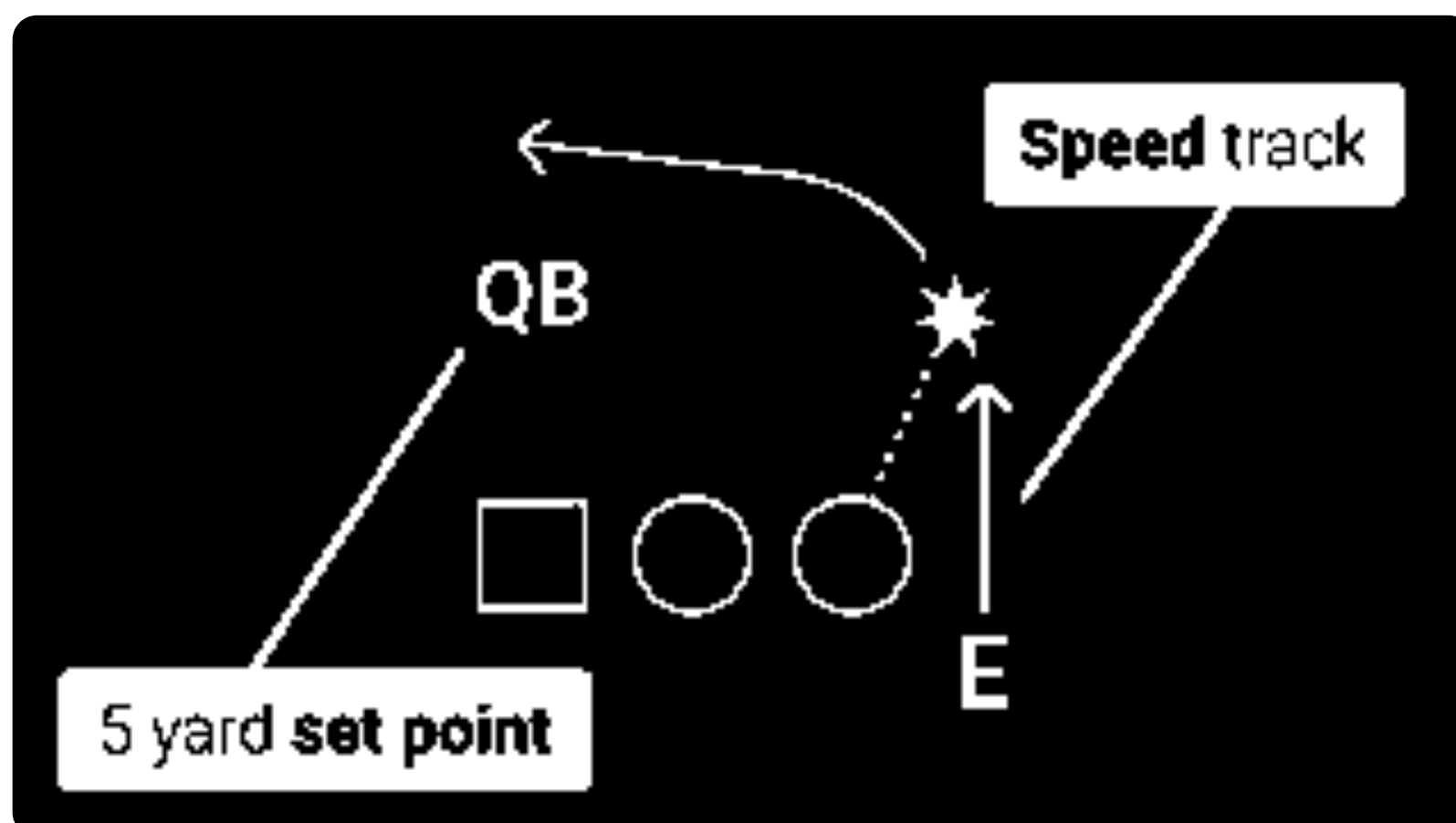


This gives you 2 yards of wiggle room to turn the corner without being pushed too high or low.

So to contact your opponent at 3 yards do you think you should use a speed track?

Absolutely not!

A speed track would put you much too high above the QB.



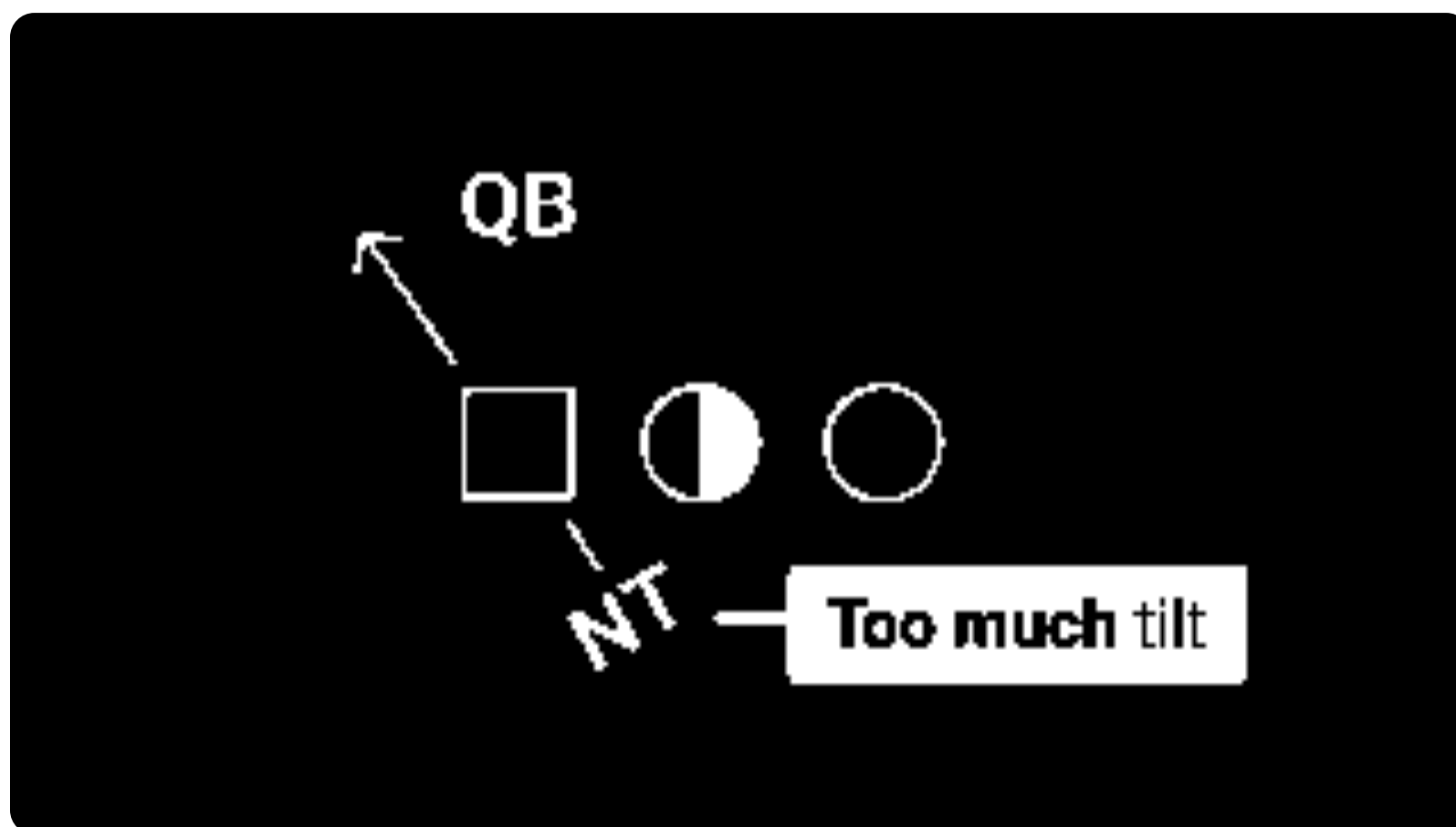
Rather you should use a tilt track in this situation so you can be on a path to affect the QB.

Interior rushers

The rush path for an interior lineman is a bit different than the path for an end.

You will only need a slight tilt if any when rushing.

If you rushing from a 3 or 1 technique the QB is just about in front of you. So from a mathematical stand point it doesn't make sense to aggressively tilt because it will point you off the path of the QB



Practicing your rush path

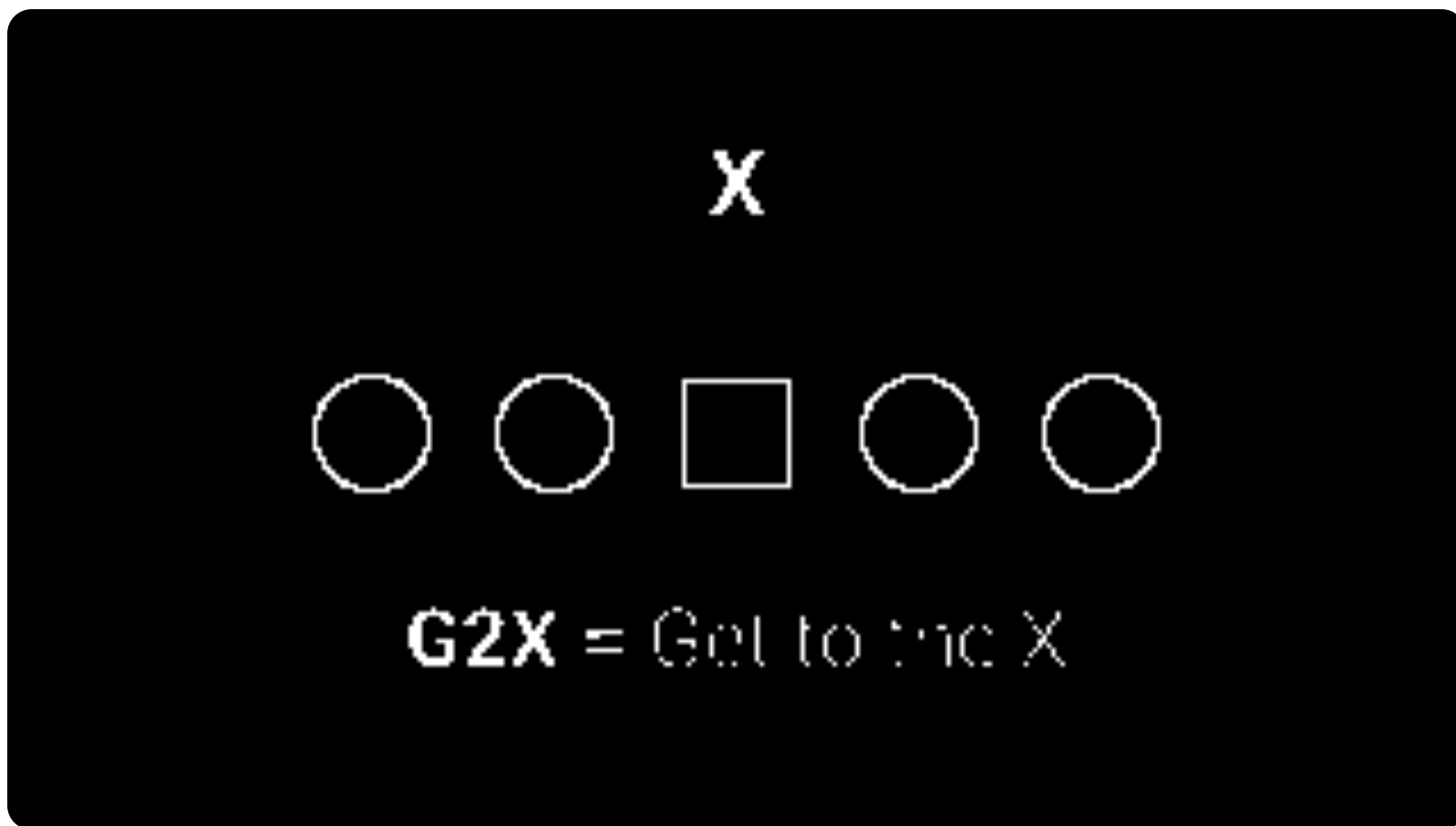
When I was on the Panthers we had this great saying called **G2X**.

It means get to the X. And yes you guessed it the X represented the set point of the QB.

So for every week our coach studied the most probable set point for 3rd and long.

After determining the set point we put a rubber X on the ground during 1-on-1s to make sure we were always on a rush path to "Get to the X".

That X helped us to practice our rush paths and make sure we didn't rush too high or too low.



It was also really fun too when you beat your man and you stomped your foot on that X.

We all had a huge sense of pride being G2X rushers.

Our coach even made shirts for it...



A final word

The whole point of pass rushing is to affect the QB. And if you are not on a path to do so what's the point.

You're not out here to waste energy and just run up the field. You're job is to affect the quarterback. **Do you job!**

Coaching points

- ① Segment your opponents passes D&D ranges
- ② Determine the QB set point in each of those segment
- ③ Decide on a tilt or speed track for your rush path
- ④ Practice your rush path in 1 on 1s by "Getting to the X"

Protections

Bruce Lee famously said:

*“Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless - **like water**. Now you put water in a cup, it becomes the cup; You put water into a bottle it becomes the bottle; You put it in a teapot it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash. **Be water, my friend.**”*

Bruce Lee was one of the greatest martial artists of all time and preached the importance of adapting to the thousands, but what does that have to do with pass rush?

Rather than rushing blindly into double and triple teams, it's better to “**be like water**” and adapt your rush attack to what the offense gives you.

You see every protection has **holes** and **gaps** that can be exploited, but to exploit these weaknesses you must first know where to attack.

But how can you know?

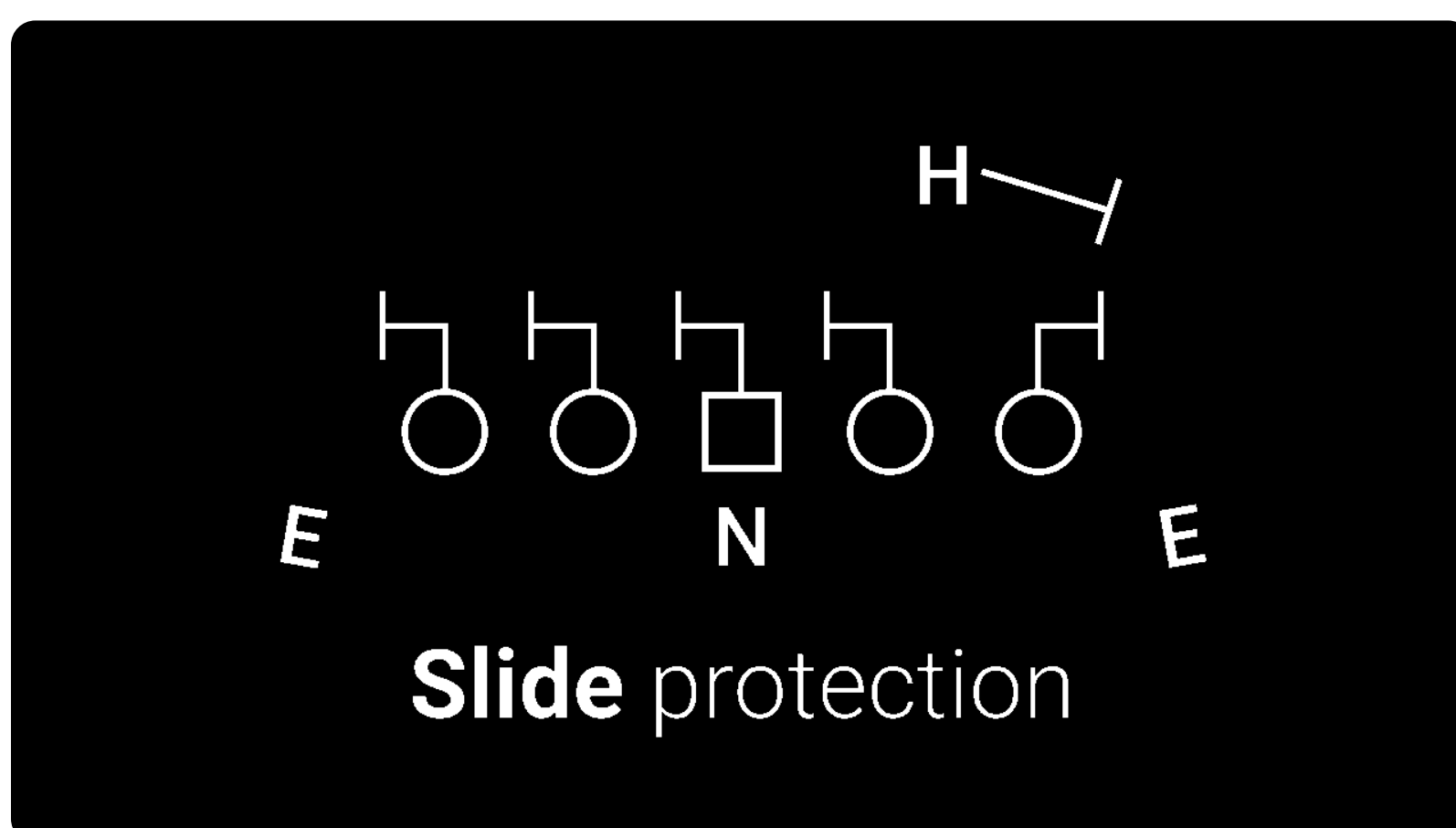
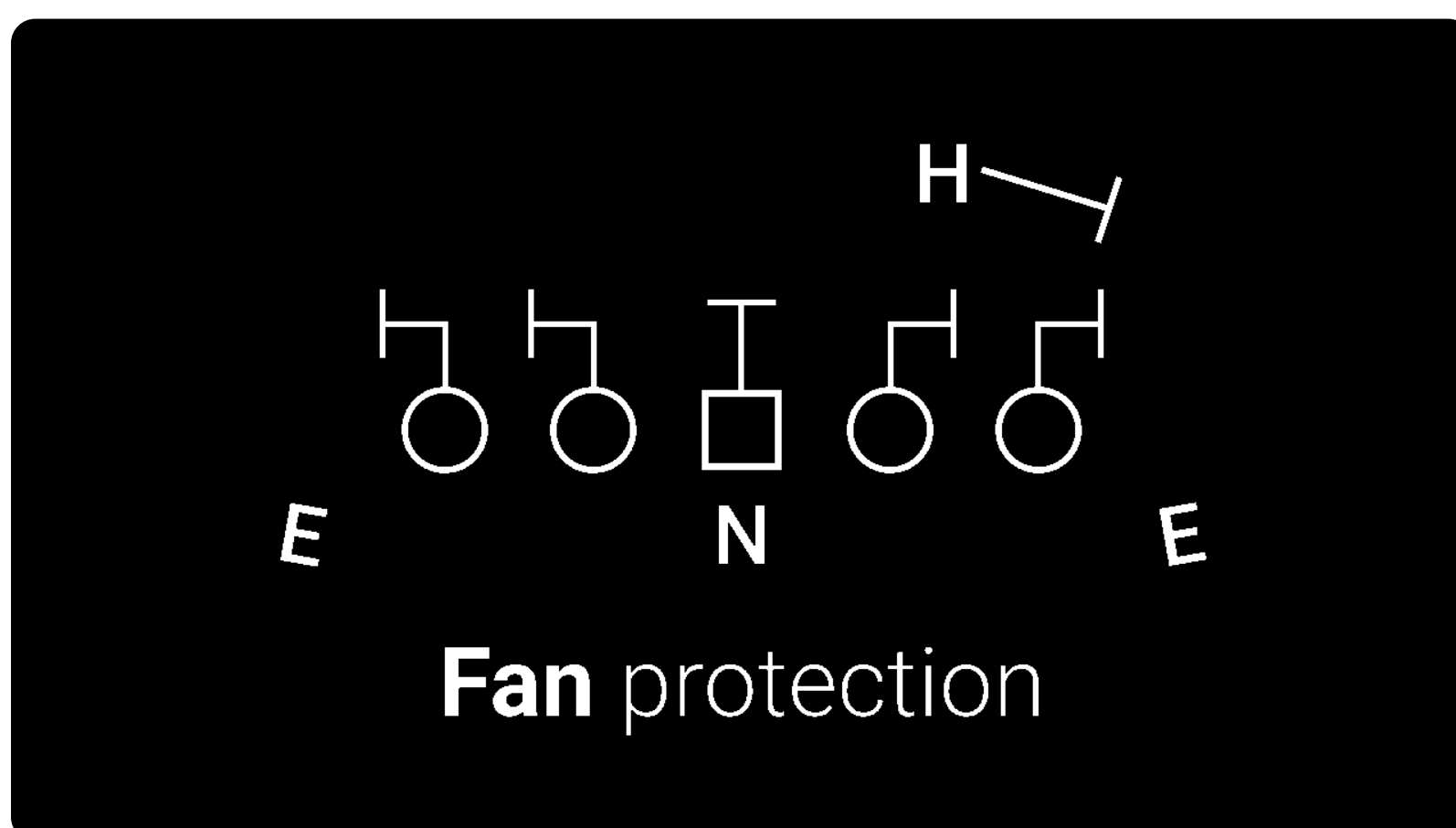
In my experience this can only be discovered through **film study**.

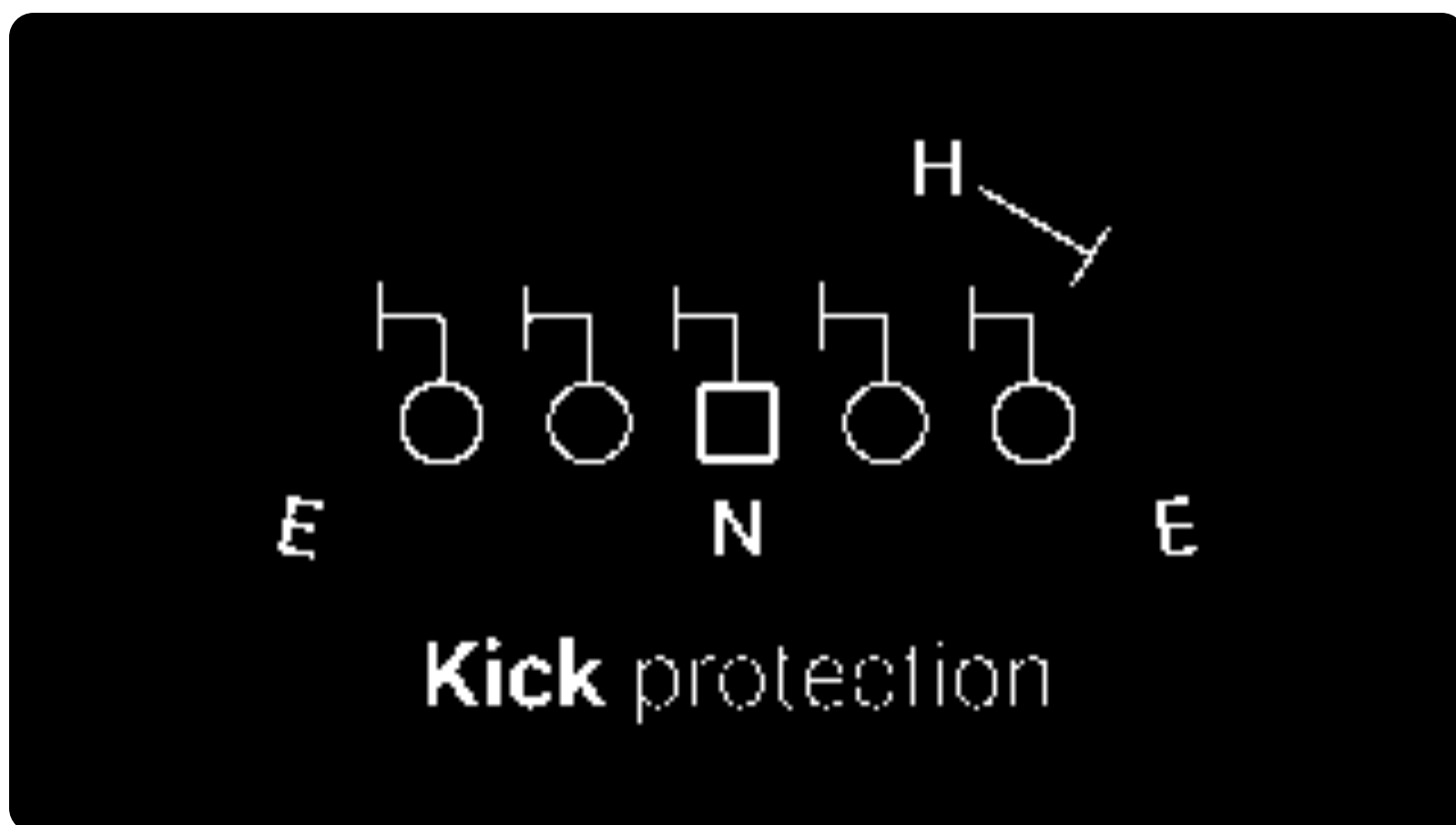
It is through the film that you discover where the **1-on-1 match ups** and **gaps** are in every protection.

So when studying film first identify **how the your opponent blocks 3, 4 and 5 man rushes** and then identify **where to attack**.

Protections vs. a 3-man rush

When rushing 3, you will see a variety of 6 man protections including a **fan**, **slide** and **kick** protection (seen below).



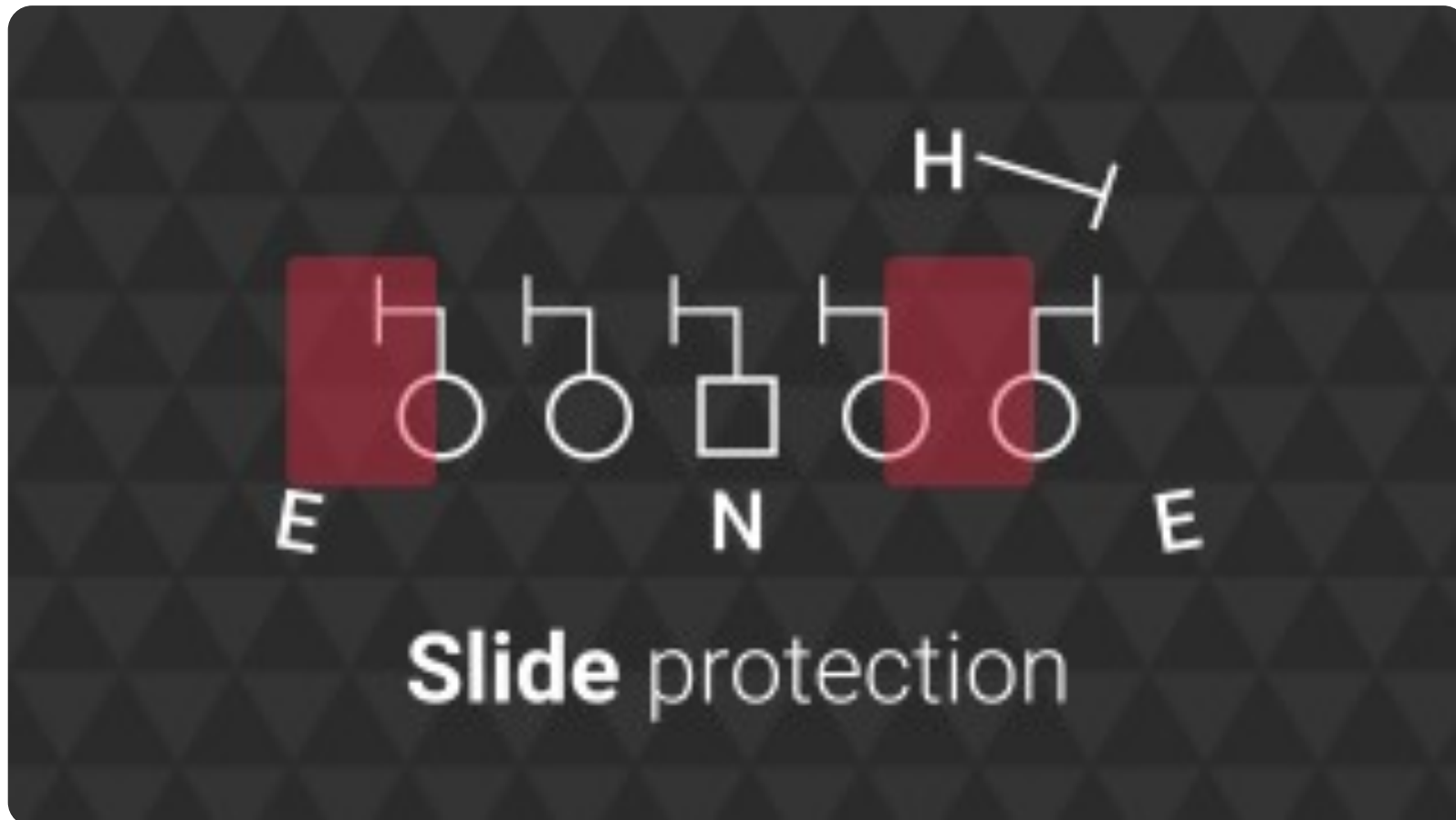


Although these protections look daunting against a 3 man rush, each of them has their weakness...

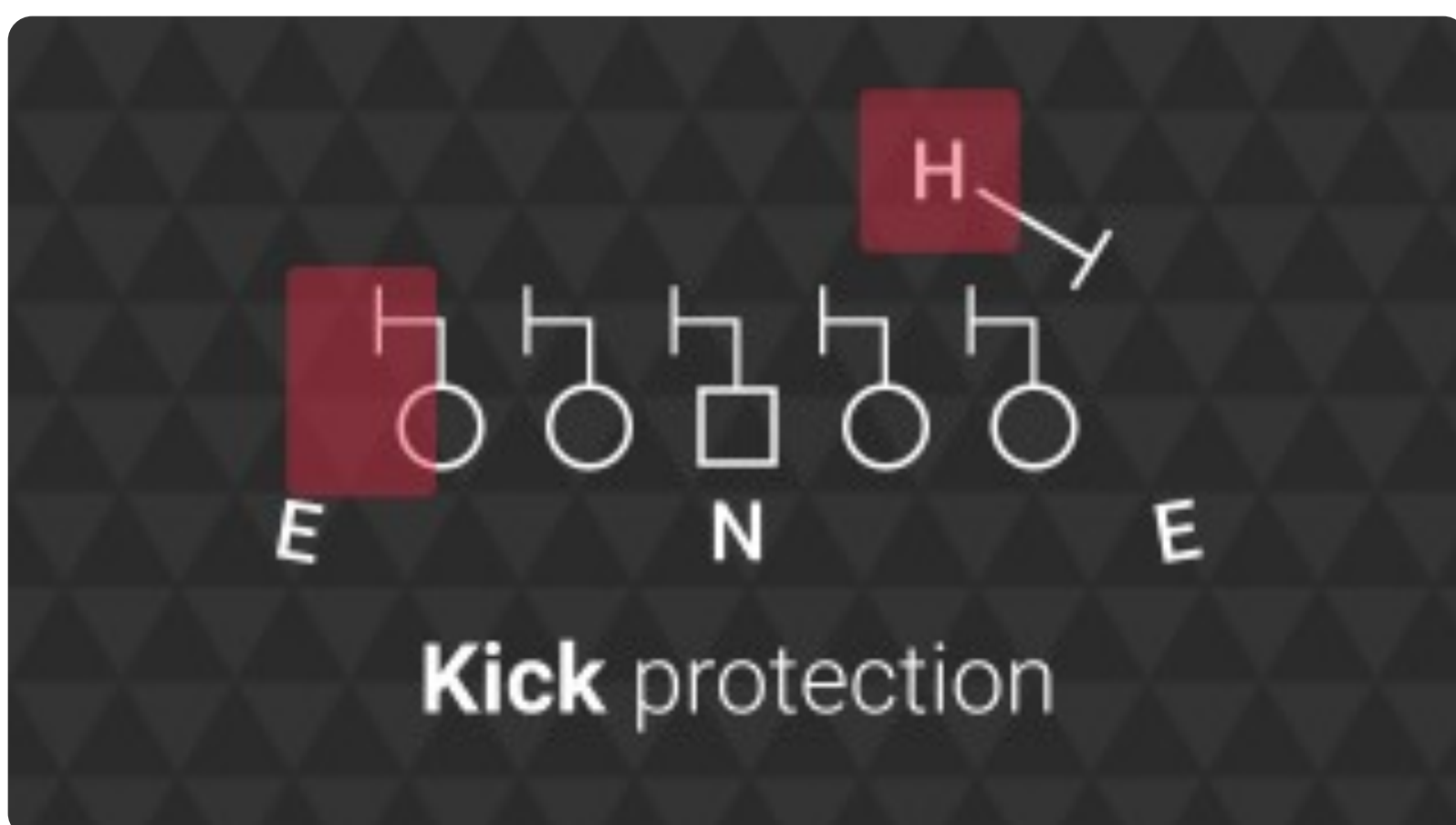
Fan weaknesses: Open C gap, center 1 on 1



Slide weaknesses: Open C and B gap

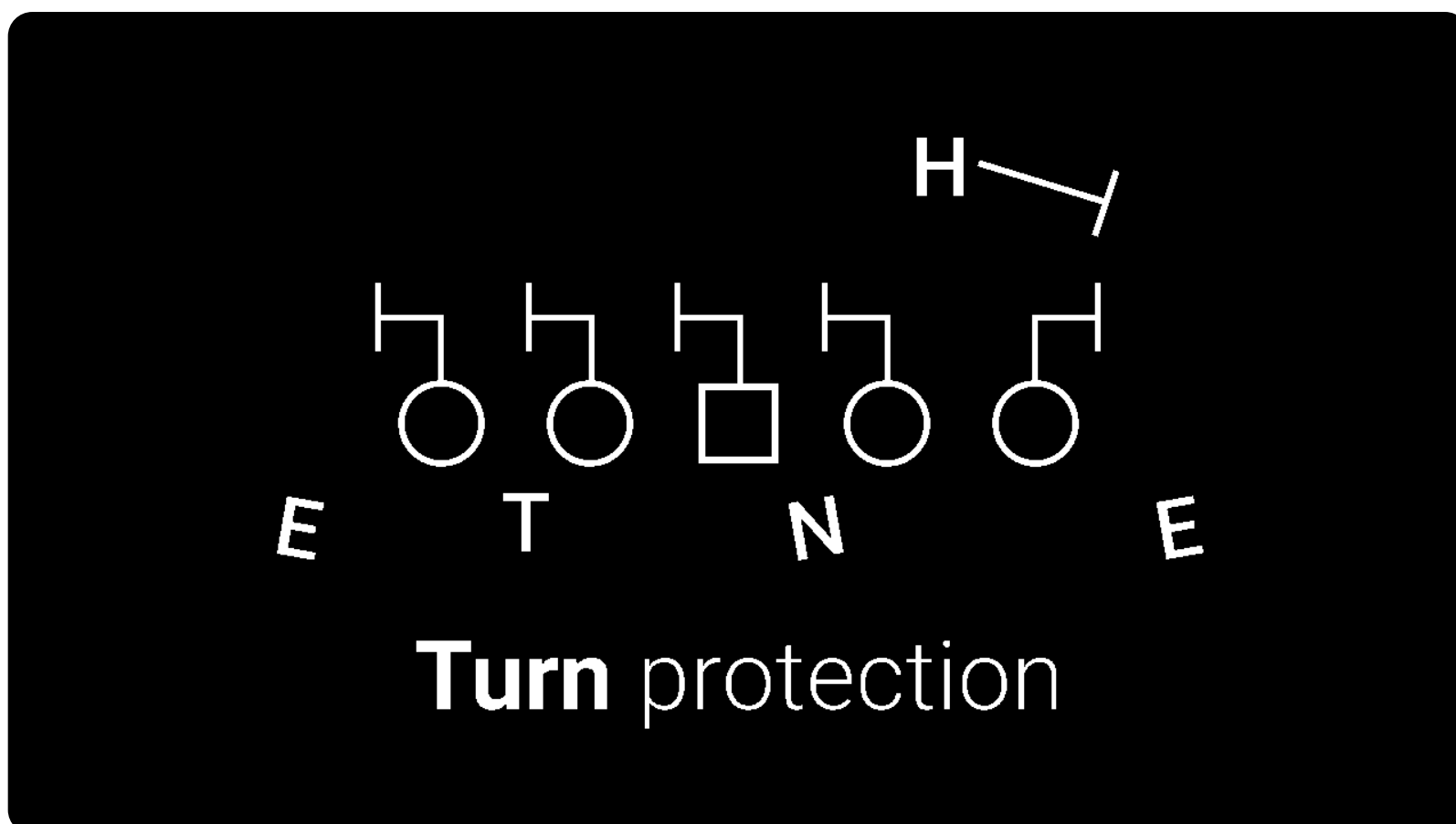
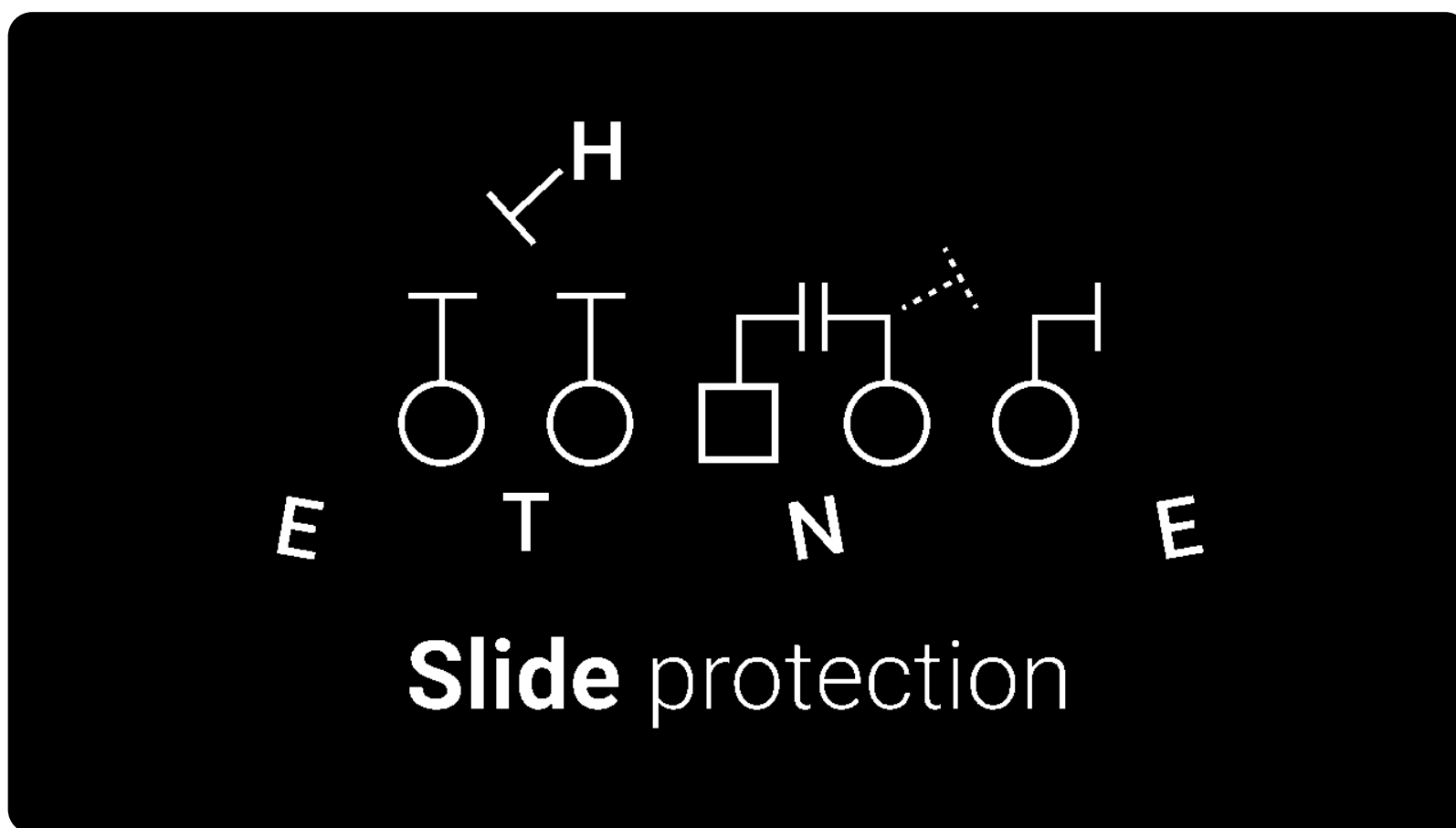


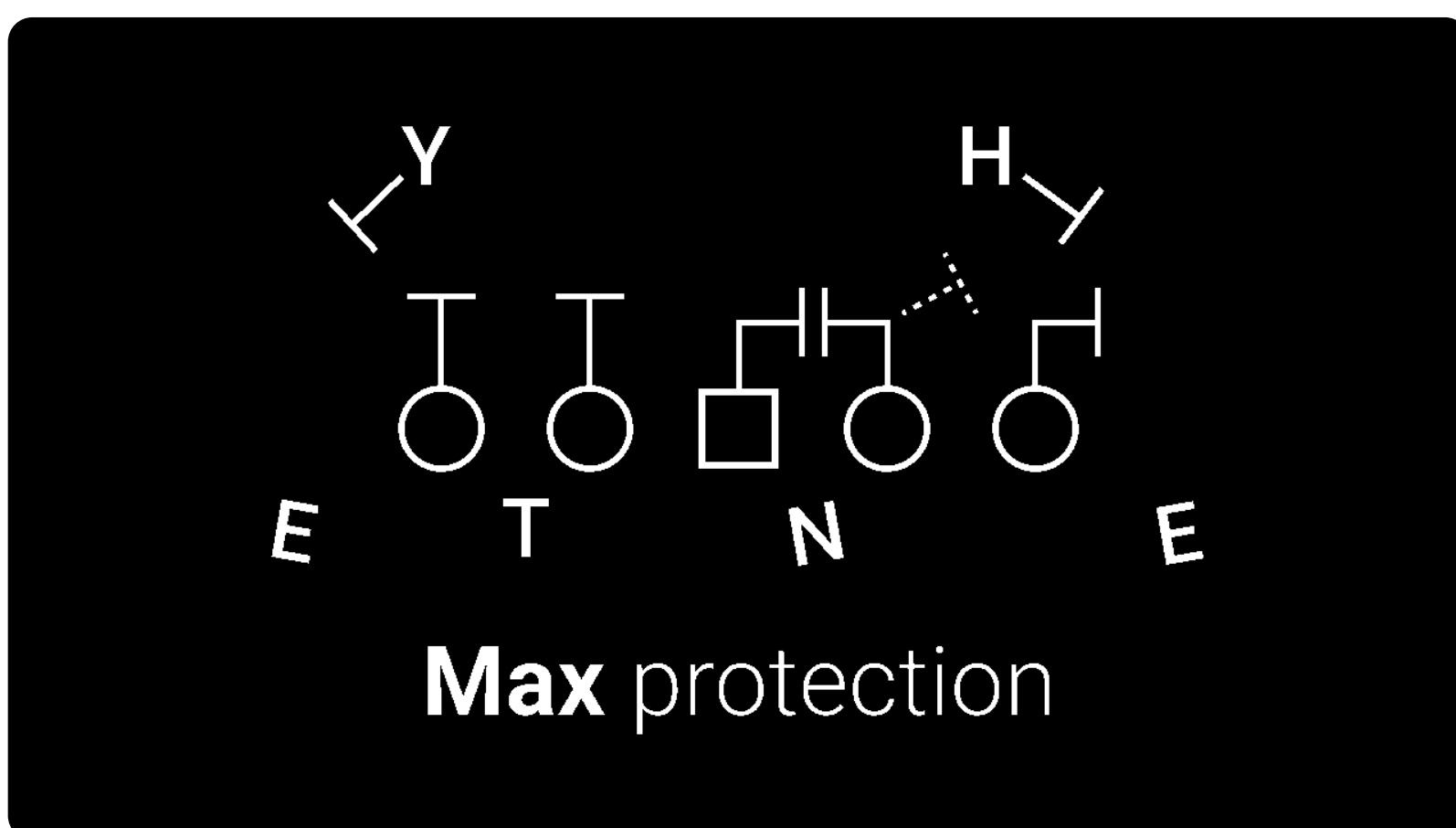
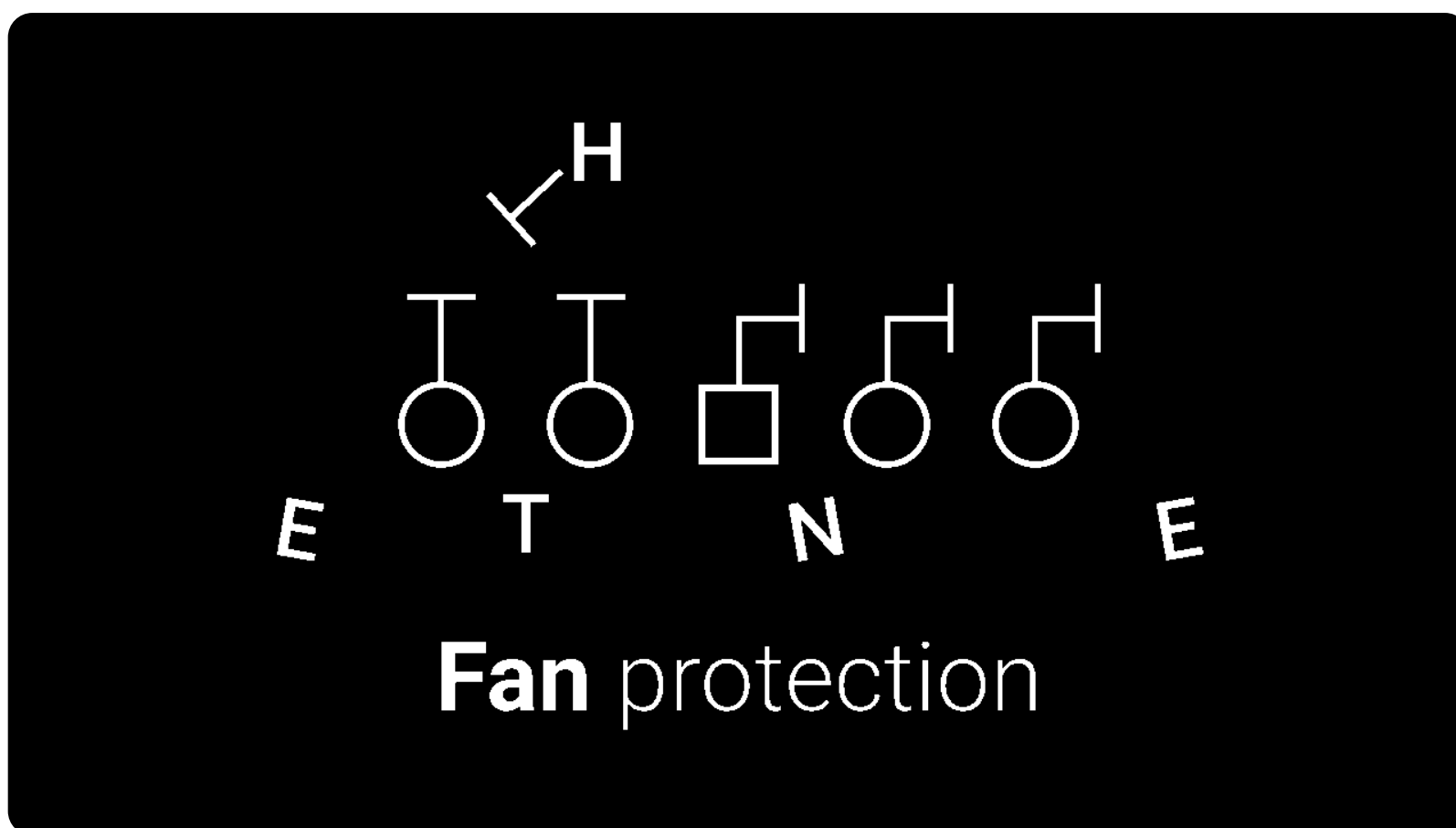
Kick weaknesses: Open C gap, running back 1 on 1



4-man rush protections

When rushing 4, you will see 6 man protections like **slide**, **turn**, **fan**, but will run into 7 man protections like **max** as well.



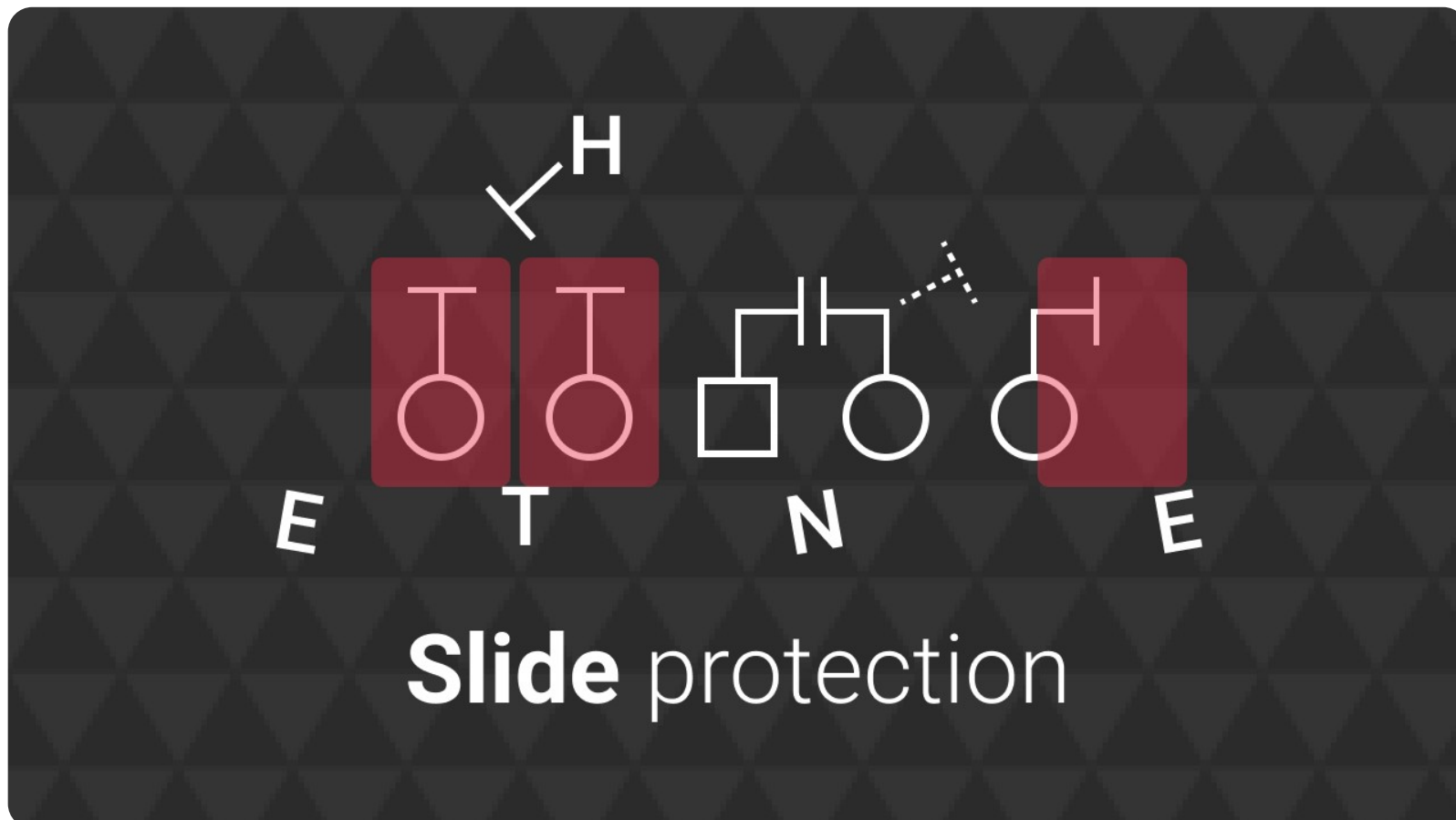


Rushing 4 is great because you have **even more weaknesses** to exploit than when rushing 3.

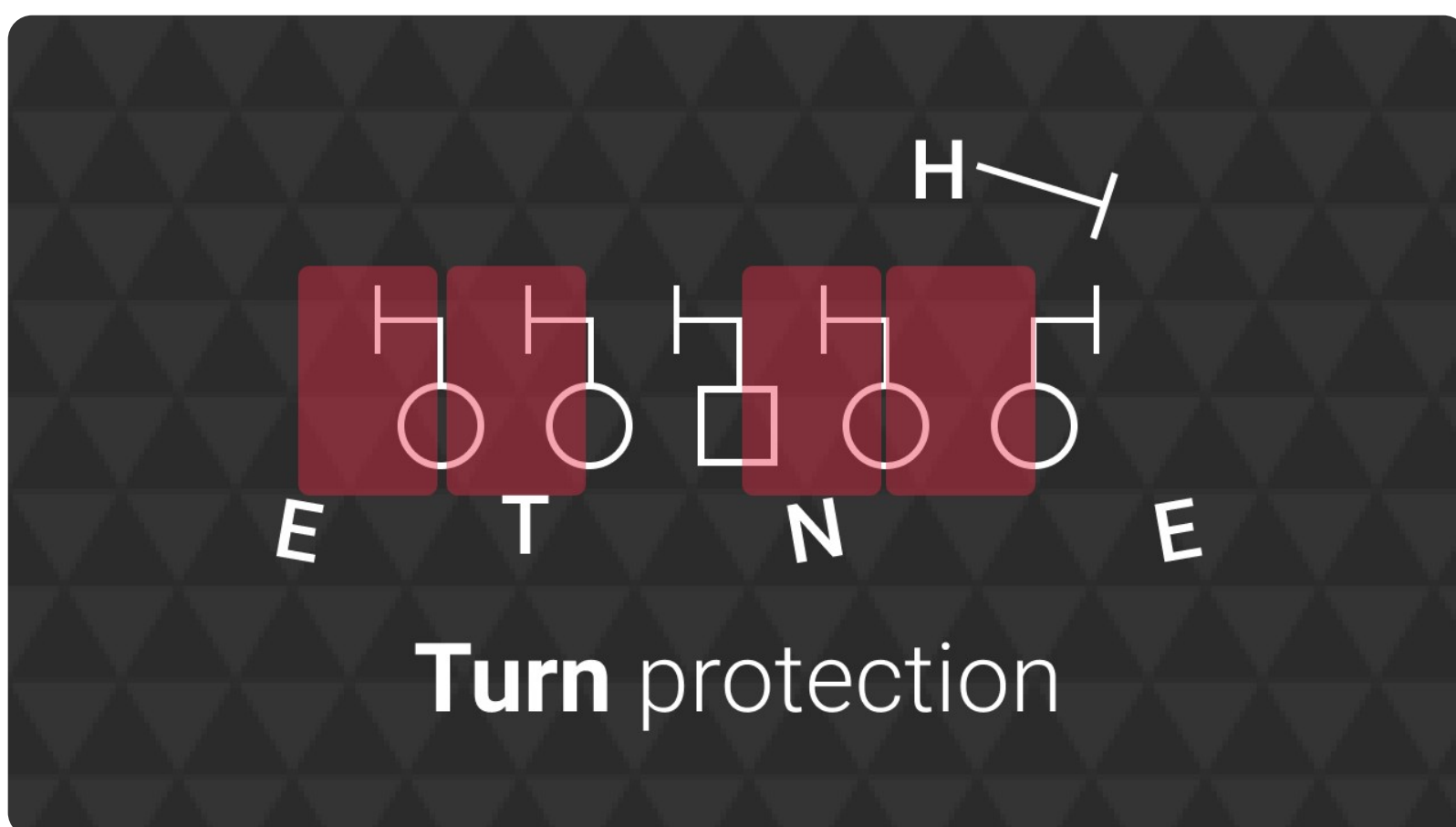
You see when you have 6 men blocking 4, it means they can only double 1 or 2 rushers at a time.

That means more 1-on-1s and gaps.

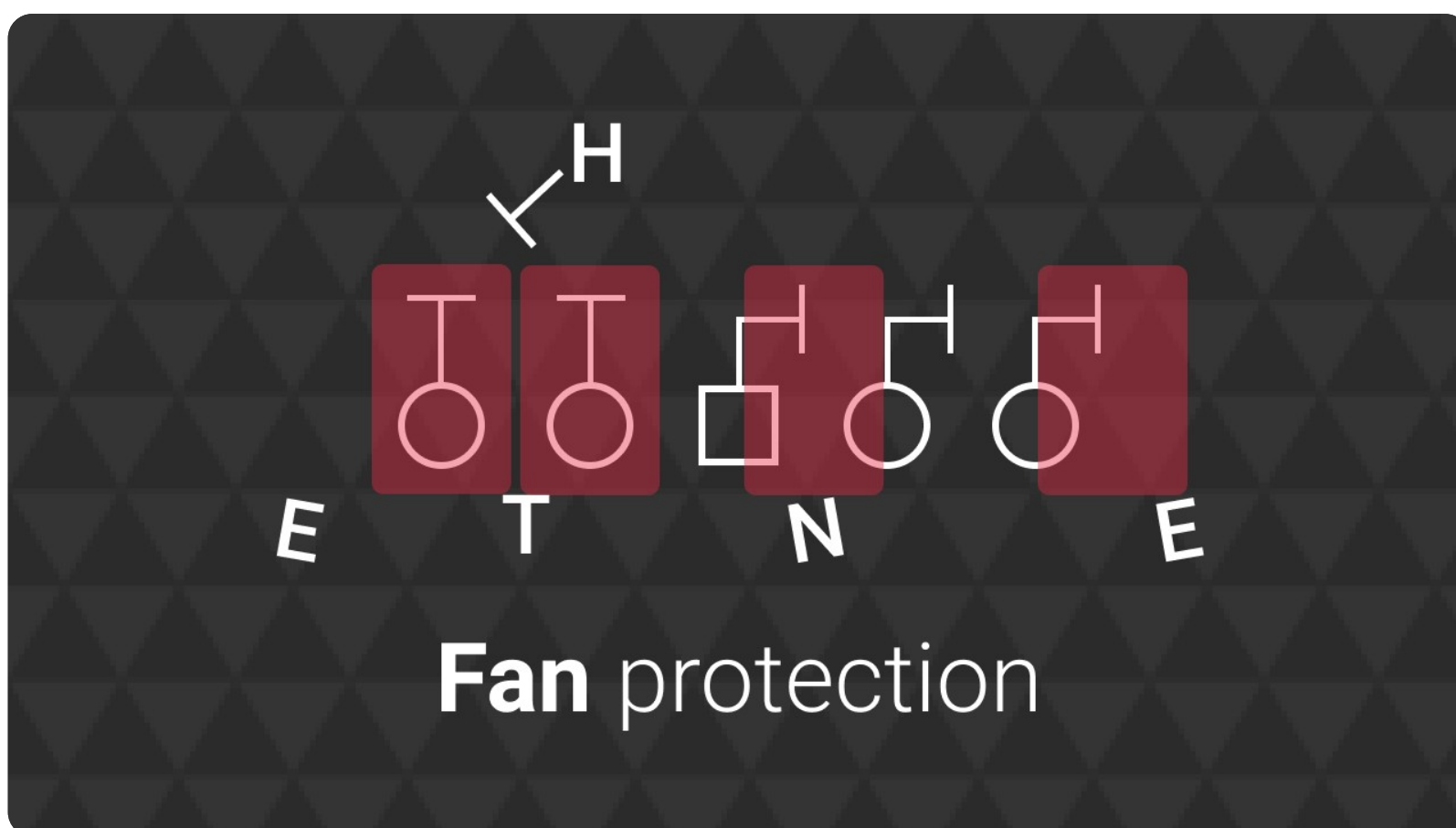
Slide weaknesses: C gap open, strongside guard and tackle 1 on 1



Turn weaknesses: Strongside B and C gap and weakside A and B gap open



Fan weaknesses: strongside guard and tackle 1 on 1, open weakside A and C gap

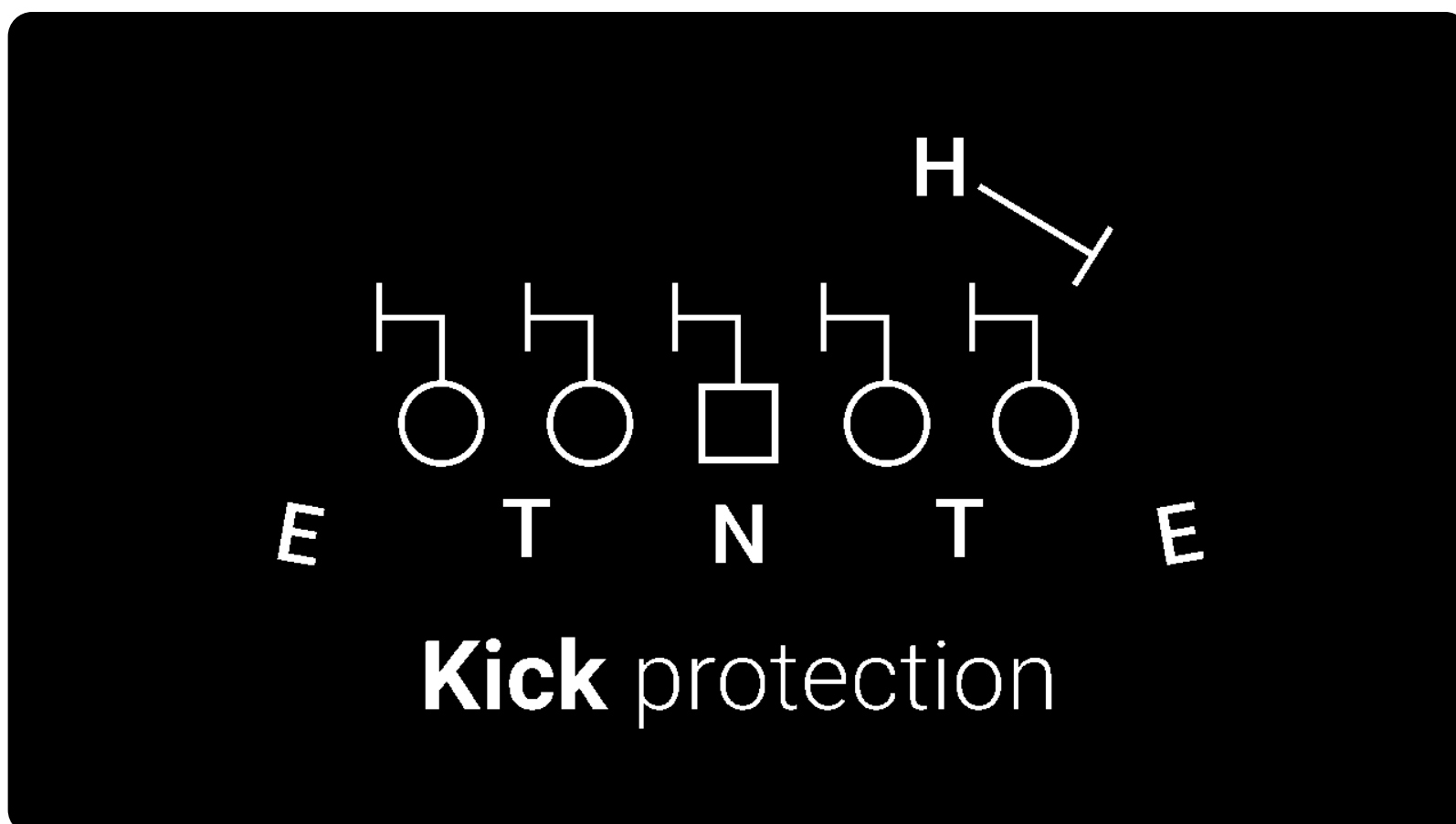
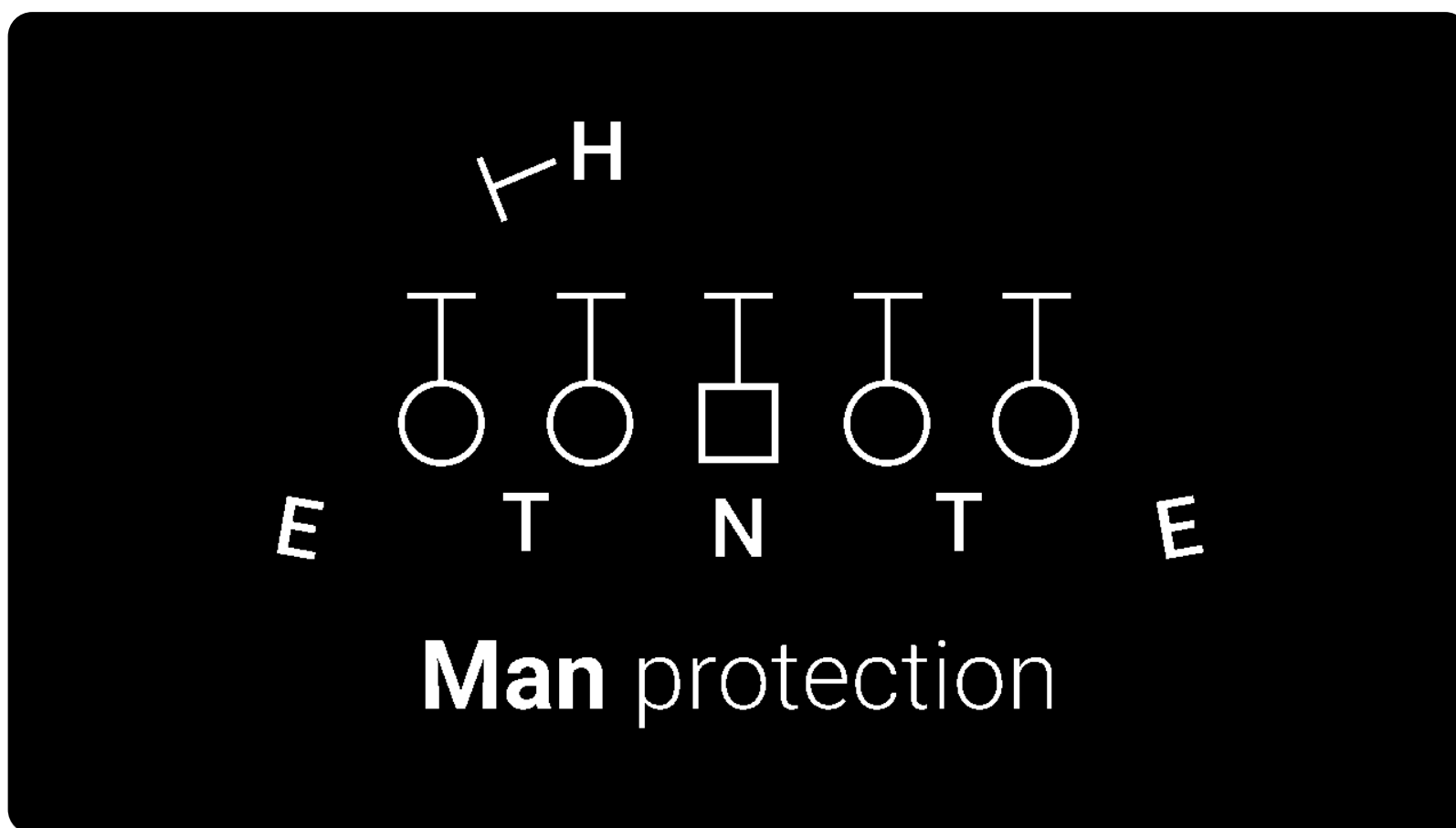


Max weaknesses: strongside guard 1 on 1, weakside B gap open



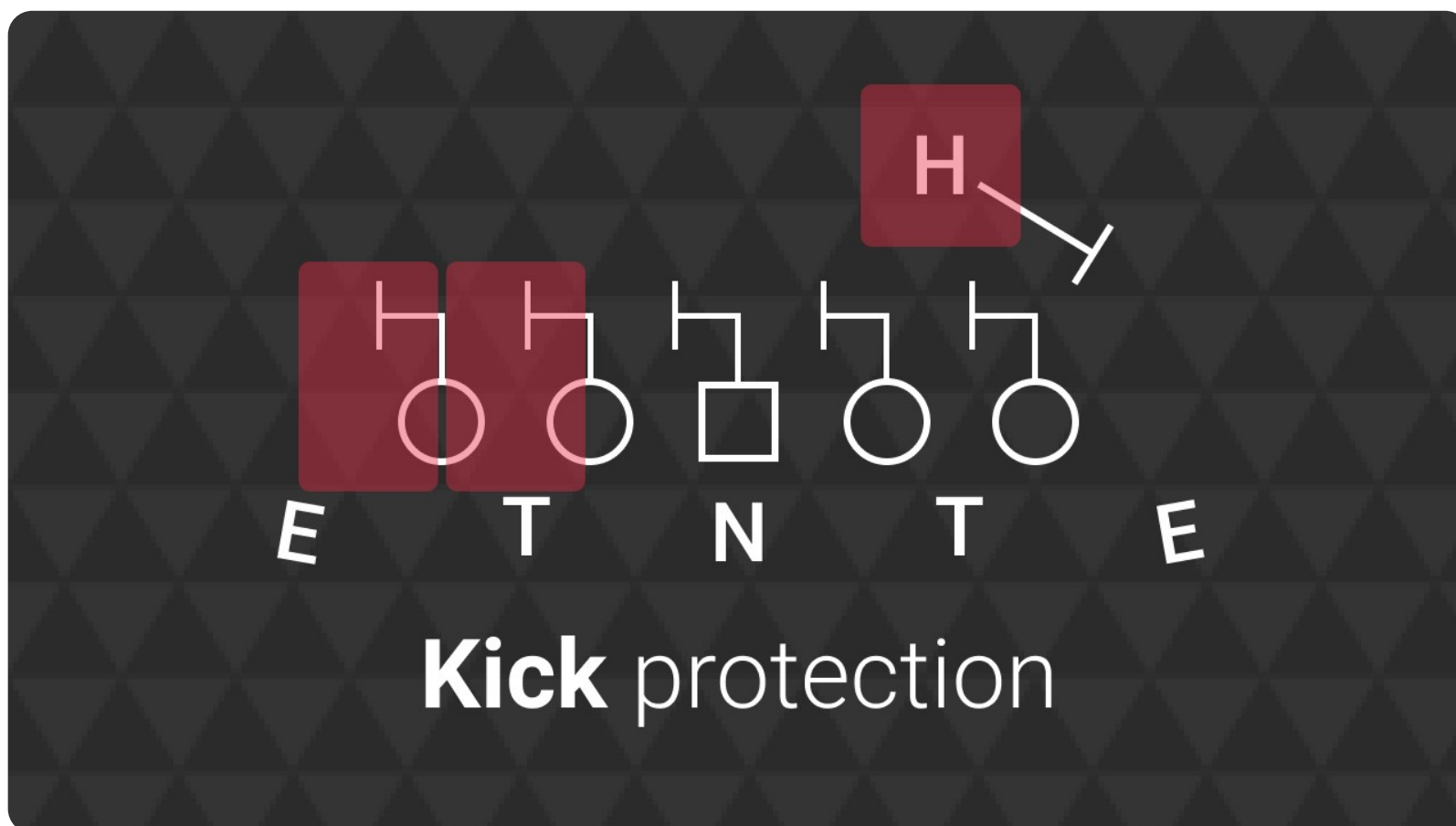
5-man rush protections

And finally when rushing 5, you will either see a **man** or **kick** protection.

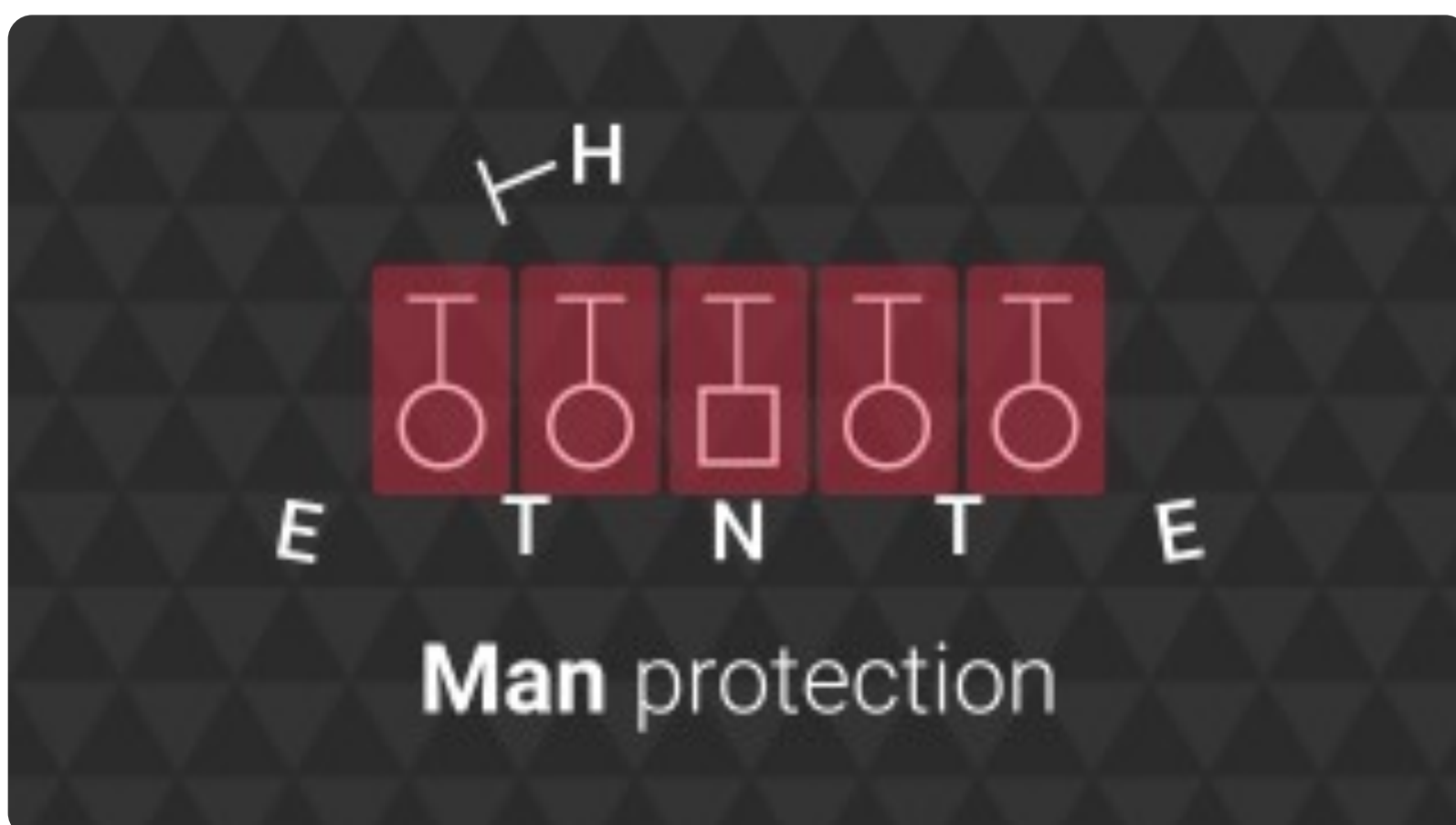


And you guessed it, these too have their weaknesses....

Kick weaknesses: Running back 1 on 1, open B and C gaps



Man weaknesses: Every blocker 1 on 1



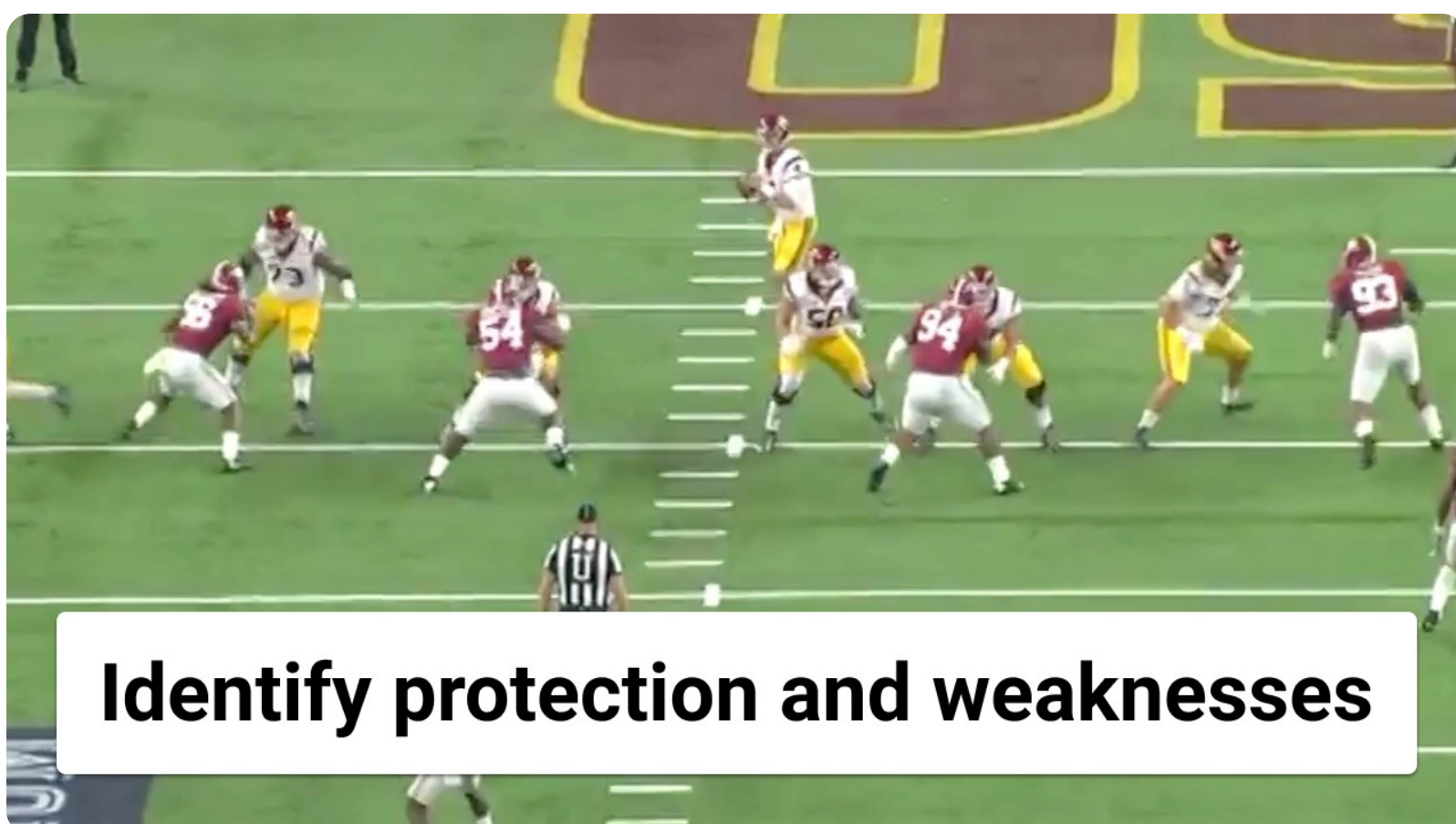
Let's practice

Ok, so you know all the protections and weaknesses you'll see when rushing 3, 4 and 5.

Let's now see if you can identify **protection** and **weaknesses** in a real life example.

Here's the clip...

click [here](#) to see example

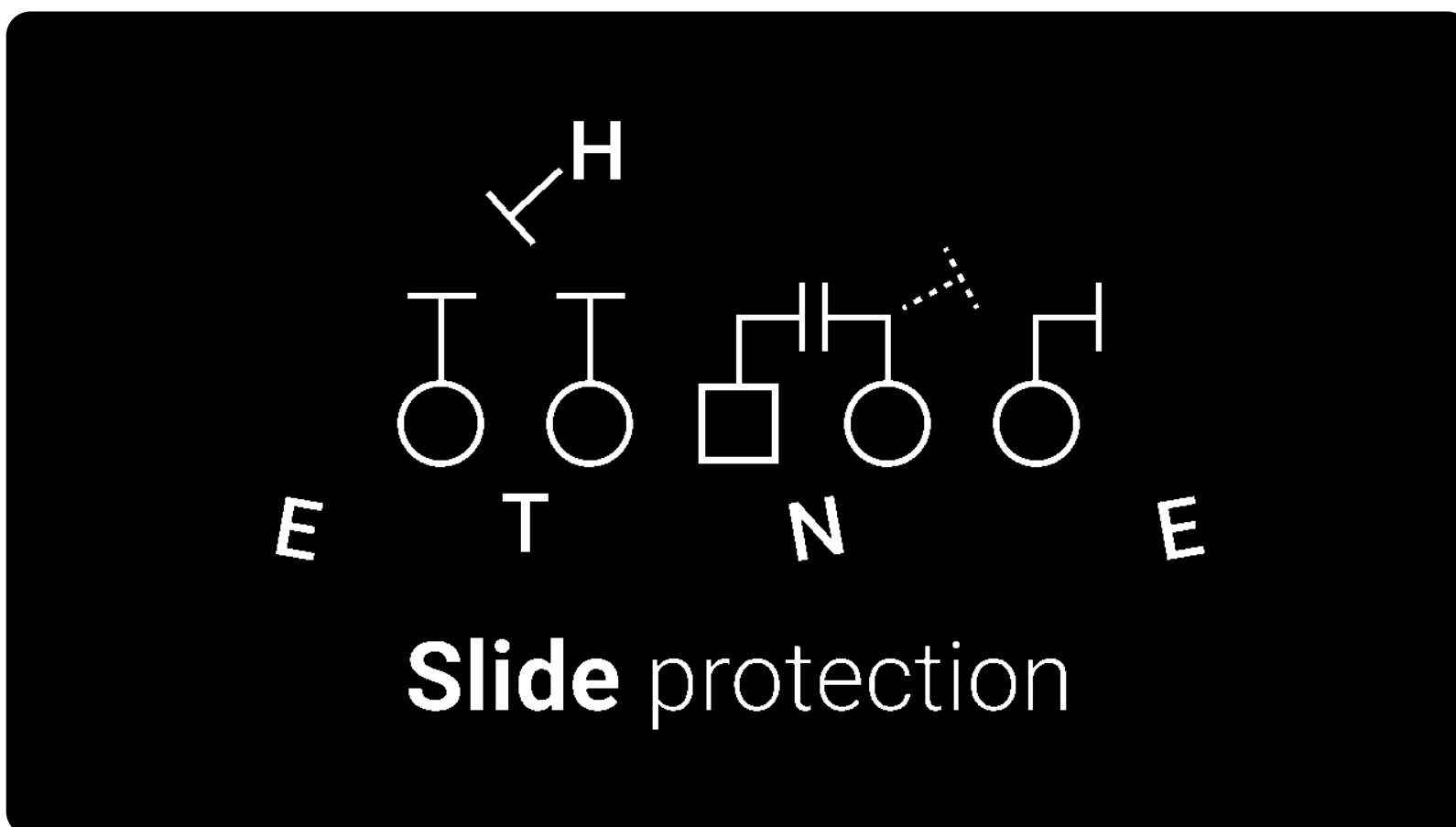


I'll give you 1 minute...

30 seconds....

3...2...1...OK Stop! Tag me ([@craigroh](#)) in a tweet with your answer.

If you said **slide** for the protection and that the weaknesses are the strongside guard and tackle and weakside C gap - you are 100% correct!



If you didn't get it right, no sweat. Just make sure to keep studying your protections.

Next step

Once you've identified how an offense will protect you, next step is to plan your attack.

For more information on this go to the rushing as a unit section of the book.

Tendencies

Film study is all about knowing what your opponent will do before they do it.

The time you spend in the film room sets you and your defense up for success when the bullets start flying.

But where to start?

Over the years playing in the NFL, CFL and NCAA I've made a film study system that has given me a leg up on every offense and opponent I've faced.

Below I'll lay out the specific steps of that system.

Let's get to it..

Selecting which film to watch

You only have so much time during a week to watch film.

You have homework, clubs, and maybe even a girlfriend - so there isn't a lot of time to waste.

That's why when selecting what film to watch, you should only watch film that you can extract insights from.

With that said, **only watch film of teams that have similar defenses to you.**

If you run a pure 3-4 and are watching film of a 4-3 team, that makes zero sense.

Offenses will attack a 4-3 defense much different than a 3-4 defense. So, watch only 3-4 film.

Furthermore, it's important to **watch the most recent games your opponent has played.**

Offenses often shift and change as the season goes on.

So watching film from the beginning of the season if you're in the play-offs is not very helpful because the offense is most likely running different plays now.

But what if it's the beginning of the season and there is no recent film?

This situation is always a tough one, but there are ways to overcome it.

One way is to use the most recent film from the previous season.

Usually, you'll be able to see what kinds of plays they like, but don't depend on this film too much.

Even if your opponent has the same O-coordinator, they often will add new wrinkles to their offense. It's best in these situations to **not depend on film study and go out and play fast.**

How much film should I watch?

At D-Line you want to watch just enough film to give you an edge, but not so much that you'll think too much on the field.

With this being said, **watch no more than 3 games** when studying your opponents offense.

Offenses can always run new plays and do things that you didn't predict, so you don't want to get into analysis paralysis by watching too much film.

Now there are exceptions to this rule.

If you're studying mannerisms of particular match ups I think you can watch as much film as you want.

For example, Osi Umenyiora watched hours upon hours of film every week looking for a "tell" from the tackle that would indicate either pass or run.

In this case you can spend as much time as you want watching for these tells and getting inside the head of your match up.

Identify pre-snap indicators

Now that you have your 3 games of film selected, it's time to start identifying indicators.

Every offense has “tells” that will indicate what type of play they are running and it’s your job to find these.

So spend about 30 seconds to a minute going through each play of the game.

As you’re going through these clips make sure to pay close attention to pre-snap indicators like **eyes, splits, stance, personnel, down and distance, formation and situation.**

These indicators will often give your clues on if it’s pass or run.

For example on the below clip the offense has quite a few “tells” that the play will be a run and specifically an inside zone.

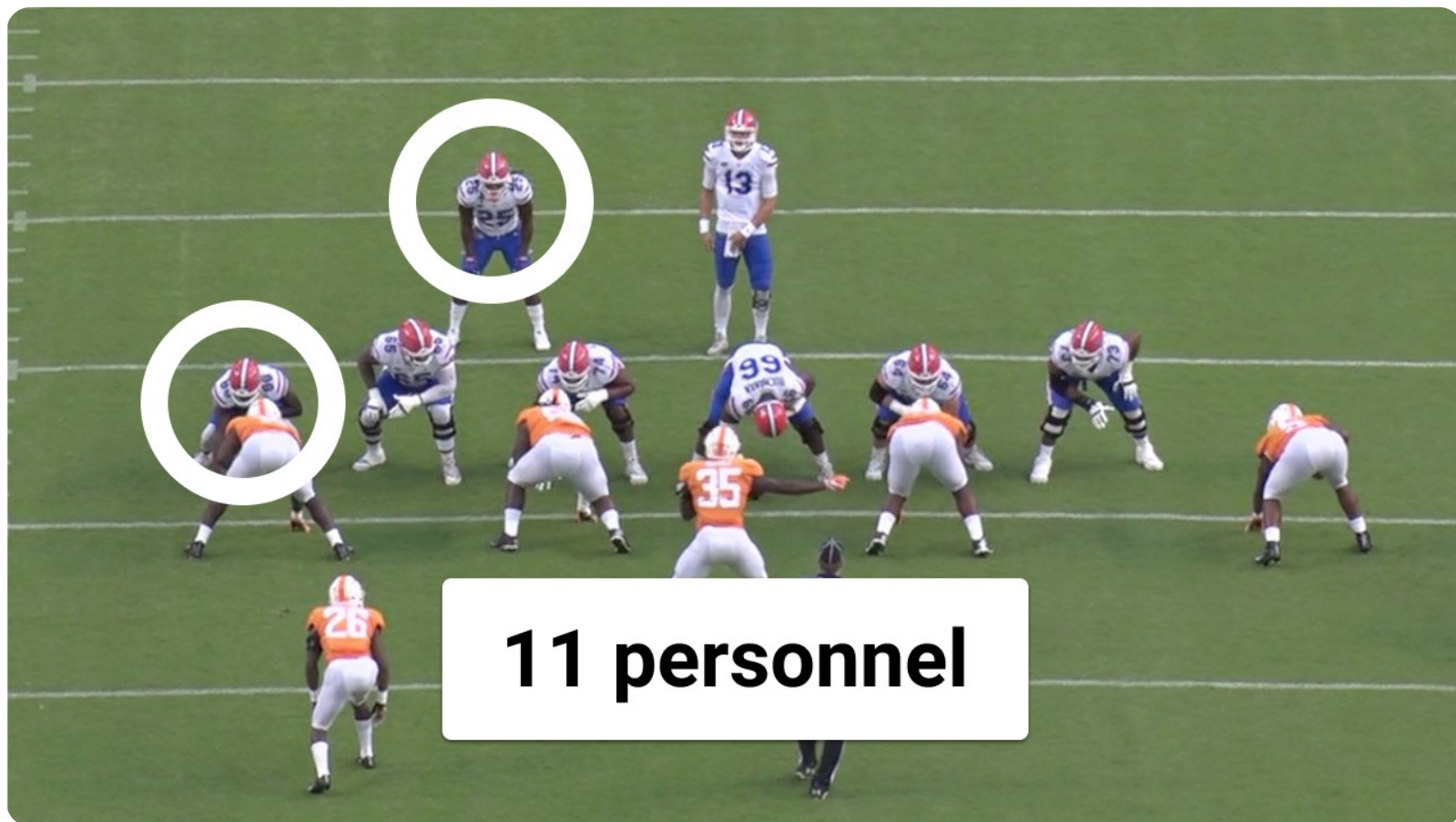
Let’s detail all of them.

click [here](#) to see example



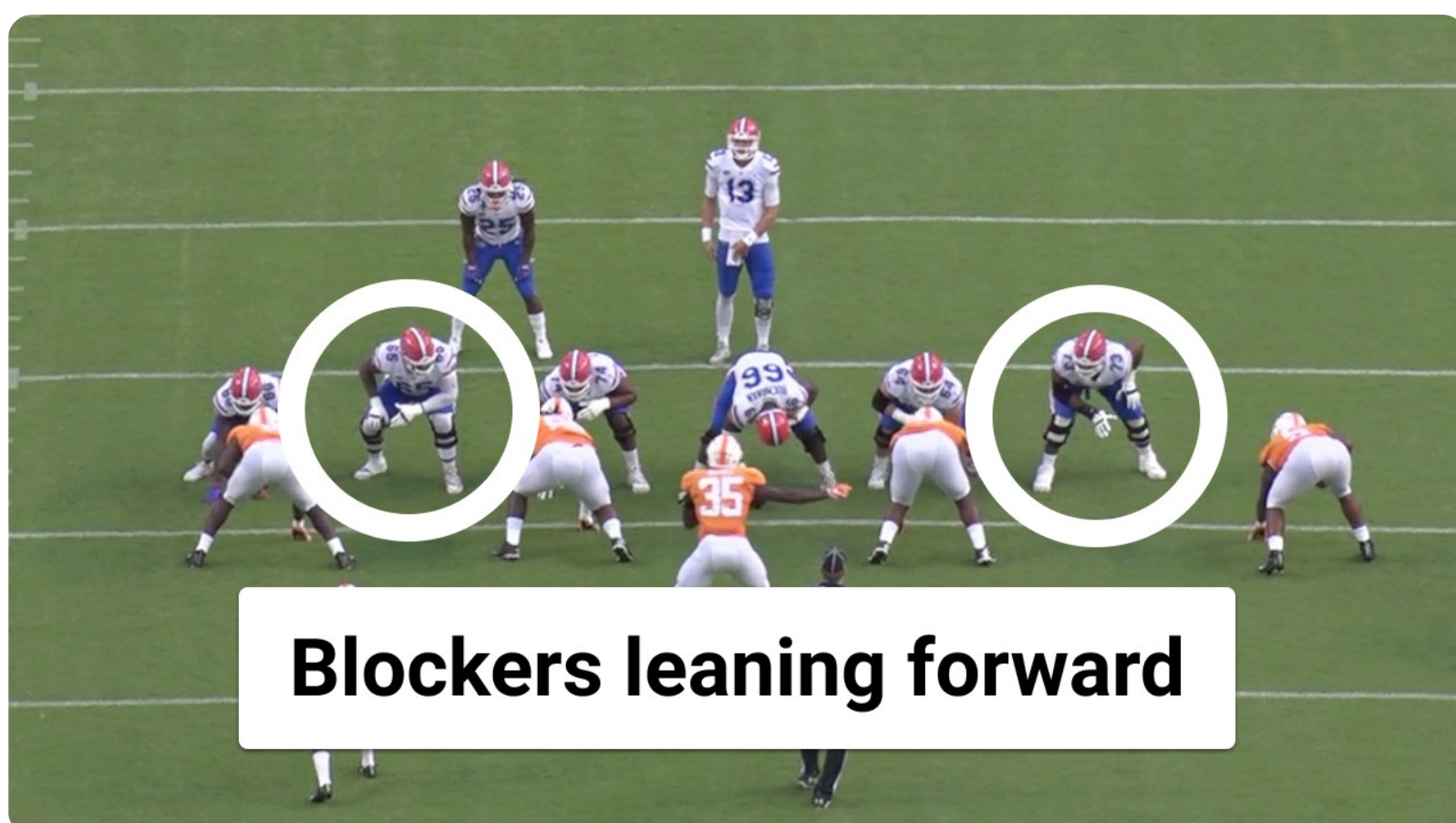
11 Personnel (1 RB + 1 TE)

Offenses bring in TEs when they want to run the ball.



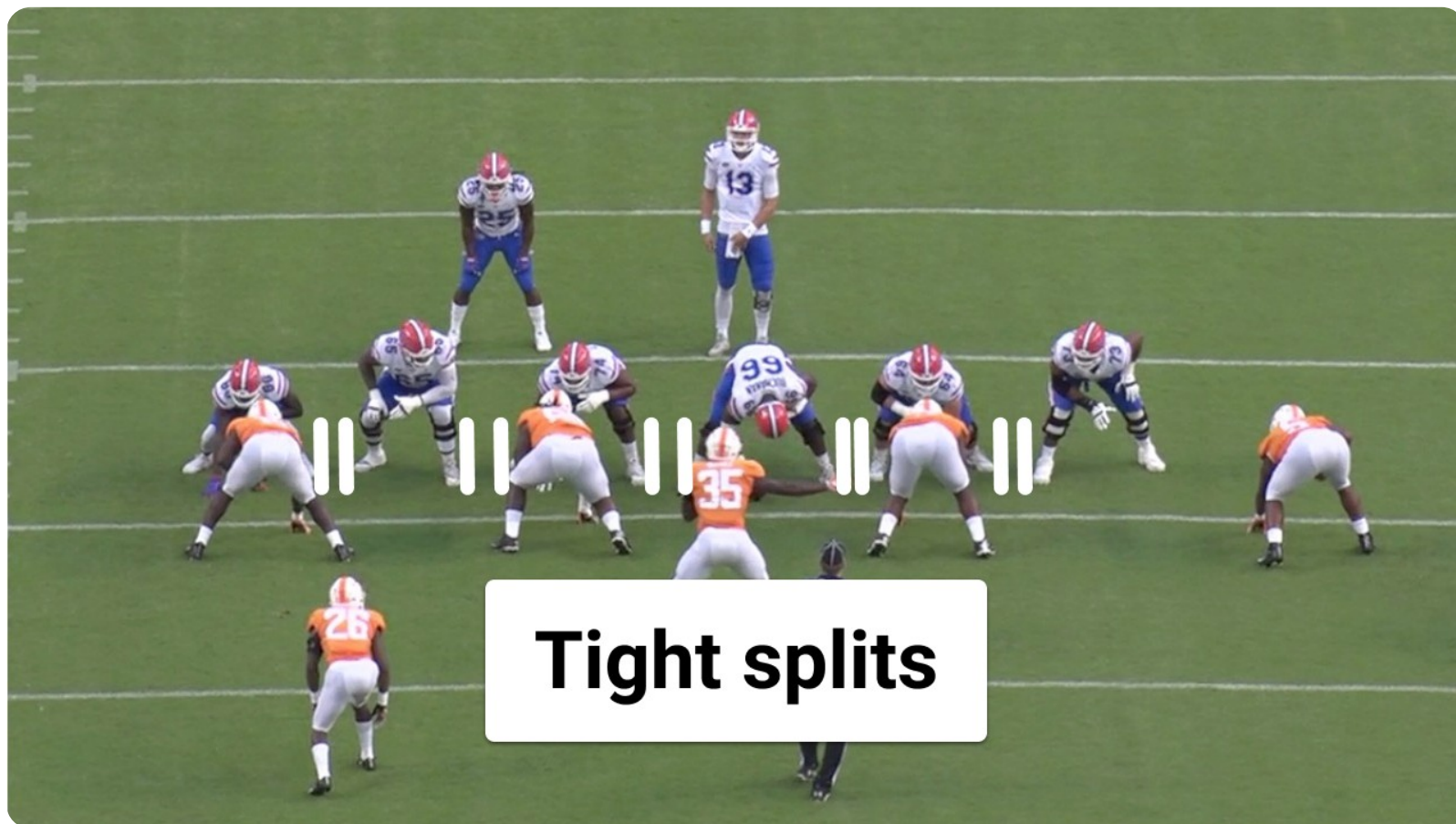
O-Line heavy in stances

Blockers will lean forward to generate power for the run game.



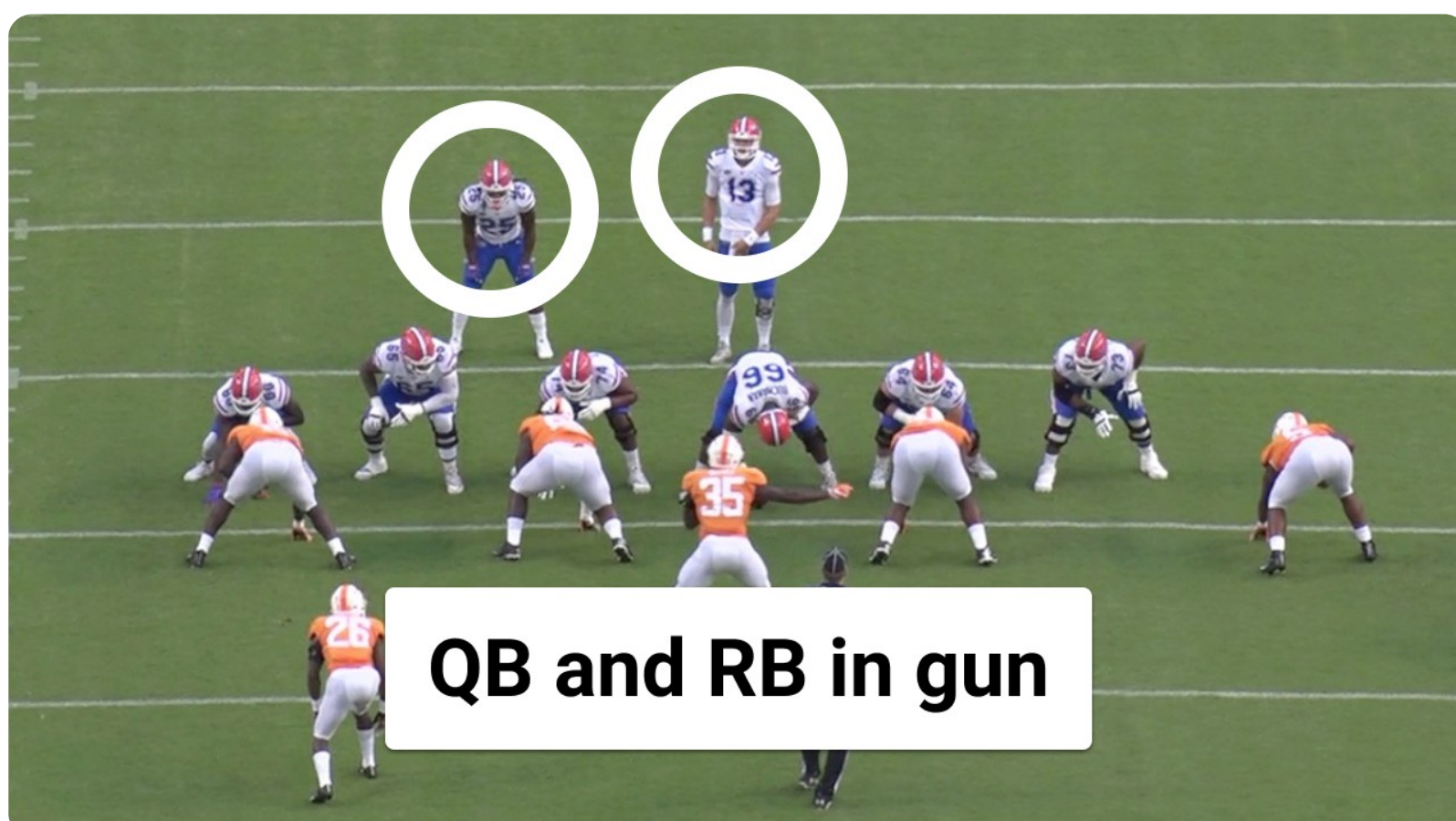
Tight splits

It's easier for blockers to run block when they're close together.



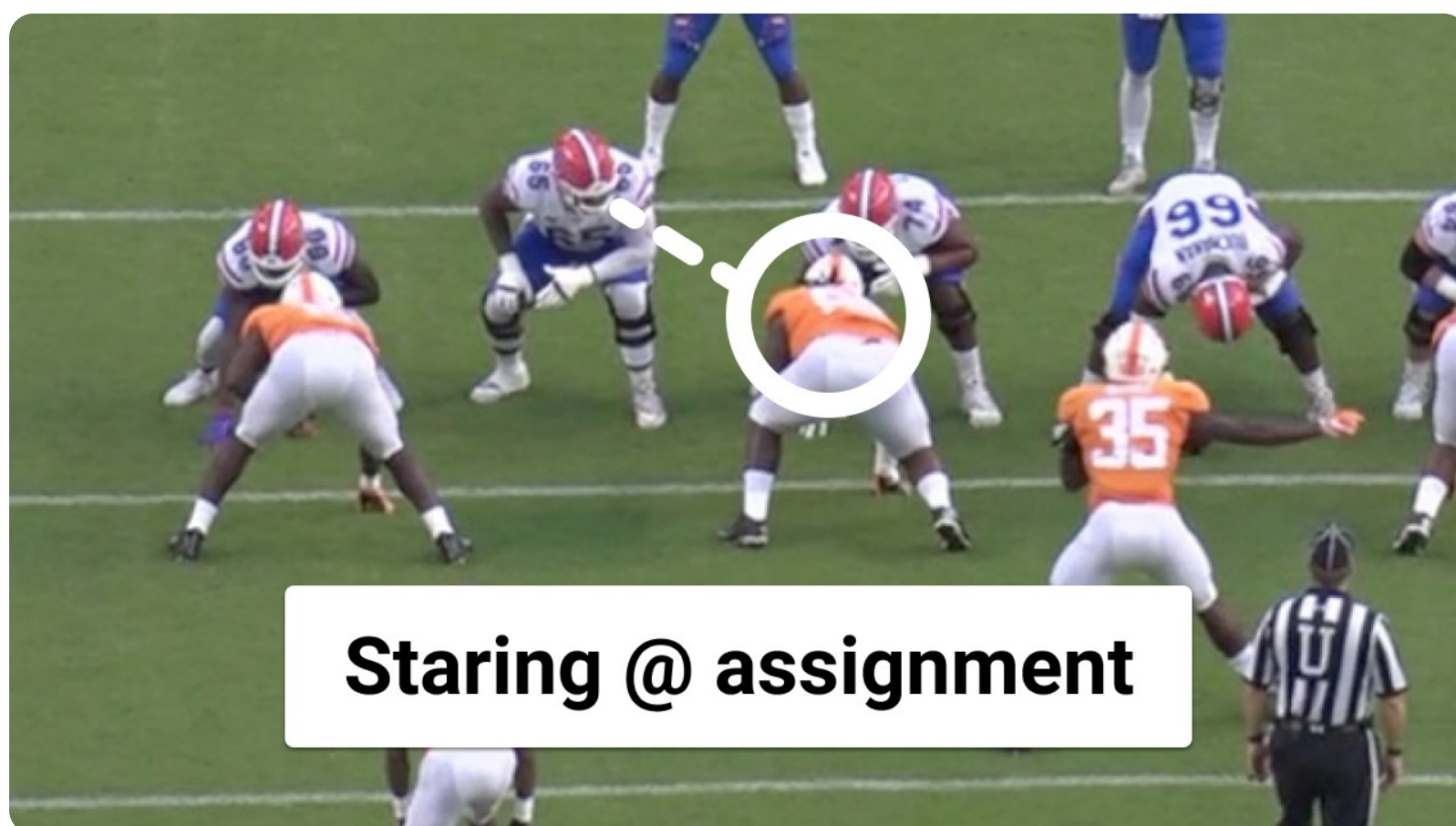
Gun formation w/ back offset and behind QB

For inside zone, RBs want to work downhill and will position themselves at a downhill angle to do so.



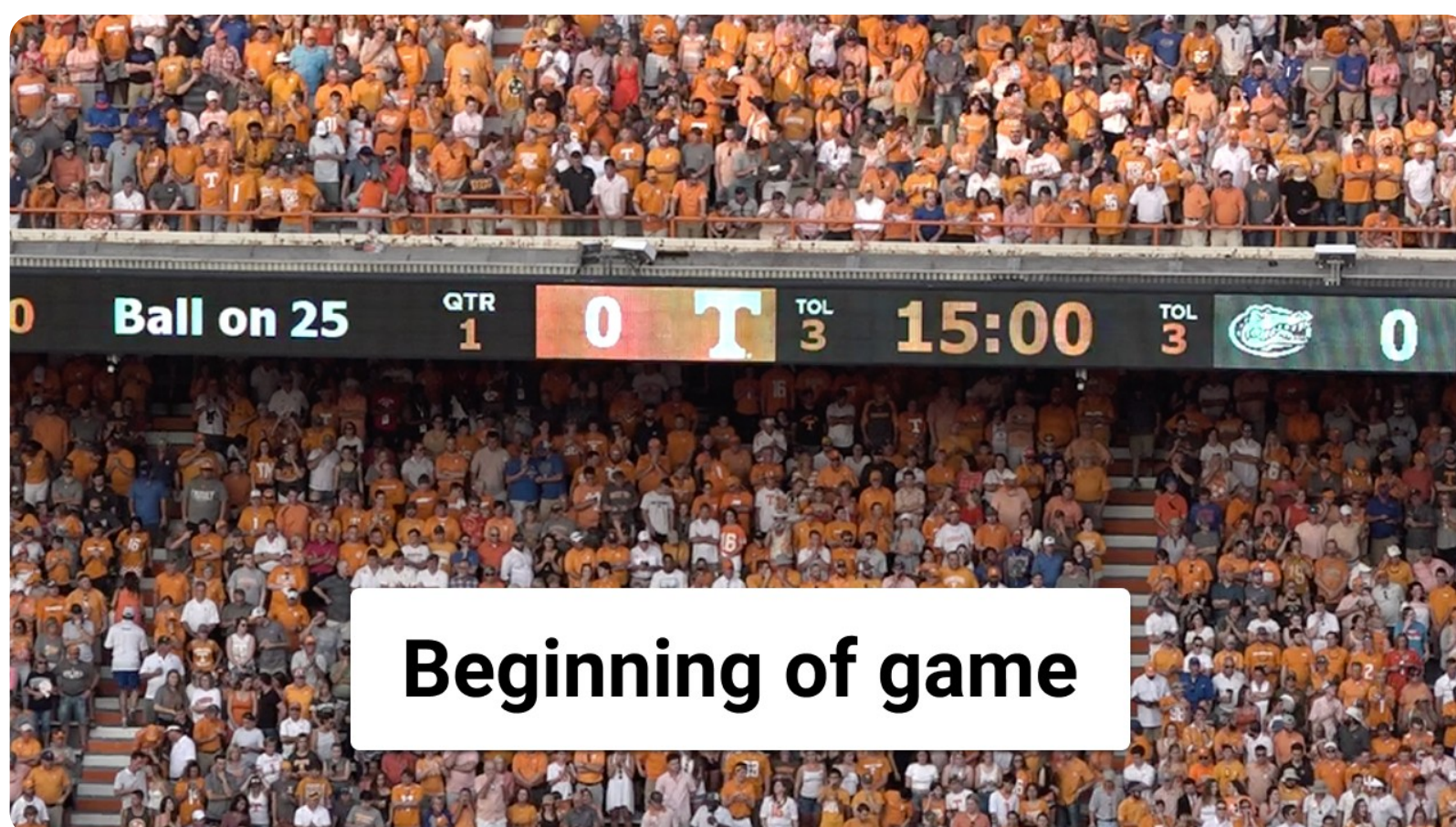
*Right tackle **staring** down at DT*

Undisciplined blockers will stare at their assignment pre-snap.



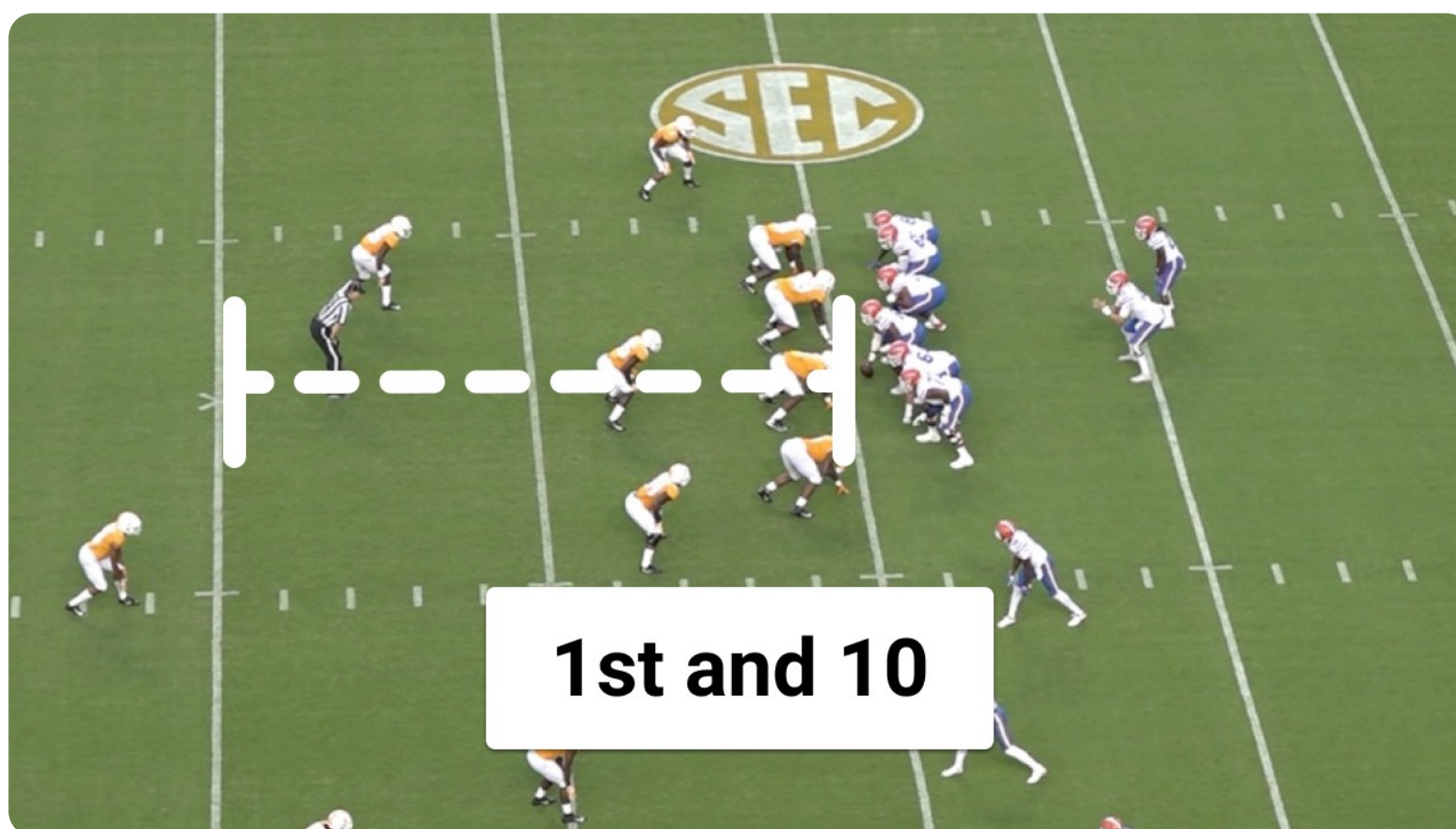
***Situation:** Beginning of game*

Many offenses want to establish their run game early.



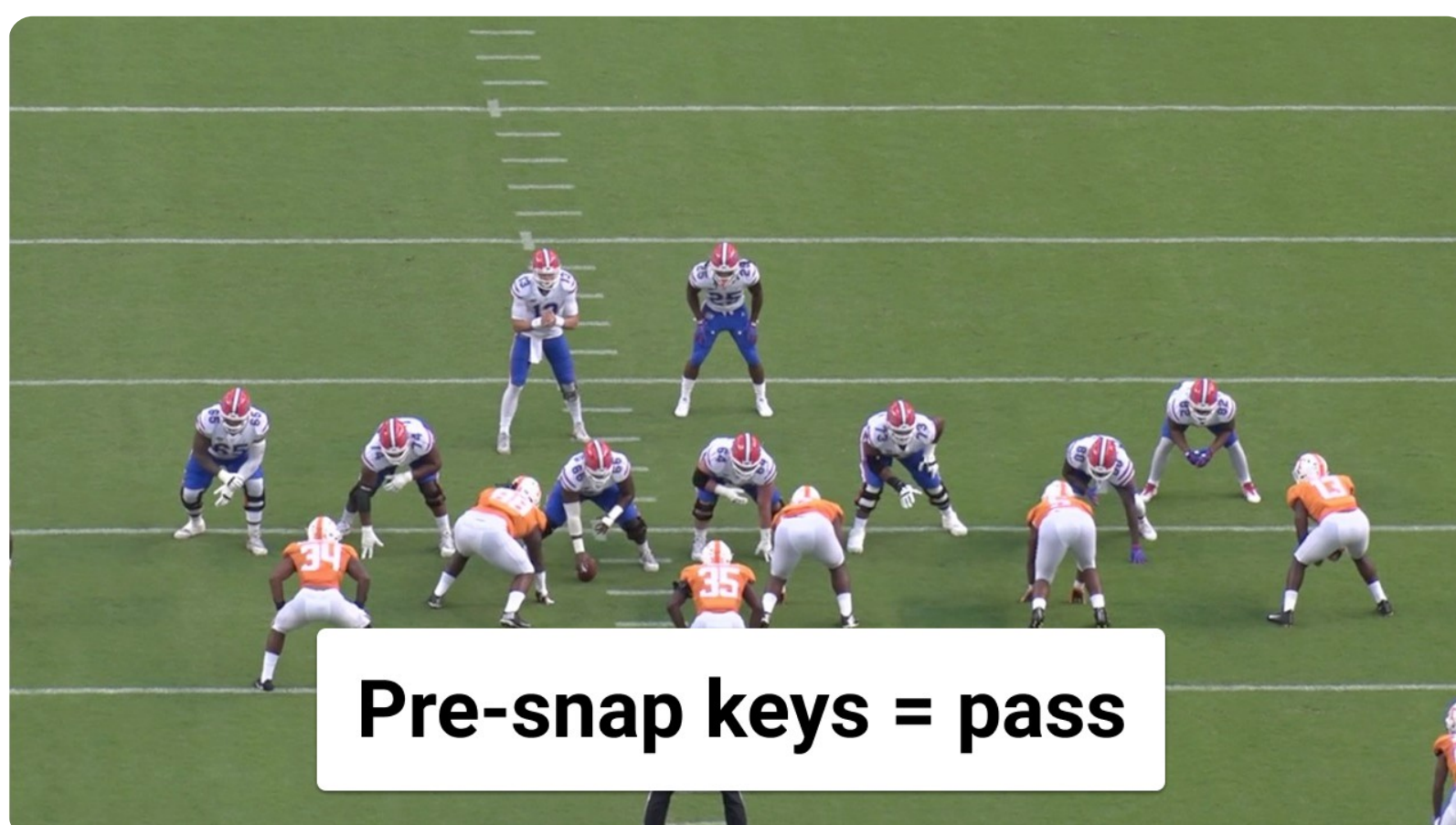
Down and distance: 1st and 10

On 1st and 10 offenses like to run to give them more flexibility in play calling on 2nd and 3rd down.



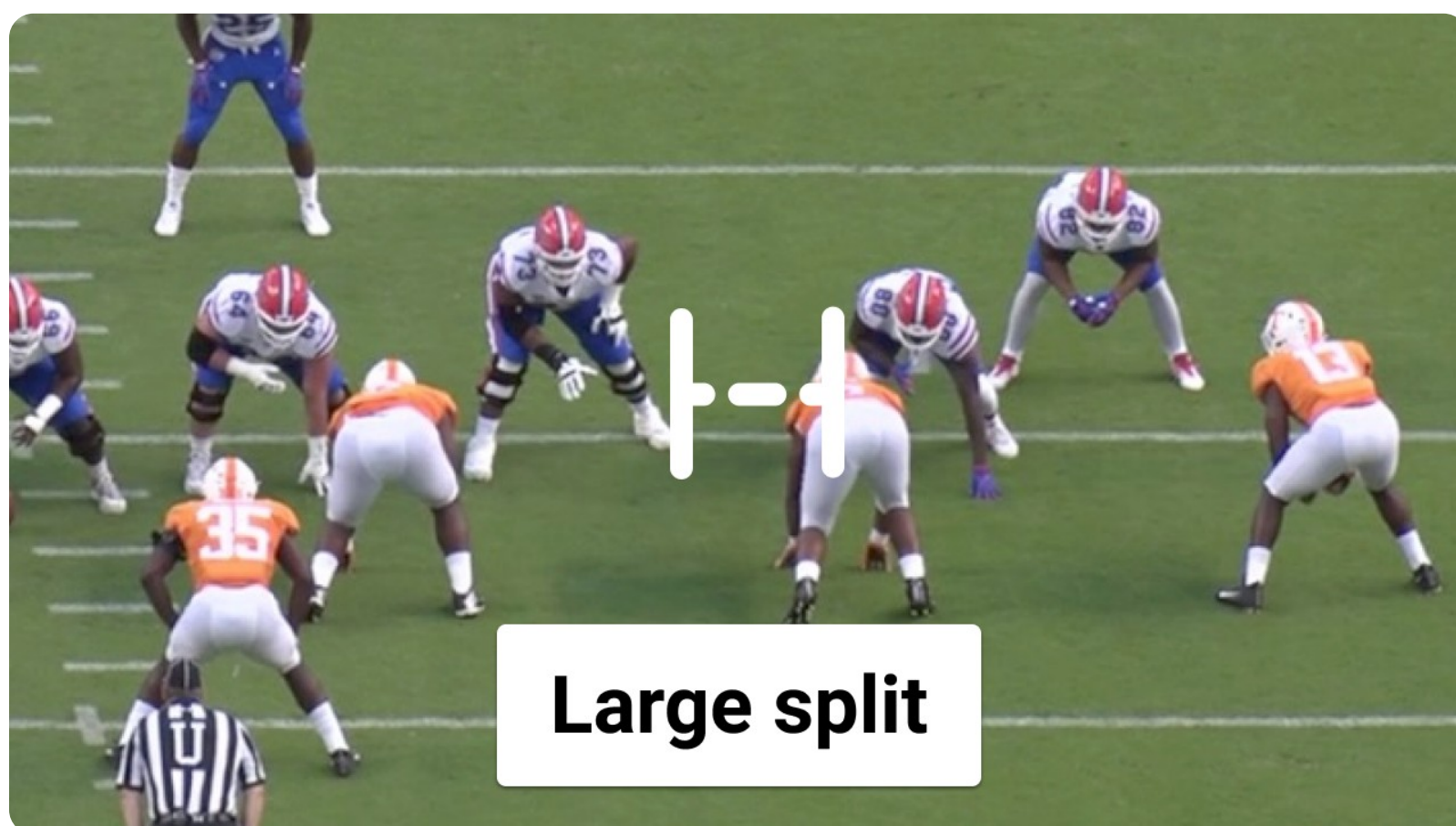
Now let's look at the next play. It looks more like pass than run to me. Let's go through each indicator and find out.

click [here](#) to see example



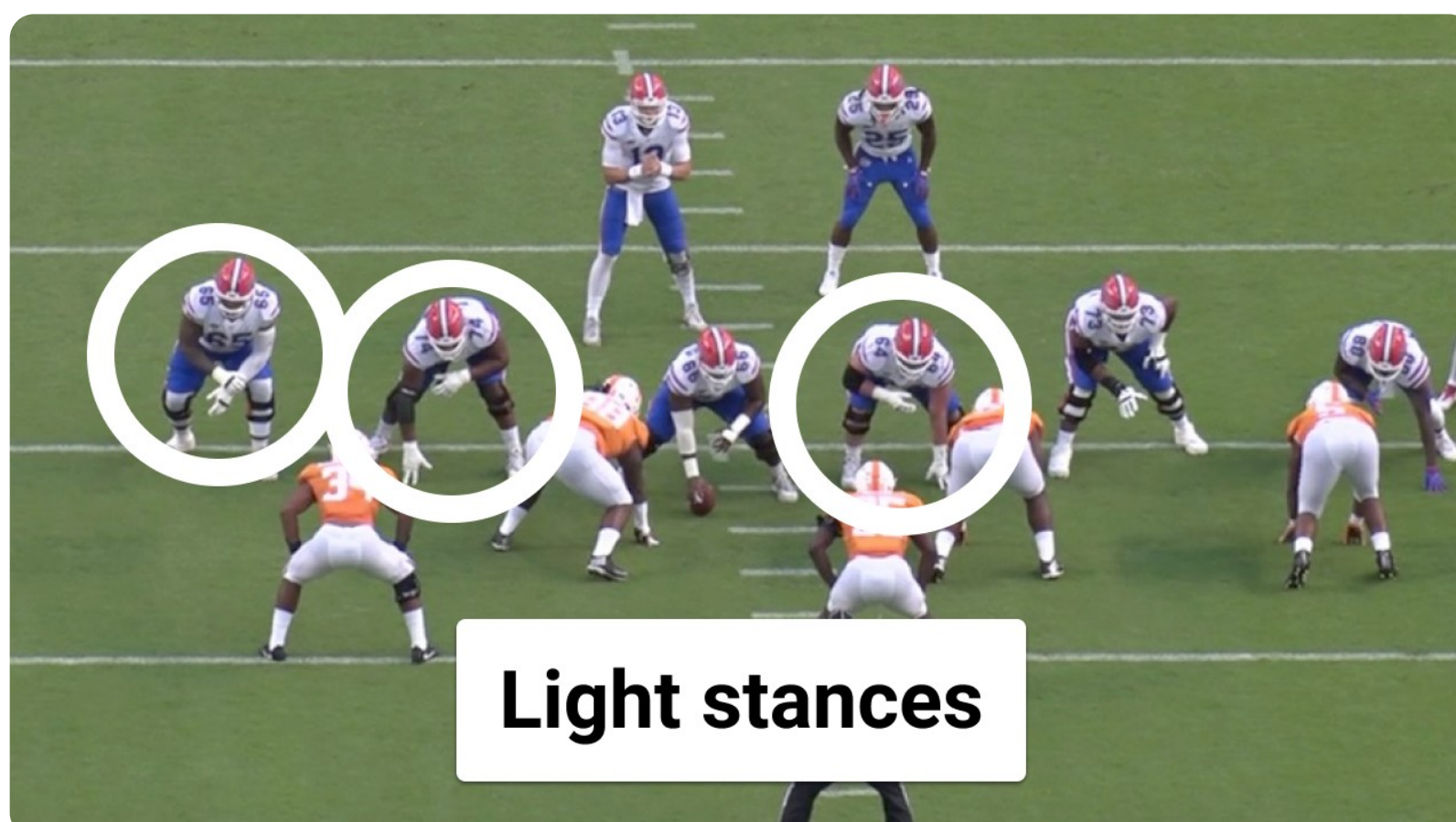
*Large **split** between tackle and TE*

TEs will use larger splits to avoid hitting you on their route.



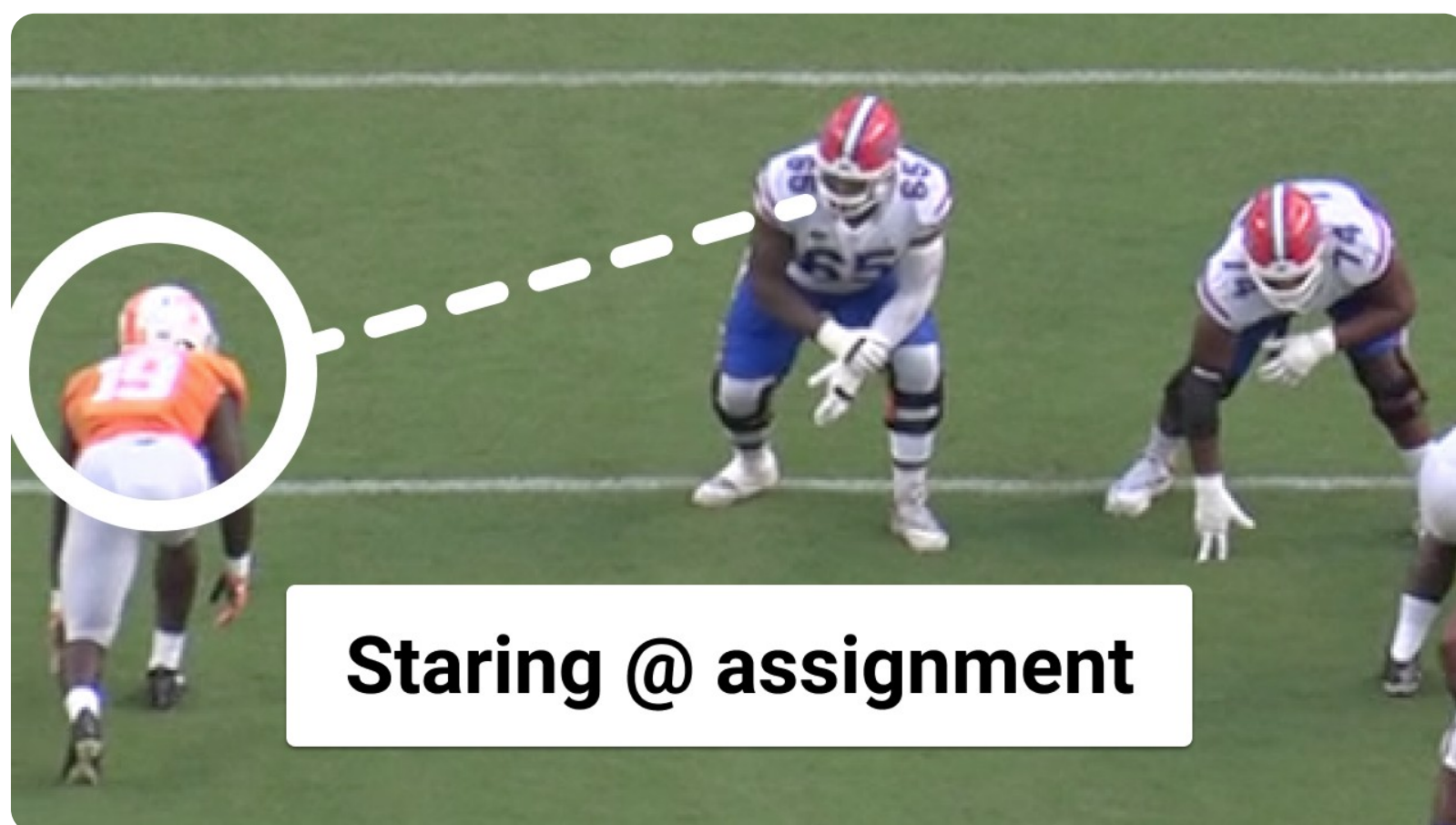
*O-Line light in **stance***

Blockers will lean back in their stance when pass setting so they aren't late off the ball.



Right tackle staring out at end

The tackle's pass block responsibility is the end.

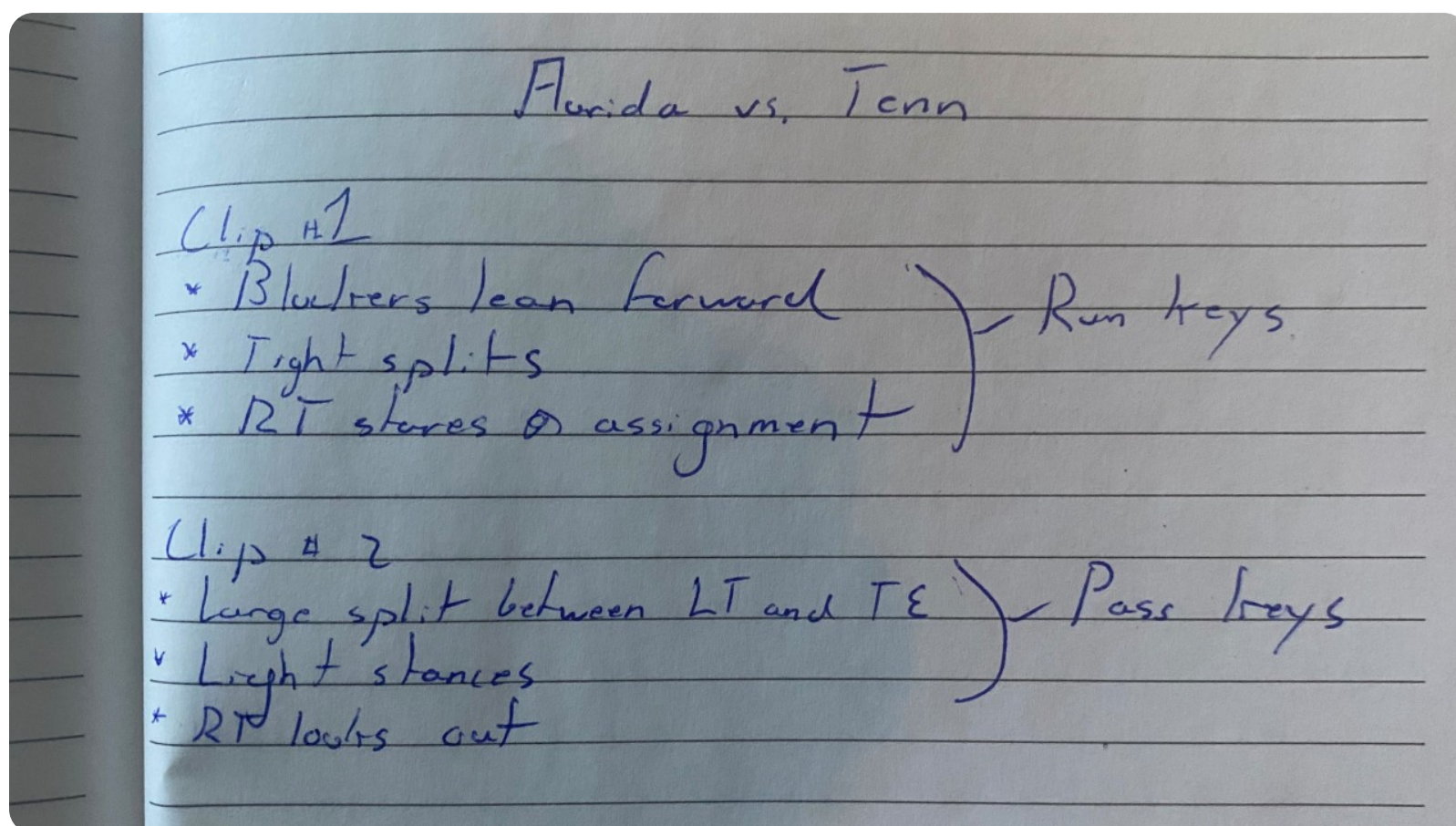


So even though the offense is in a typical running personnel (1 back and 2 tight ends)...

...the **splits, eyes** and **weight** of the O-Line gives away that the offense is running a pass.

So, as you're skimming through each clip and identifying pre-snap indicators make sure to **jot down notes of each indicator** to take a closer look at.

Your notes should look something like this...



Take a closer look

You should have a sheet full of notes with potential tells.

Your job now is to **see whether or not each indicator is dependable or not.**

So, let's take the TE Tackle split tell that we saw earlier.

Right now, we think that if the TE and tackle have a close split it is run and if they have a large split it is pass

To see whether or not this is dependable, now look at every clip in the next 3 games where the TE is on the LOS and see if this pre-snap indicator holds up

If a large split indicates pass **more than 70%** of the time you can depend on this indicator.

If it doesn't, throw it out and move onto the next one.

Go through each indicator like this until you have a dependable list of "tells" you can bring into the game

Answer these questions

You've now got a validated list of tells, but you still need to have a comprehensive understanding of what the offense will do in any situation.

With this in mind, you'll need to answer particular questions about every offense you face.

Below, I have included a list of questions you can use while studying film...

Eyes

Do any of the O-Line stare at their blocking assignments?

Splits

Are splits tight when it's run and wide when it's pass?

Weight

Are any blockers light when it's pass and heavy when it's run?

Personnel

What personnel's is the offense most likely to run and pass in?
(Ex: 23 Personnel is 70% run)

Down and distance

What does the offense like running on different downs and distances? (Ex: 3rd and 15 = draw or pass)

Formation

What formations are high pass or run indicators? (Ex: Gun, Trips)

Situation

Are there any obvious situations where the offense will pass or run? (Ex: 2 minute drill = pass)

To answer these questions most film study softwares like **Hudl** have the capability to generate reports that tell you % of run and pass in different **formations, situations** and **personnel**.

	0-20		21-50		50-21	
	Run	Pass	Run	Pass	Run	Pass
1st & 10+	70% 7/10	30% 3/10	70% 32/46	30% 14/46	75% 46/61	25% 15/61
1st & < 10	-	-	-	100% 1/1	-	-
2nd & 7+	33% 1/3	67% 2/3	41% 7/17	59% 10/17	43% 9/21	57% 12/21
2nd & 4 - 7	50% 1/2	50% 1/2	50% 5/10	50% 5/10	71% 10/14	29% 4/14
2nd & < 4	-	-	100% 1/1	-	100% 3/3	-
3rd & 7+	33% 1/3	67% 2/3	22% 2/9	78% 7/9	22% 2/9	78% 7/9
3rd & 4 - 7	-	100% 1/1	25% 1/4	75% 3/4	86% 6/7	14% 1/7
3rd & < 4	-	-	100% 1/1	-	100% 3/3	-
4th & 2+	-	100% 1/1	-	-	50% 3/6	50% 3/6
4th & ≤ 2	-	-	100% 1/1	-	100% 1/1	-

These types of softwares make it really easy to get answers to questions so if you have access use them!

Wow, this was a long chapter, but detail is needed when studying film. I can say personally that when I learned to study film the right way it **doubled** my on field production!

To put it simply, you're job as a D-Lineman is to disrupt the offense and when you study film and know what they're doing it makes your job a whole lot easier.

Coaching points

- ① Select 3 recent games for film study
- ② Skim through film and identify pre-snap keys
- ③ Validate if each pre-snap key is dependable
- ④ Answer the critical questions about the offense

**Step 6: Create
a game plan**

Have a plan

Ben Franklin once said,

“By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail.”

Many young players think that they don't need to put in the time grinding in the film room and think they can just show up.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The best defensive linemen I've been around always put in the hours studying their opponent and have a solid plan of attack coming into the game.

If you want to be an elite rusher you need to have an elite plan.

So make sure to have your **pre-snap indicators, rush plan, and call plan** ready before you come into a game.

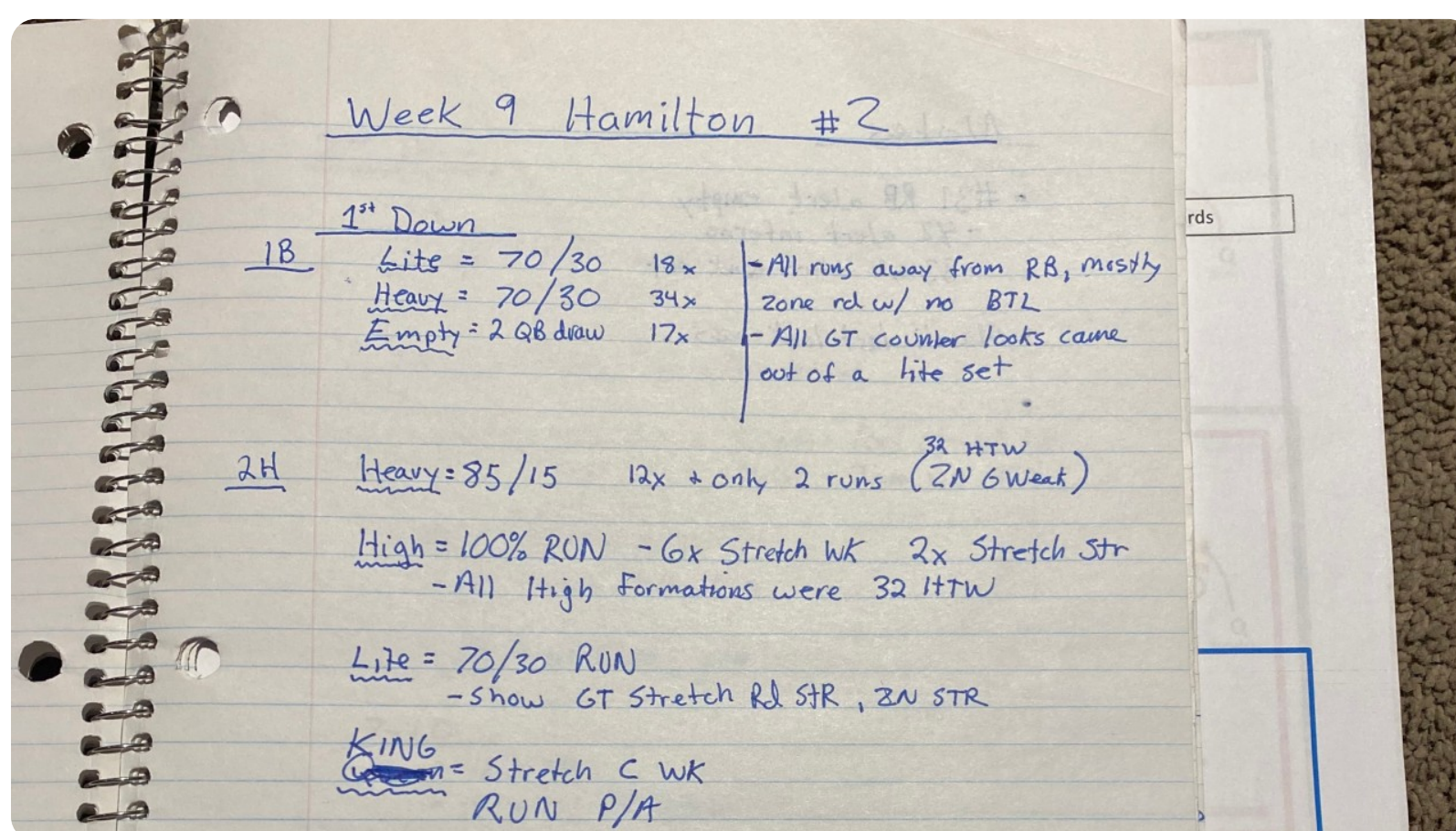
Pre-snap indicators

I've spoken already about how to compile a list of pre-snap indicators in the “Tendencies” chapter, but I'll do a quick refresher.

The offense will have pre-snap “tells” that will indicate either pass or run.

And as your studying film you should be taking note of pre-snap indicators like eyes, splits, stance and personnel to help you identify whether or not it's pass and run.

By the end of the week you should have a sheet of validated pre-snap indicators that will help you identify if it's run or pass.



You then can use these indicators to help you gain an edge against the offense.

For example, if you noticed the offense only passes in 2 minute drill in your film study, and if you see 2 minutes left in the half no need to play the run.

Get off the ball and get after the QB.

Rush plan

Next you need to put together your rush plan.

This is the plan you will use in obvious passing situations when you have a 3 or 4 man rush called.

Your plan should be based off of your individual match ups and weaknesses of those opponents.

For example, if you play DT and the LG is a 6'3" chest puncher who turns his hips and sets on a 45 degree angle you need to match your edge, power and inside rush to his weaknesses.

So if I were in this situation this is what my plan would look like....

Edge rush: Swipe

Power rush: Speed bull

Inside rush: Counter swipe

My goal here is to **match my hands to my opponents hands and my move type to his set.**

If he's trying to punch my chest I need to use a move that prevents him from doing so.

So, the swipe or counter swipe works perfect in redirecting his hands away from my chest.

You need to have a rush plan for every opponent your going against so by the end of the week you should have a sheet that looks like this for each of your match ups.



74 Damieon George Jr.



Edge rush: Cross chop
Inside rush: Counter chop
Power rush: Stutter bull

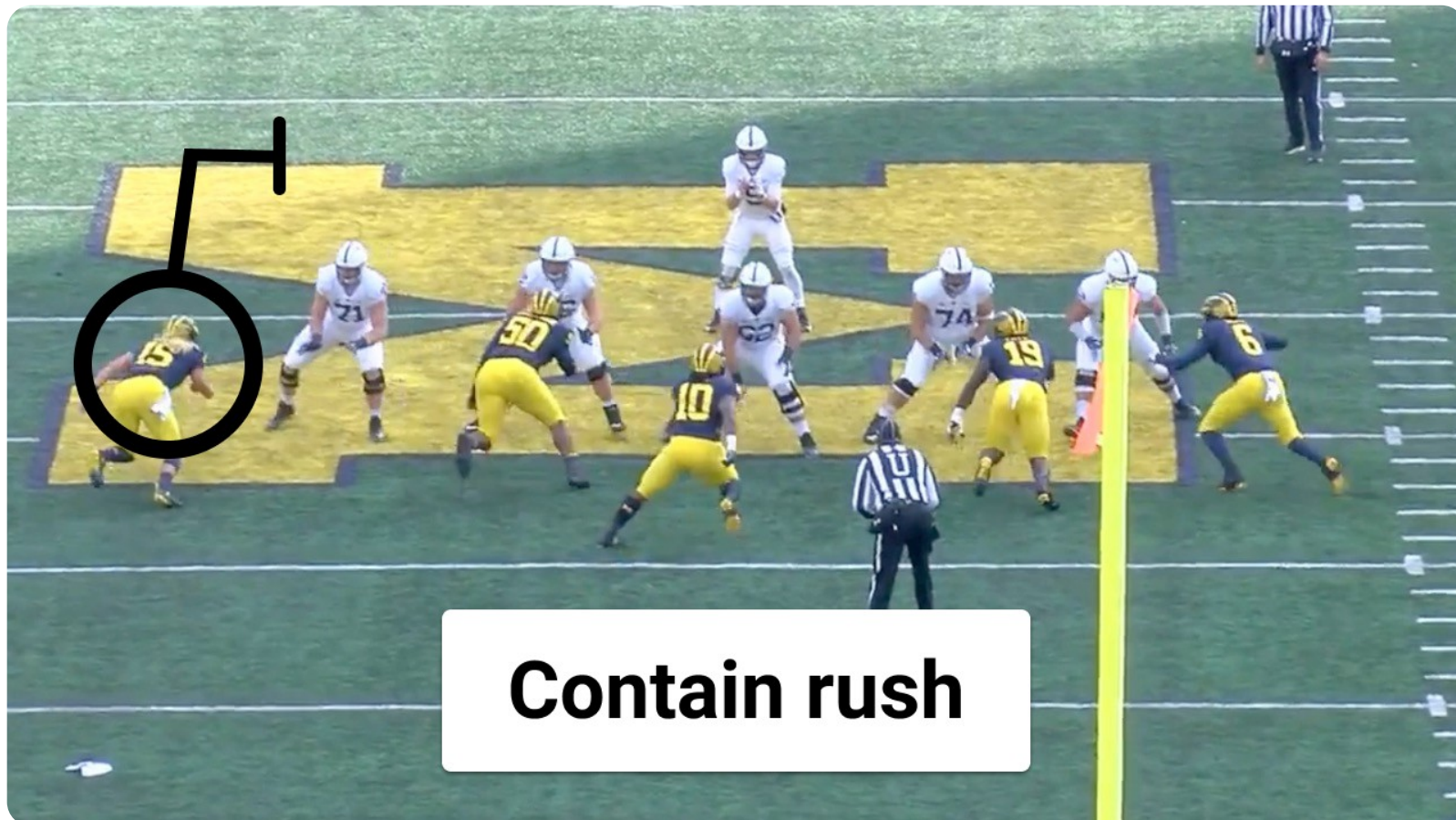
Call plan

If you play in defenses like I have you will be blitzing on 3rd and long quite often.

And even though your responsibilities will change depending on the call, you still need to have a rush plan in these situations too.

For example, if you're running a 5 man pressure like the Michigan D-Line and I'm #15, the left D-End, my responsibility is to not let the QB break contain on my side.

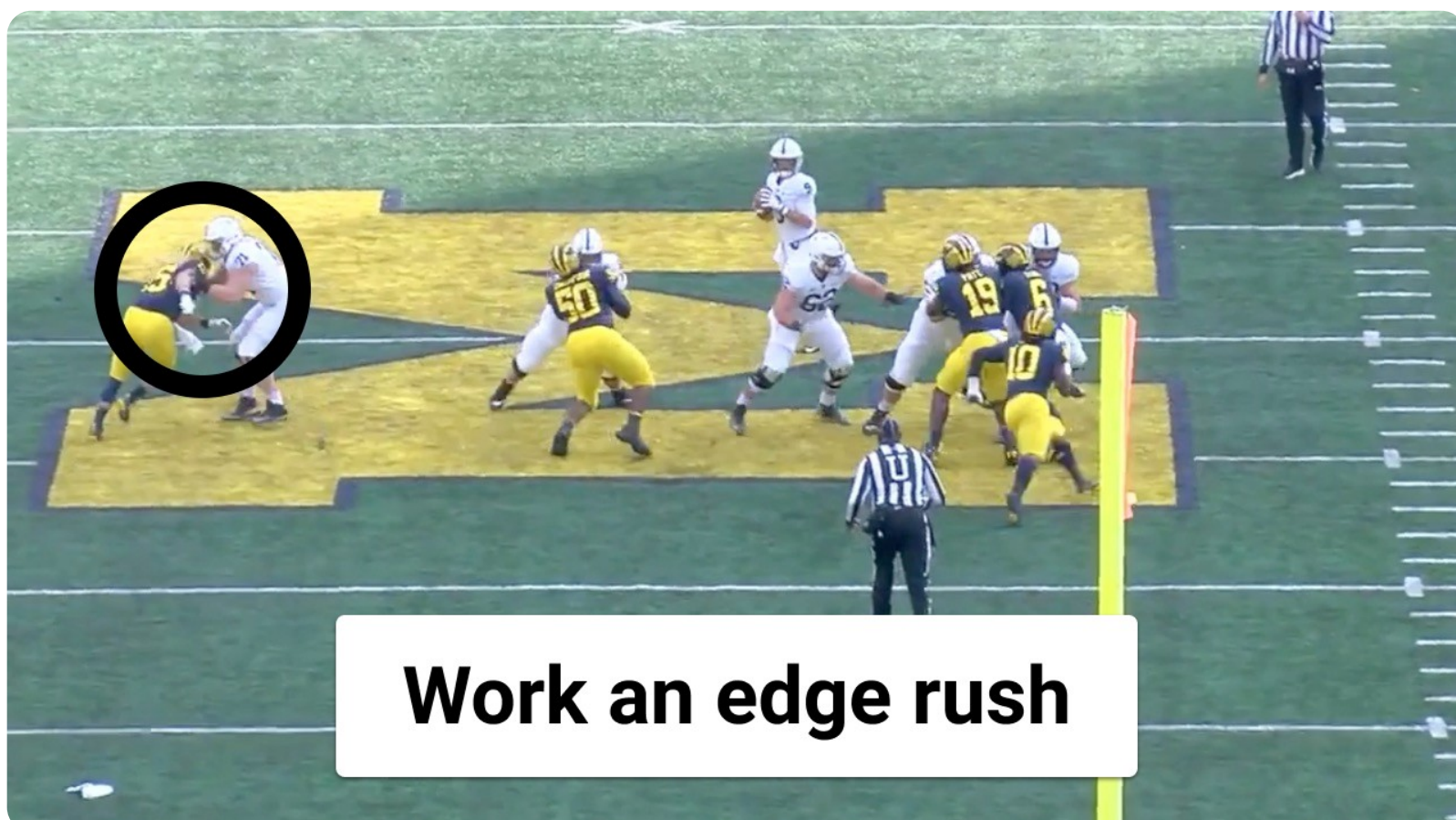
click [here](#) to see example



So I could just run up the field and say I did my job, but that's not what great rushers do.

Instead execute an edge rush and try to get there before the pressure does.

click [here](#) to see example



Now I'm not saying abandon your responsibilities to get sacks.

Rather match your blitz responsibility with the proper rush type. If you need to contain, use an edge rush. If you need to cross face, use an inside rush.

You never know who is going to get a sack on the blitz so you need to have your rush plan ready for every single call your defense brings into the game.

Coaching points

- ① Make a hot sheet of pre-snap indicators
- ② Create a rush plan for each of your opponents
- ③ Create a rush plan for every call

Execute your plan

Planning is useless unless you are able to execute when bullets are flying.

Everything is faster in the game so having a step by step process for planning you rush (pre-snap) and executing your plan (post-snap) is absolutely critical.

For example...

On a 3rd and 10 I'll sequentially answer these questions in my head pre-snap....

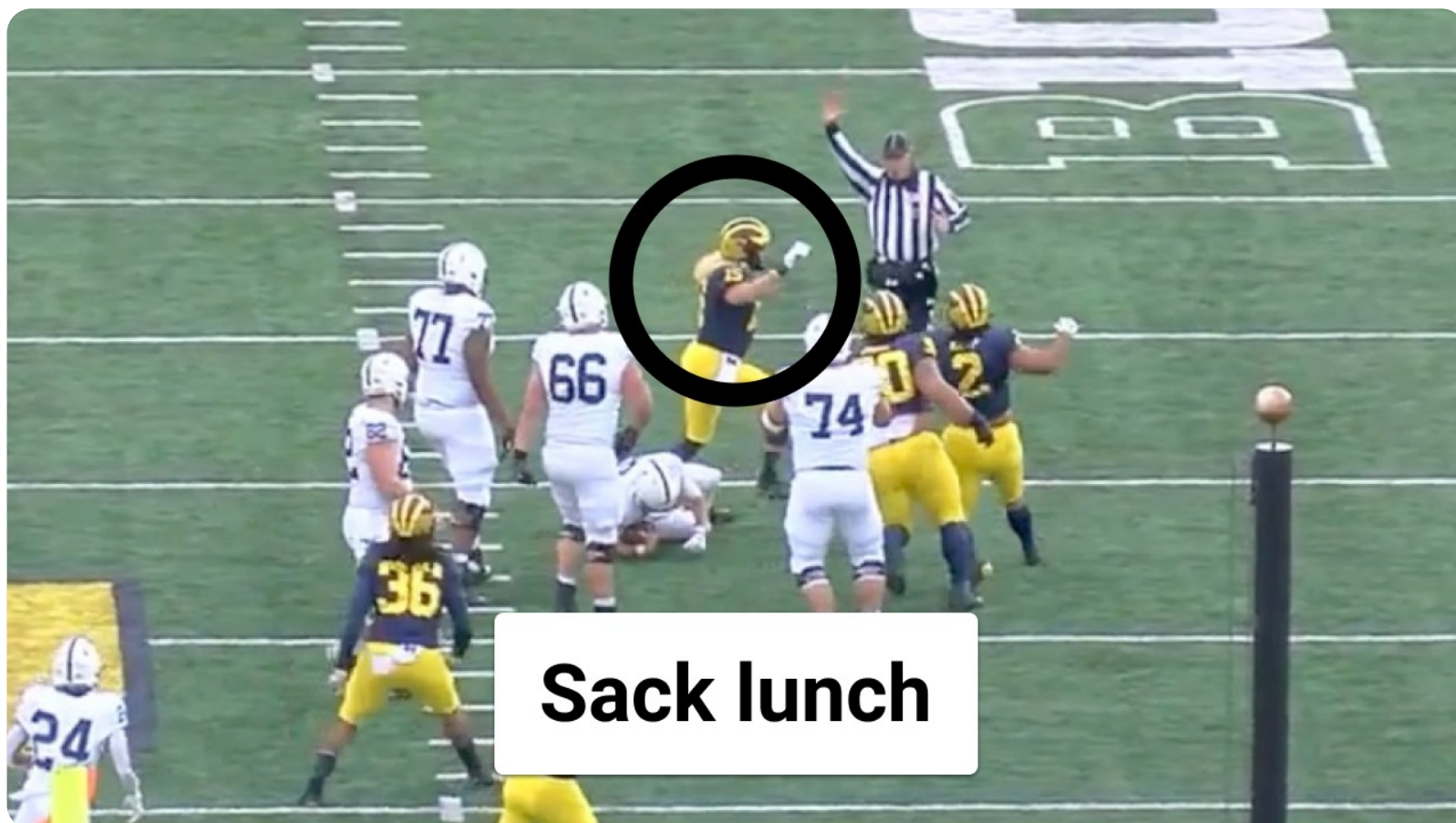
- 1. What's the game situation?*
- 2. What's the down and distance?*
- 3. What's the call?*
- 4. What's my alignment?*
- 5. What's my assignment?*
- 6. Run or pass stance?*
- 7. Am I to the man or zone side?*
- 8. Which move should I use?*
- 9. Is the O-line in their stance?*

These questions will help you to accurately identify the situation, run the right assignment and choose the right move to defeat your opponent.

Game situation example

Let's use an example from my alma mater. All-Big Ten Michigan grad **Chase Winovich** here gets a huge sack early in the game against Penn State.

click [here](#) to see example



Definitely a great play, but let's break down what his pre-snap thought process should look like. As I said before he should answer each of the following questions.

1. *What's the game situation?*
2. *What's the down and distance?*
3. *What's the call? (alignment + assignment)*
6. *Run or pass stance?*
7. *Am I to the man or zone side?*
8. *Which move should I use?*
9. *Is the O-line in their stance?*

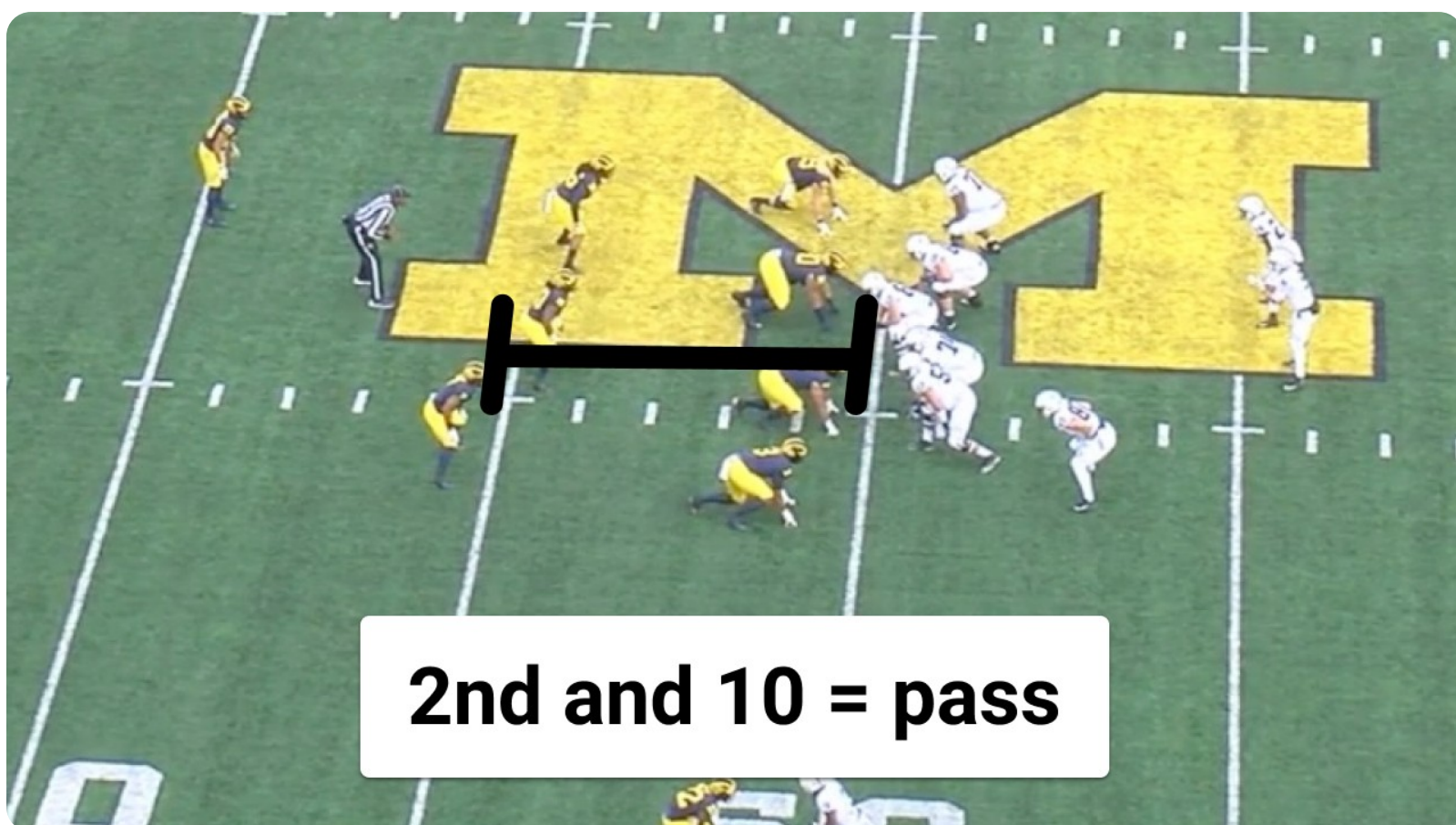
What's the game situation?

Score is 0-0 in the 1st quarter. The offense doesn't have any major tendencies that tells him if it's pass or run.



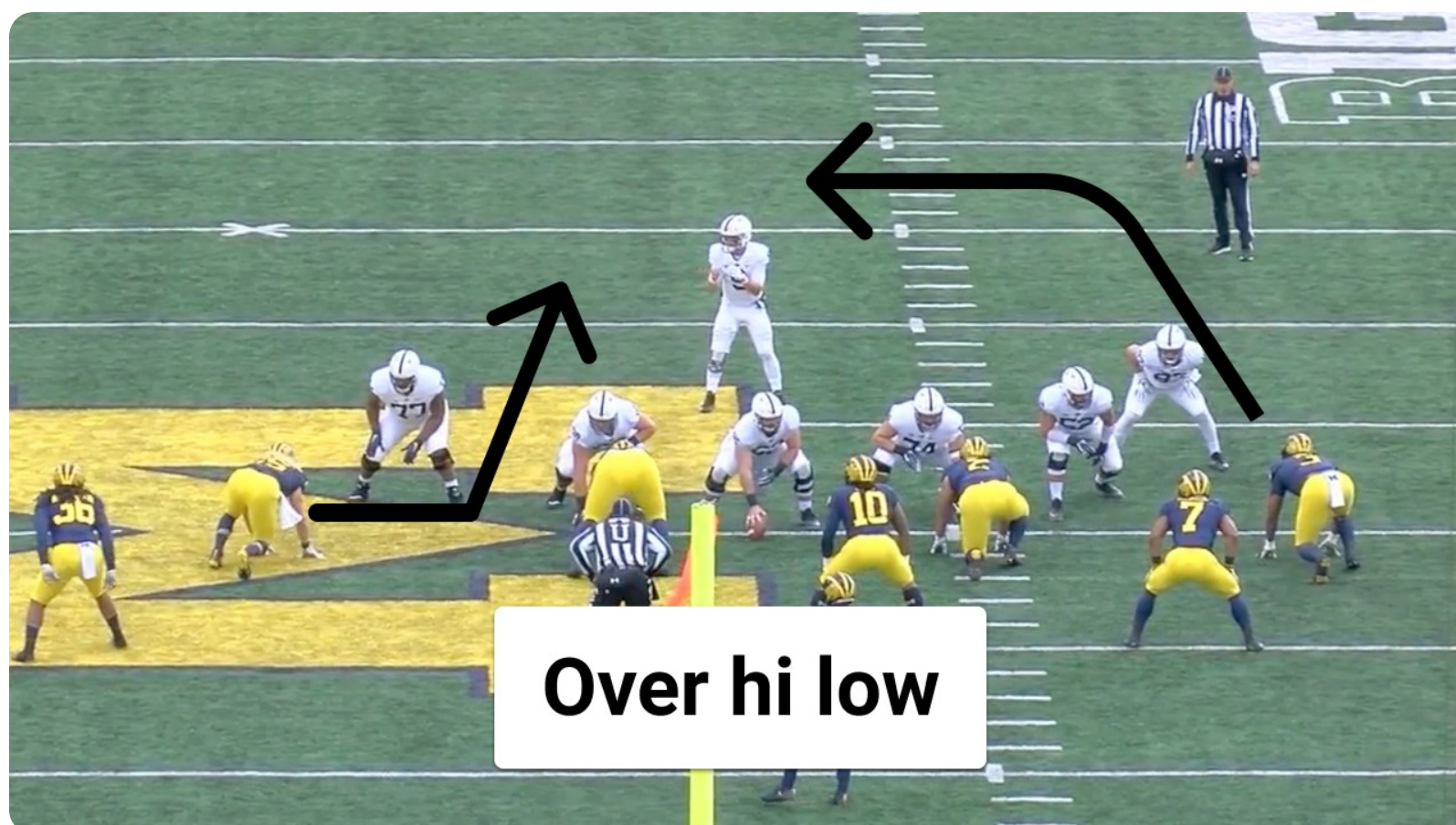
What's the down and distance?

2nd and 10. I know Penn State is a big passing team on 2nd and 10 so he should be thinking it's pass here.



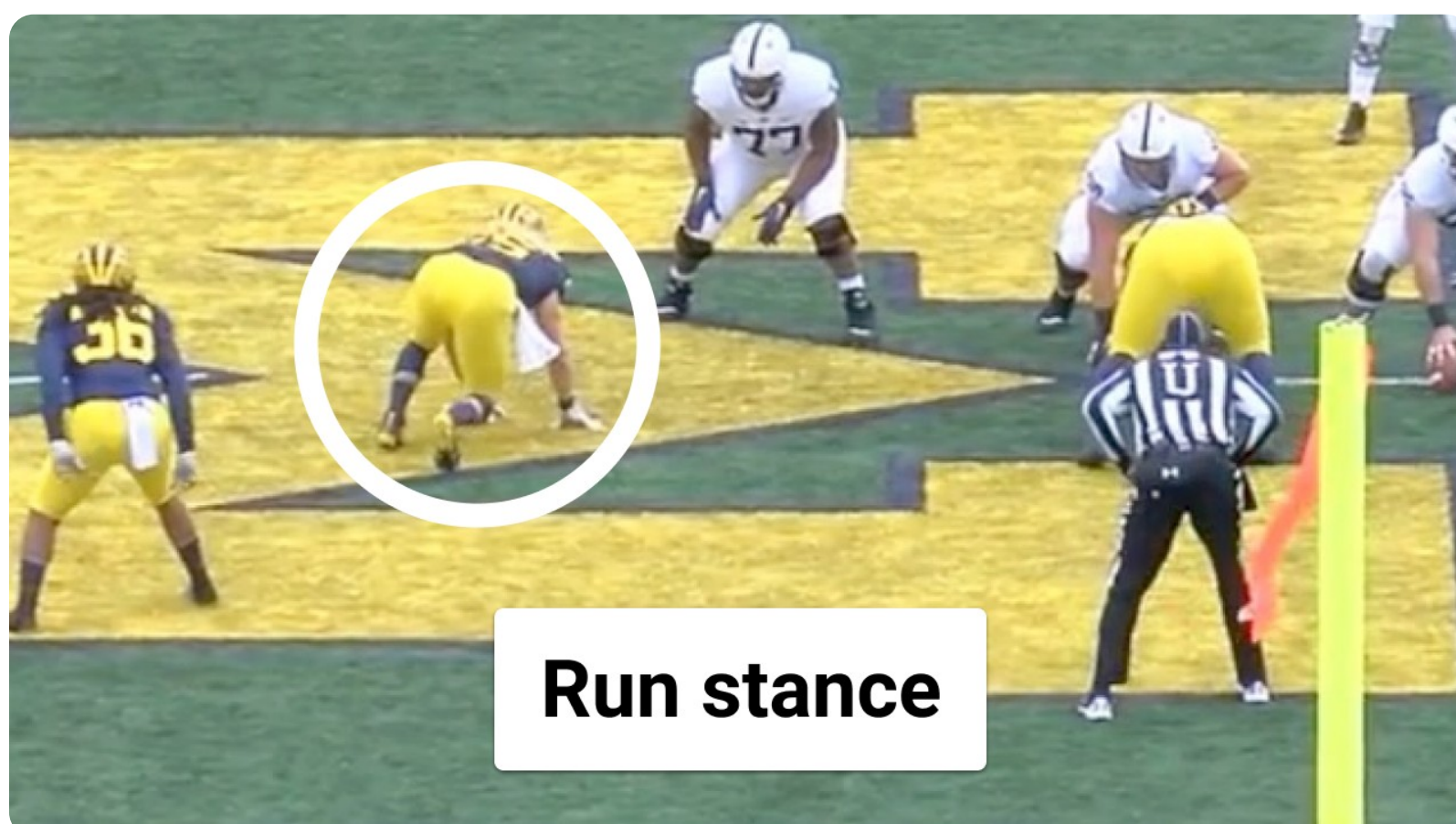
What's the call?

Over hi-low. That means he needs to line up in a loose 5 and slant to the B-gap.



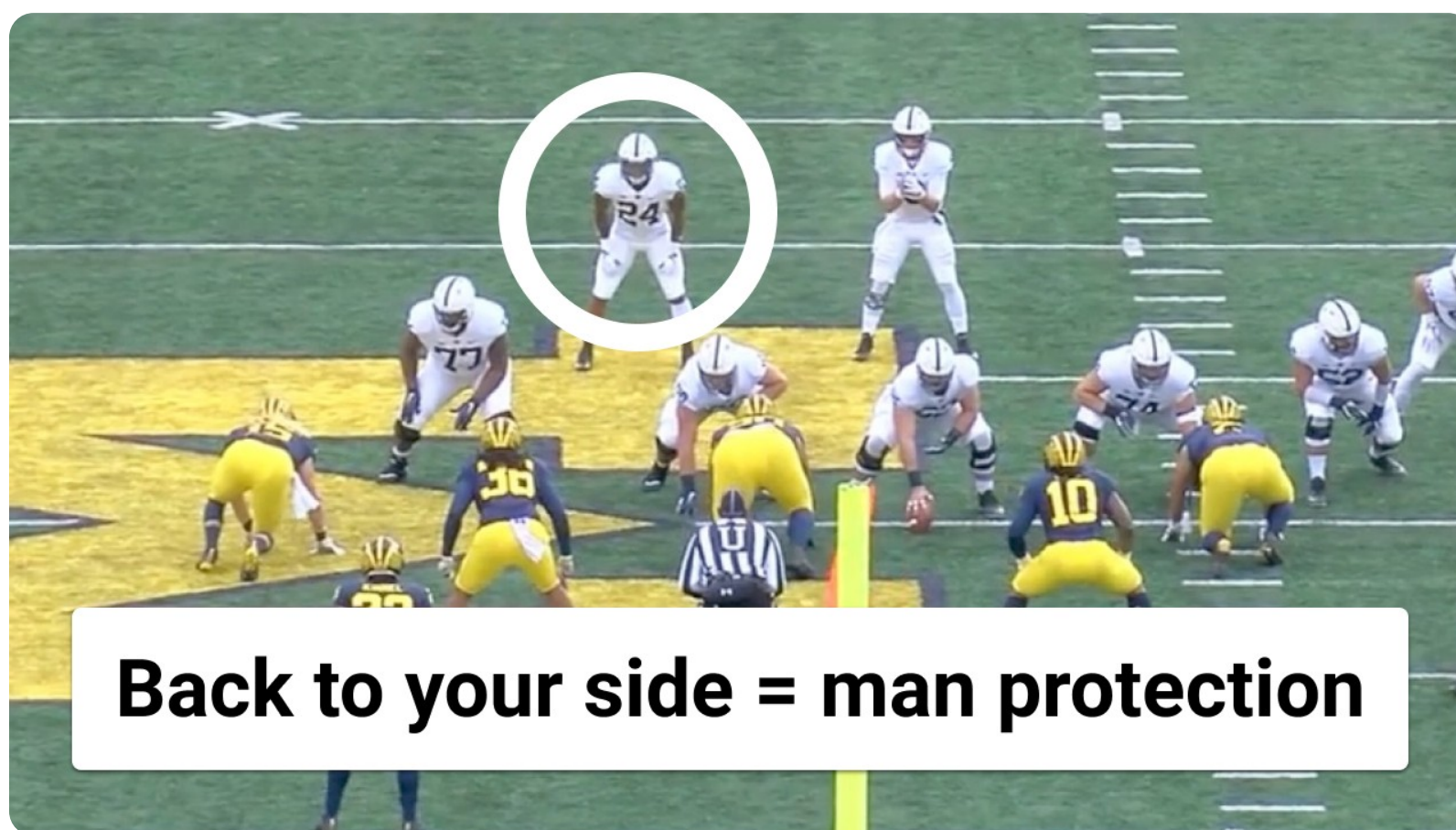
Run or pass stance?

Run stance. Even though he knows it's pass he should use his run stance because it's best for taking a lateral step.



Am I too the man or zone side?

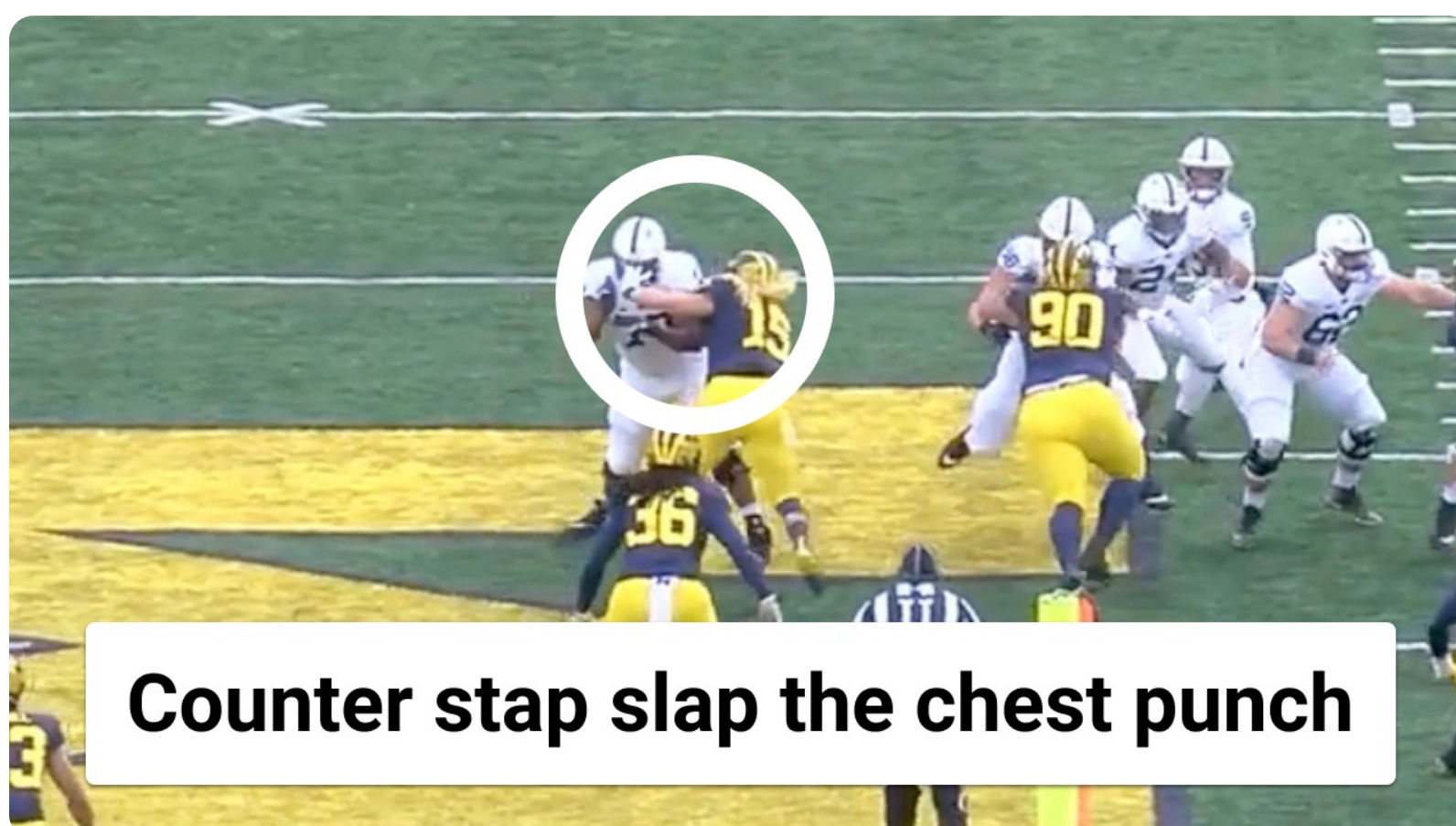
Man. The back is too hime so he will have a 1 on 1 with the tackle.



Which move should I use?

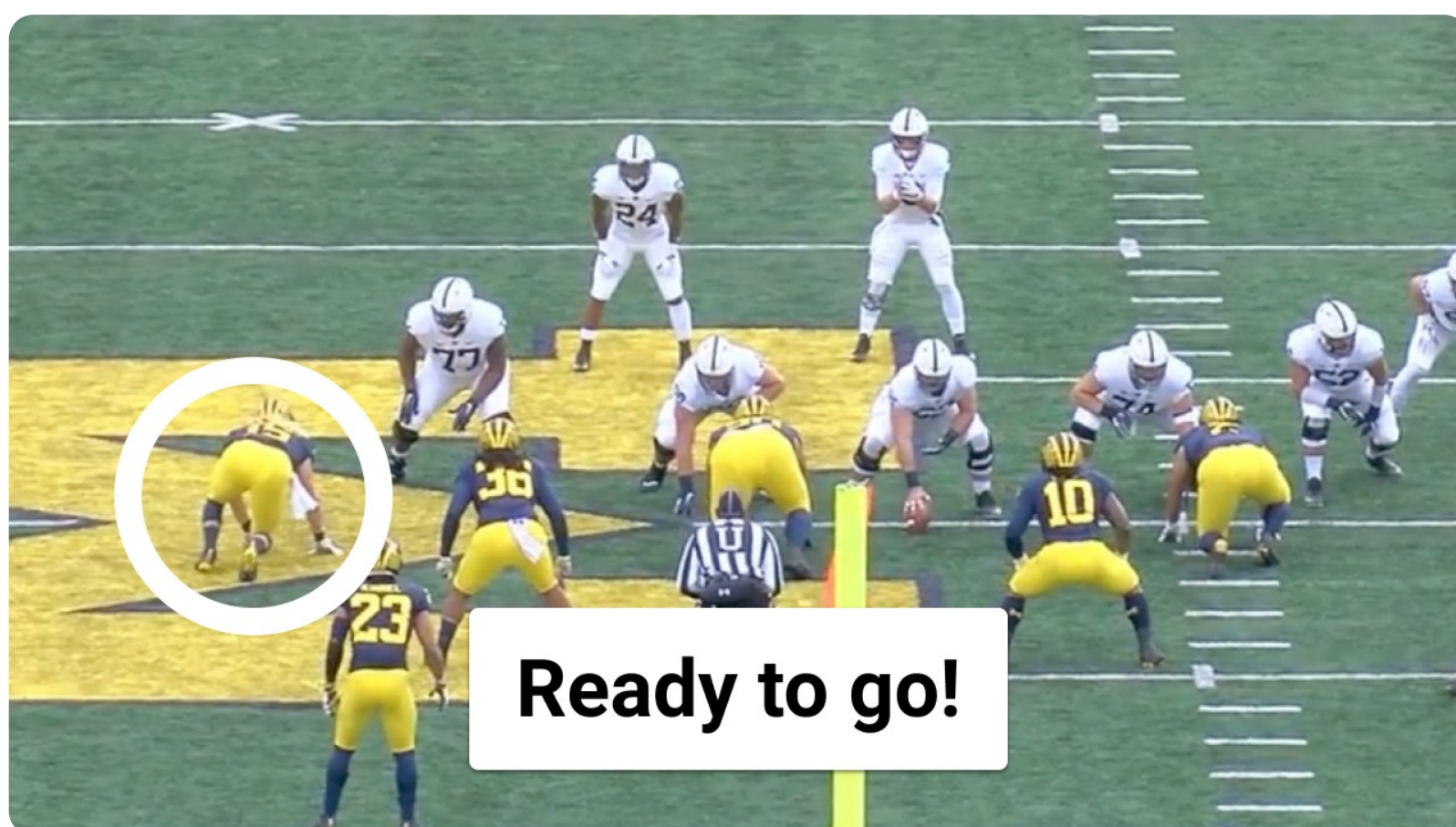
Counter stab chop. His opponent is a chest puncher and he's inside rushing so the counter stab chop will work perfect.

click [here](#) to see example



Is the O-line in their stance?

Yes. That means he needs to be in my stance ready to go!



Many people think that sacks come from pure athleticism, luck and spider man like pass rush instincts.

In chase's case though he used his **mind** and his **athleticism** together to make a game changing play.

Don't get caught in analysis paralysis

For younger rushers this may be a lot of information to process before the snap.

And you may be going against a tempo offense that gives you even less time to process information.

In either of these situations I would remove questions 1, 2 and 7.

These are advanced questions to answer and take some time to quickly process.

So, if you're not able to answer all questions right from the get go that's ok.

You have anywhere from 10 - 20 seconds before the ball is snapped and it's **better to be ready to go in your stance** than analyzing.

At D-Line analysis paralysis is one of the worst things to do. You don't want to be looking around when you got a 300 pound man ready to take your lights out.

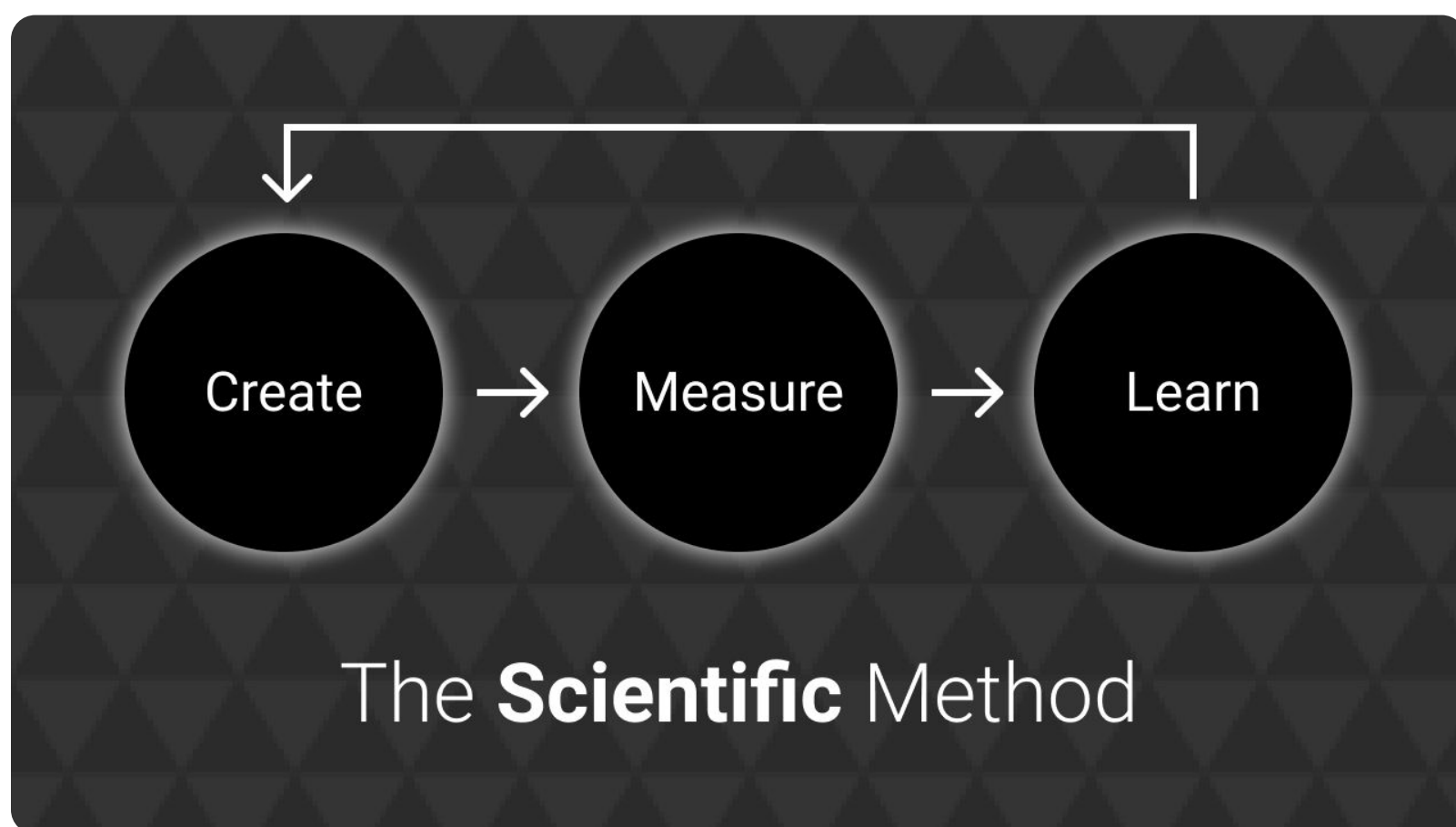
With this being said, **keep challenging yourself** to process more and more information before the snap.

To improve you will have to push yourself past your comfort zone.

Rush-measure-learn

Many of you may not know this, but pass rushing is very similar to science.

In the scientific method you create an experiment, measure the results, and then learn from the data.



This method has led to history changing discoveries like penicillin, gravity and X-rays.

And this same method can help you discover how to disrupt an entire offense.

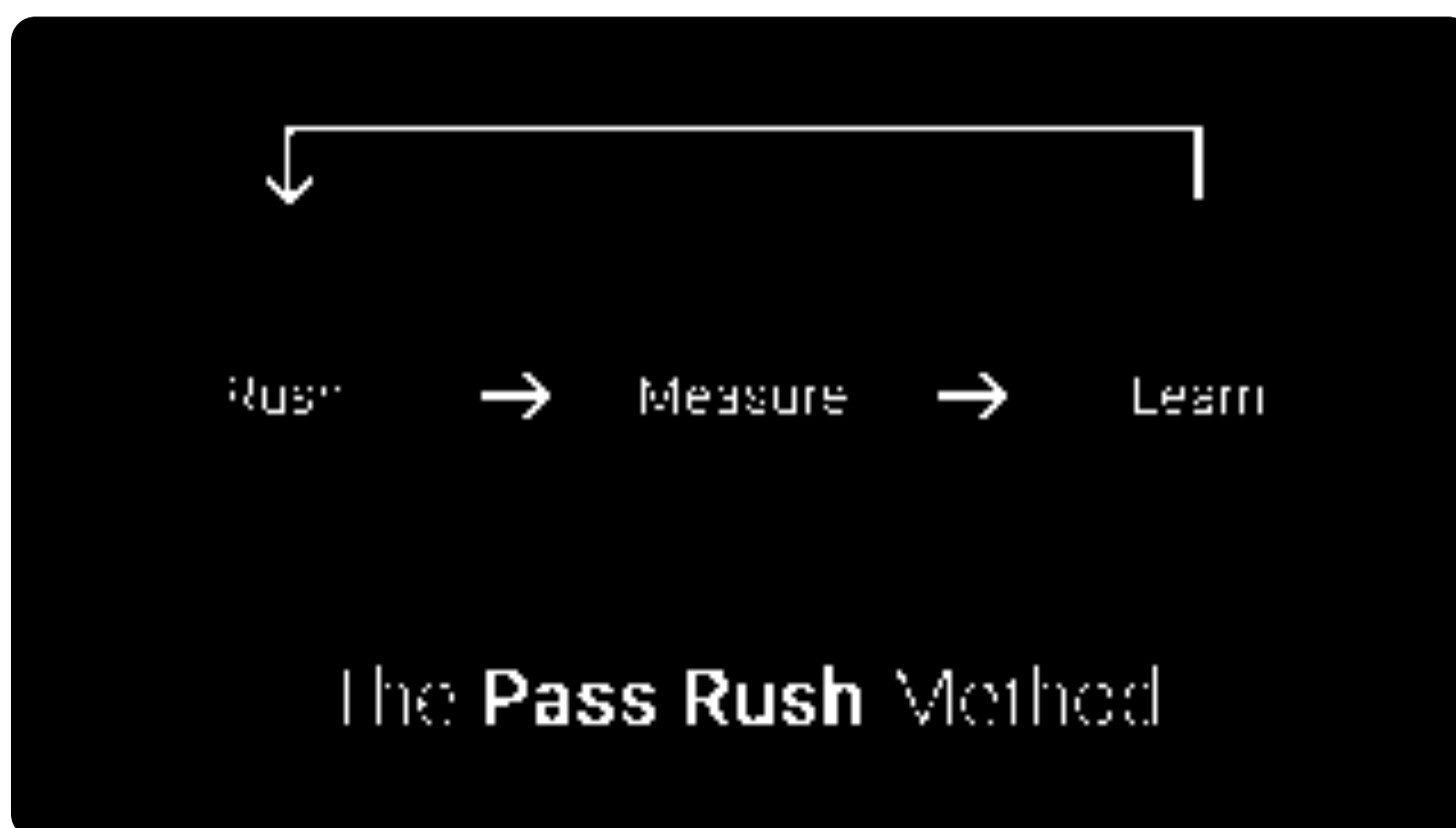
I'll explain...

When you're creating your rush plan you're building a hypothesis (an educated guess) about how to defeat your opponent.

Then, as you're executing your rush plan (experimenting) you will collect data on whether your rush has worked or not.

And ultimately you will need to "learn" from each rush and decide whether to adapt your plan or keep doing the same thing.

So as you're rushing, you'll go through multiple rush, measure, learn experiments just like a scientist.



A real life experiment

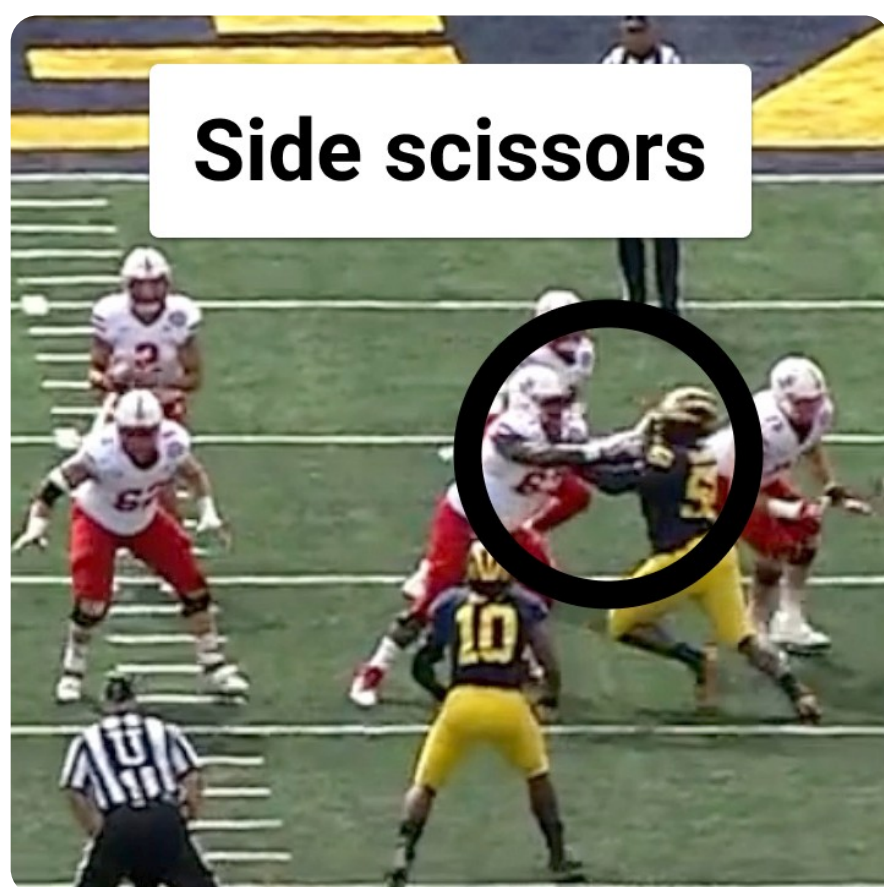
Let's take a look at #50 Michael Dwumfour.

He does a great job of experimenting with different rushes and adjusts his game plan based on feedback.

For his first rush he executes a side scissors (edge rush)...

...however, because the QB sets up at 5 yards he rushes too far up the field to affect him.

click [here](#) to see example



So his first rush experiment looked like this...

Rush: Side scissors

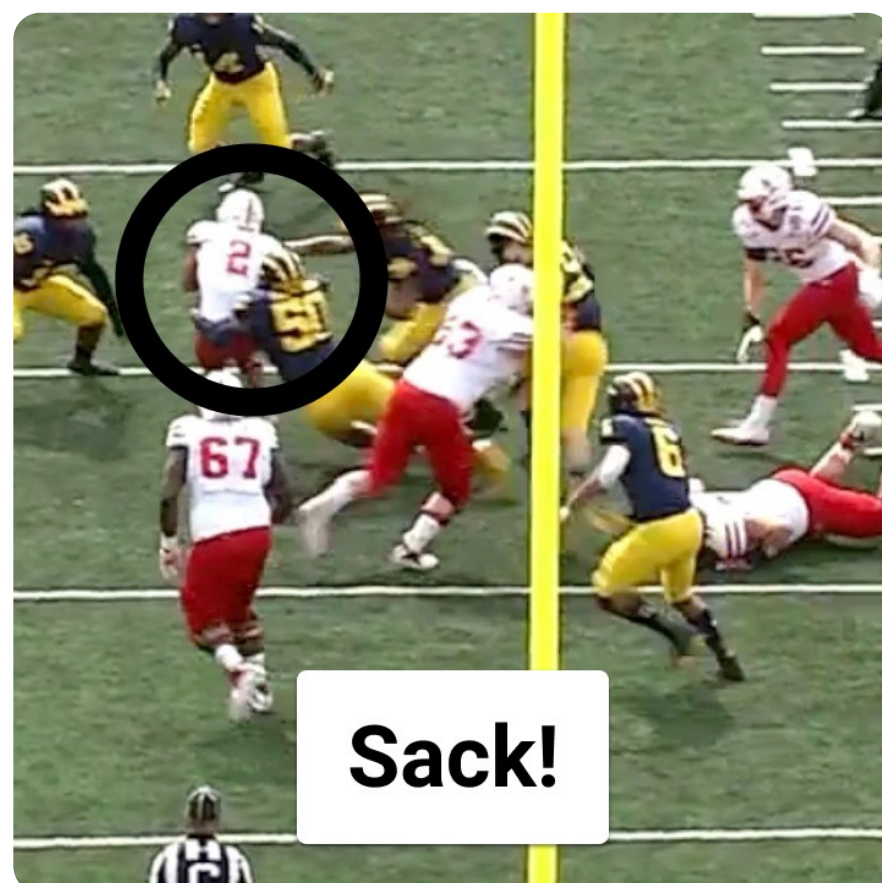
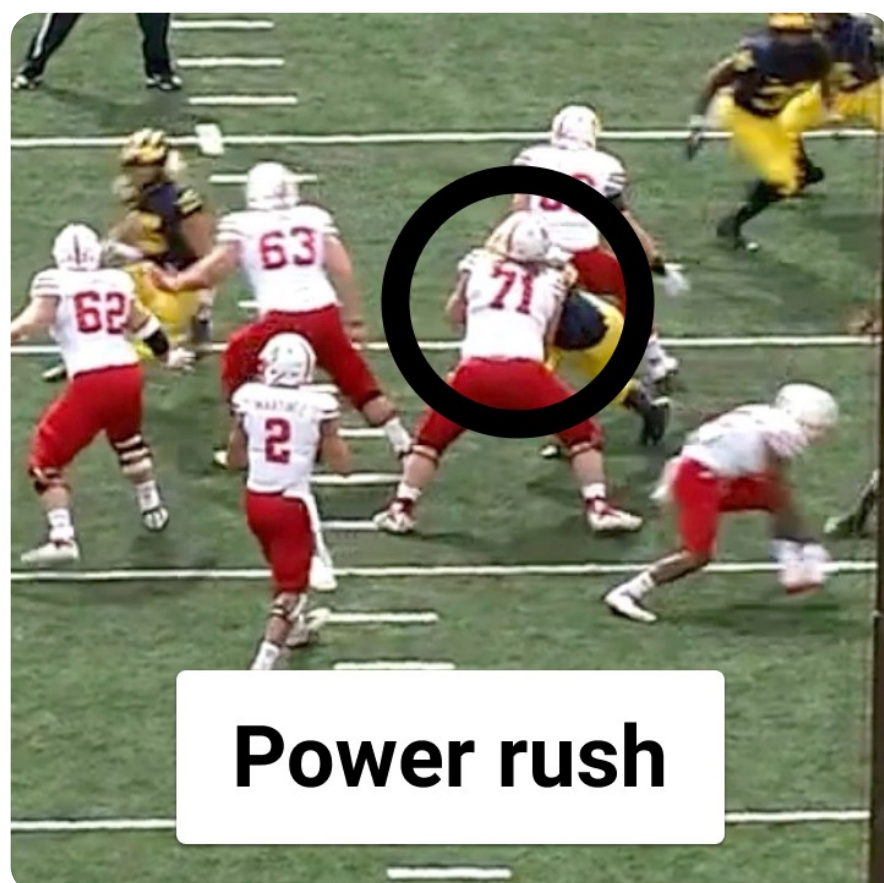
Measure: Too far up the field

Learn: Use power and inside rushes

In the next 3rd and long situation he could have very easily chosen to use another edge rush...

...but because he knew the QB set point was shallow he decided to test out a power rush.

click [here](#) to see example



This test went a little different. The power rush put him in a great position to stay in front of the QB and get the sack.

Let's review what Mike went through. In his first experiment he used a side scissors, but rushed too far upfield to get the sack.

Expirement #1

Rush: Side scissors

Measure: Too far up the field

Learn: Use power and inside rushes

So, knowing that the QB's set point would be shallow next 3rd and long he decided to experiment with a power rush instead.

Expirement #2

Rush: Power rush

Measure: Sack lunch!

Learn: Keep using power

And this resulted in getting a big time sack!

A final word

It can be frustrating to loose 1 on 1s, but think about it this way.

You actually end up learning more from your failures than your successes.

So put on your pass rush lab coat and get to experimenting...

...and remember with the right scientific mind set every failure gets you closer to success.

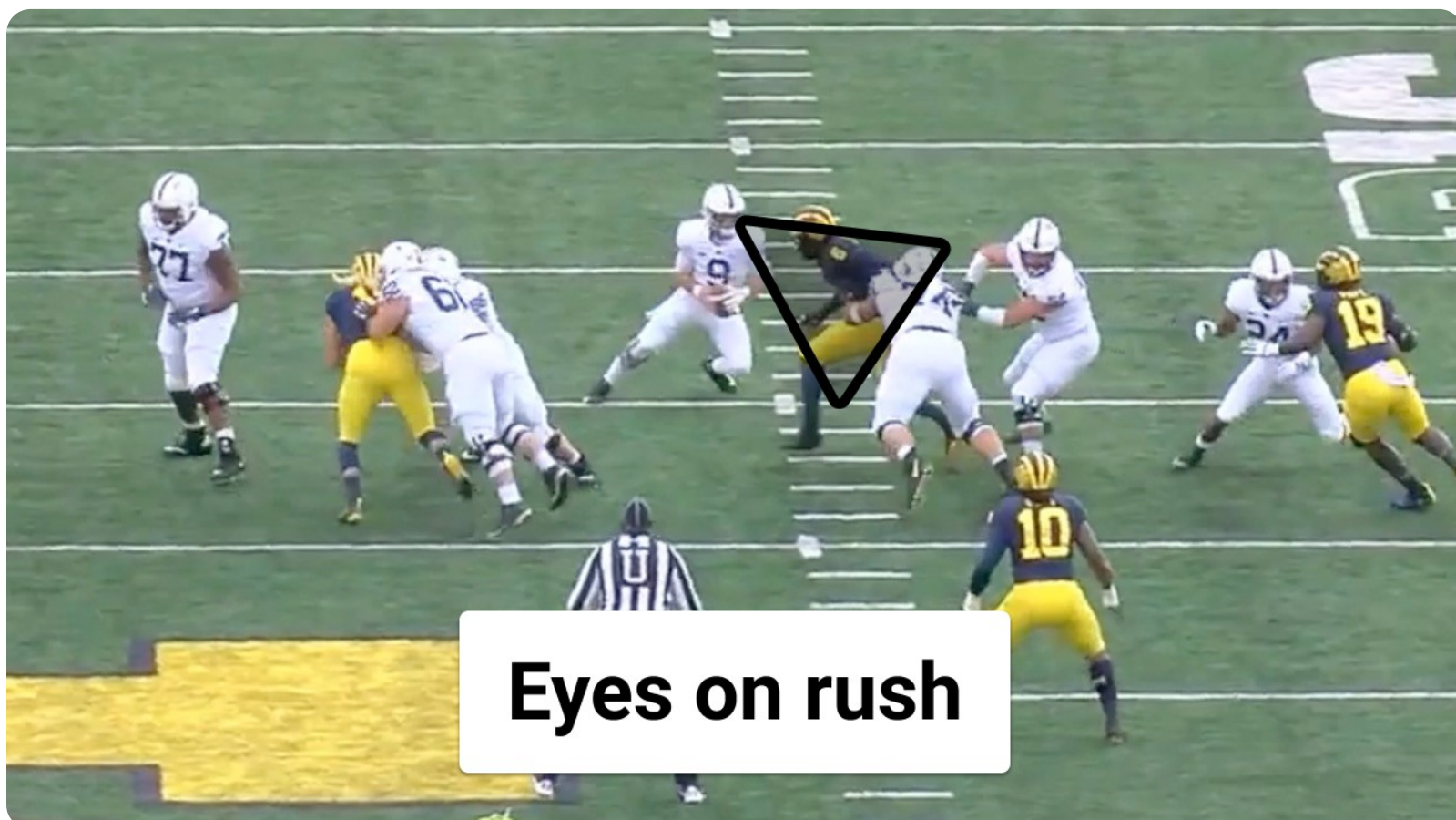
Step 7: Rush as a unit

Affect the quarterback

Any quarterback with enough time will be able to pick apart your defense.

But when a quarterback feels pressure their eyes go from their receivers to the rush.

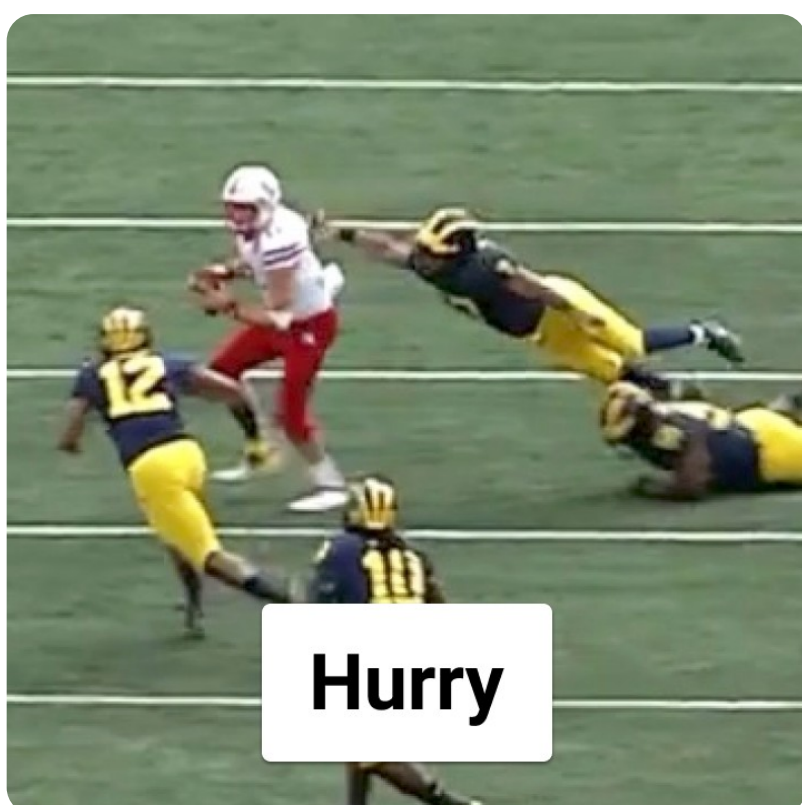
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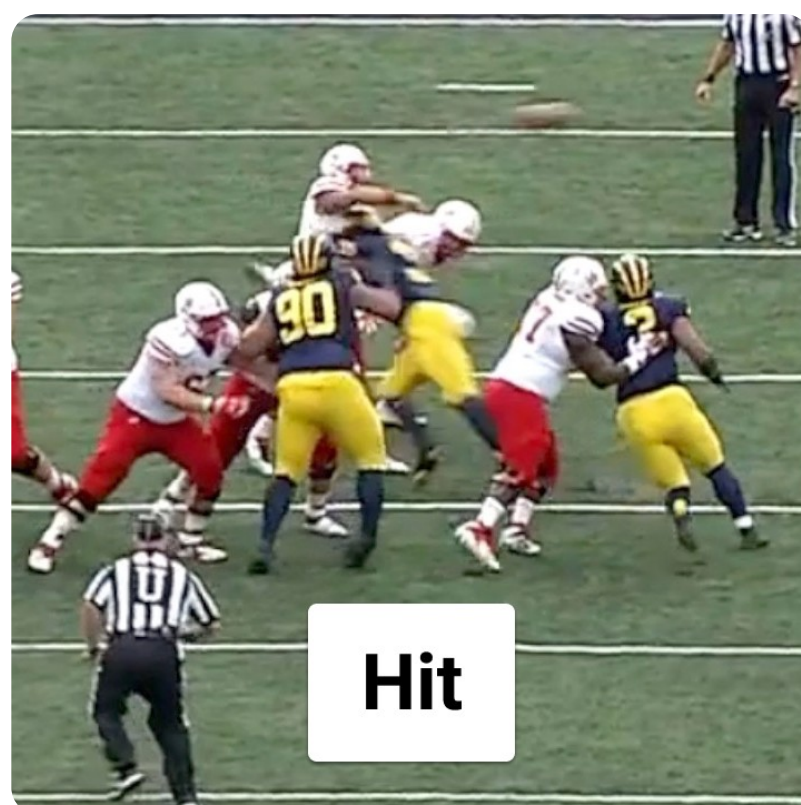
And it's really hard for any quarterback to complete passes when they're not looking at their receivers.

The 4 types of pressure

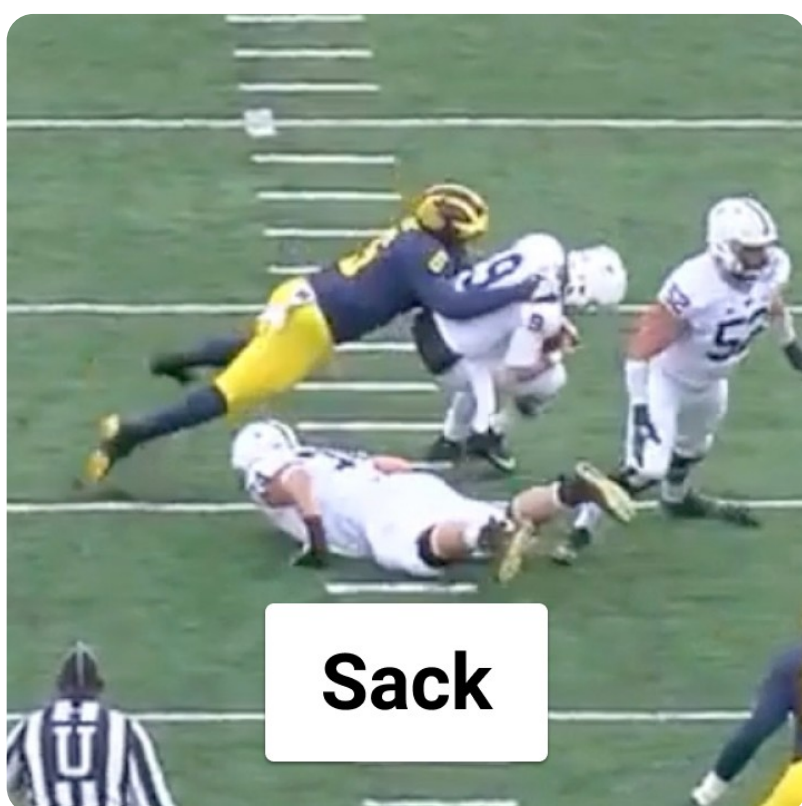
The number one job of any pass rush attack is to **hurry, hit, sack** and **knock down** the quarterback.



click [here](#) to see example



click [here](#) to see example



click [here](#) to see example



click [here](#) to see example

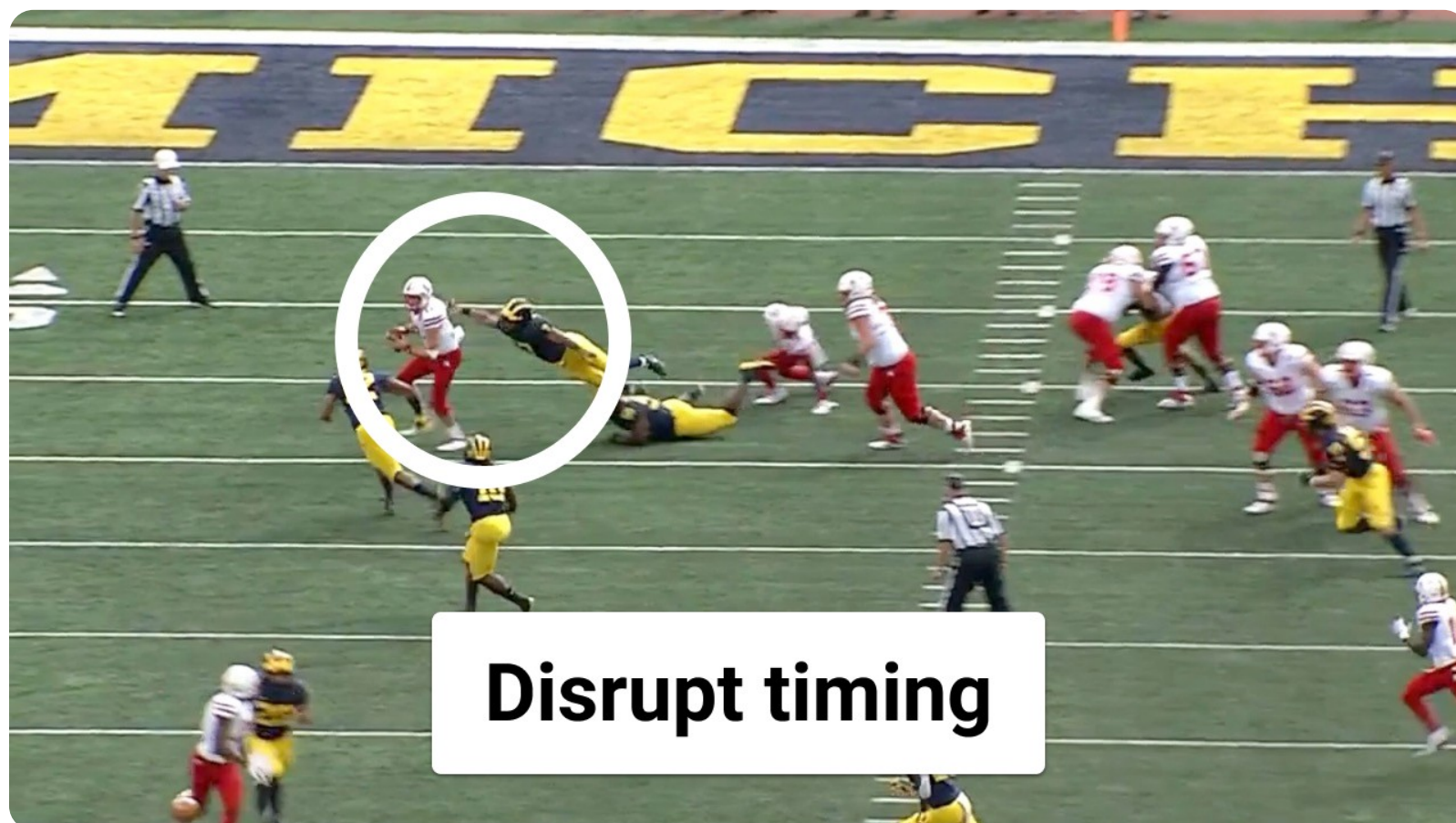
Hurry

Every route concept has a different timing.

For some routes the QB will get the ball out immediately, but for others the QB will need time to let the route develop.

If you can get close enough to the QB to get him to move off of his setpoint it will disrupt the timing of the route and force the QB to throw too early or late

click [here](#) to see example



Hit

Humans will avoid pain at all costs.

And it's no different for a quarterbacks.

If you continuously hit the QB, he's going to try to avoid that pain at all costs.

And if he's doing that he won't be completing many passes.

click [here](#) to see example



Sack

The HOF defensive end Deacon Jones said this about sacks,

"I developed a term that is used in the game right now called sacking a quarterback. Sacking a quarterback is just like you devastate a city or you cream a multitude of people. I mean it's just like you put all the offensive players in one back and I take a baseball bat and beat on the bag."

Sacks are the crème de la crème. You hurry, hit and knock the offense back all in one play.

And if you can strip the ball when doing it even better. It's all about putting you offense in a position to score and sacking the QB is the way to do that.

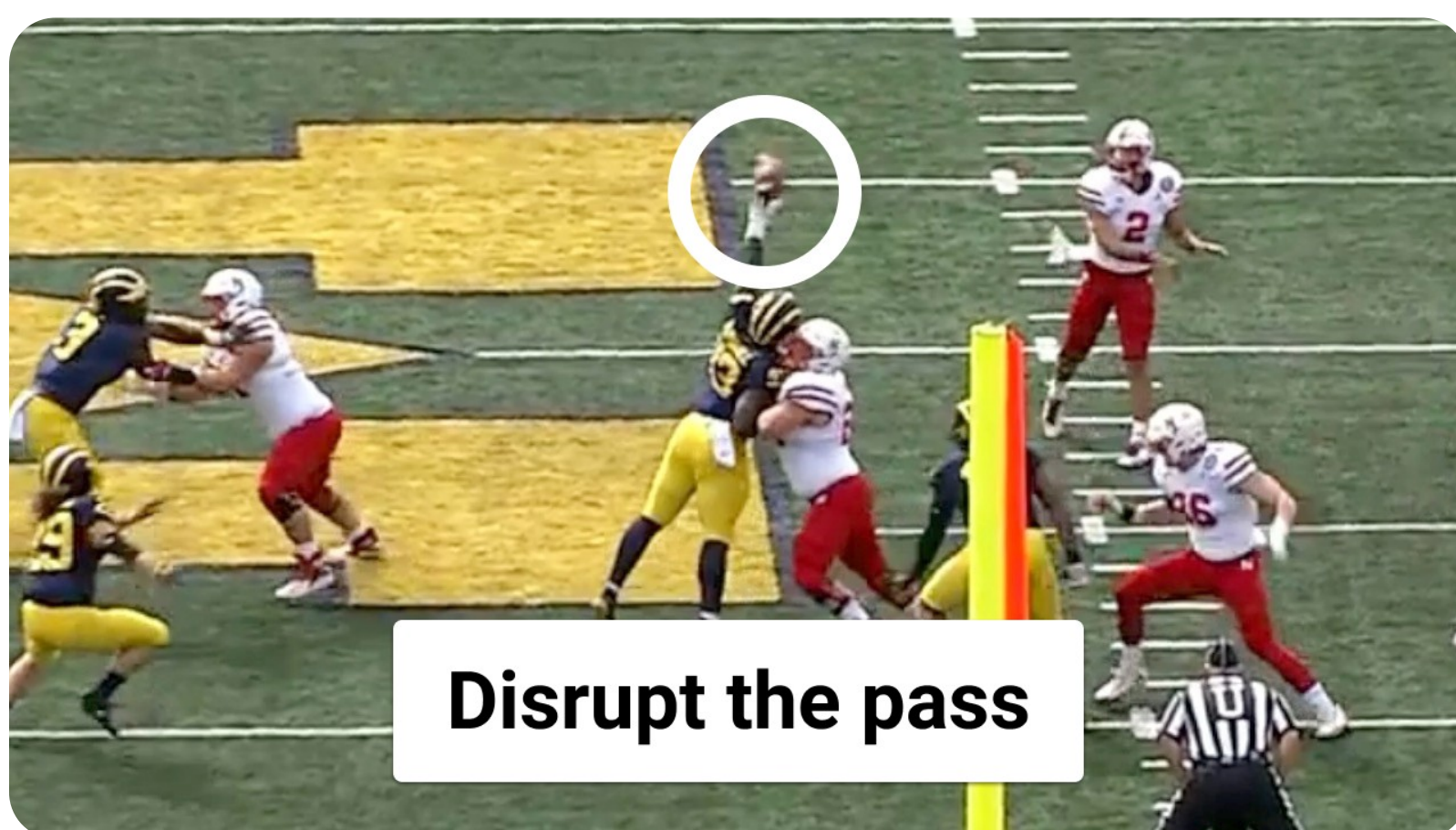
click [here](#) to see example



Knock Down

You may not always be able to beat your man, but that's OK. You can still affect the quarterback by disrupting his pass.

click [here](#) to see example



Nothing is more frustrating for a quarterback than to have a D-lineman knocked down or tip one of his passes.

A final word

Whether you're blitzing or rushing three, you must **get to the QB**. A battered and bruised QB stifles any offensive attack and gives your team a great chance to win.

3-man rush

Whenever you are rushing 3 you are outnumbered. Think about it. They have 5 offensive linemen and a RB to block 3 people. That means you have 2 blockers on every 1 rusher.

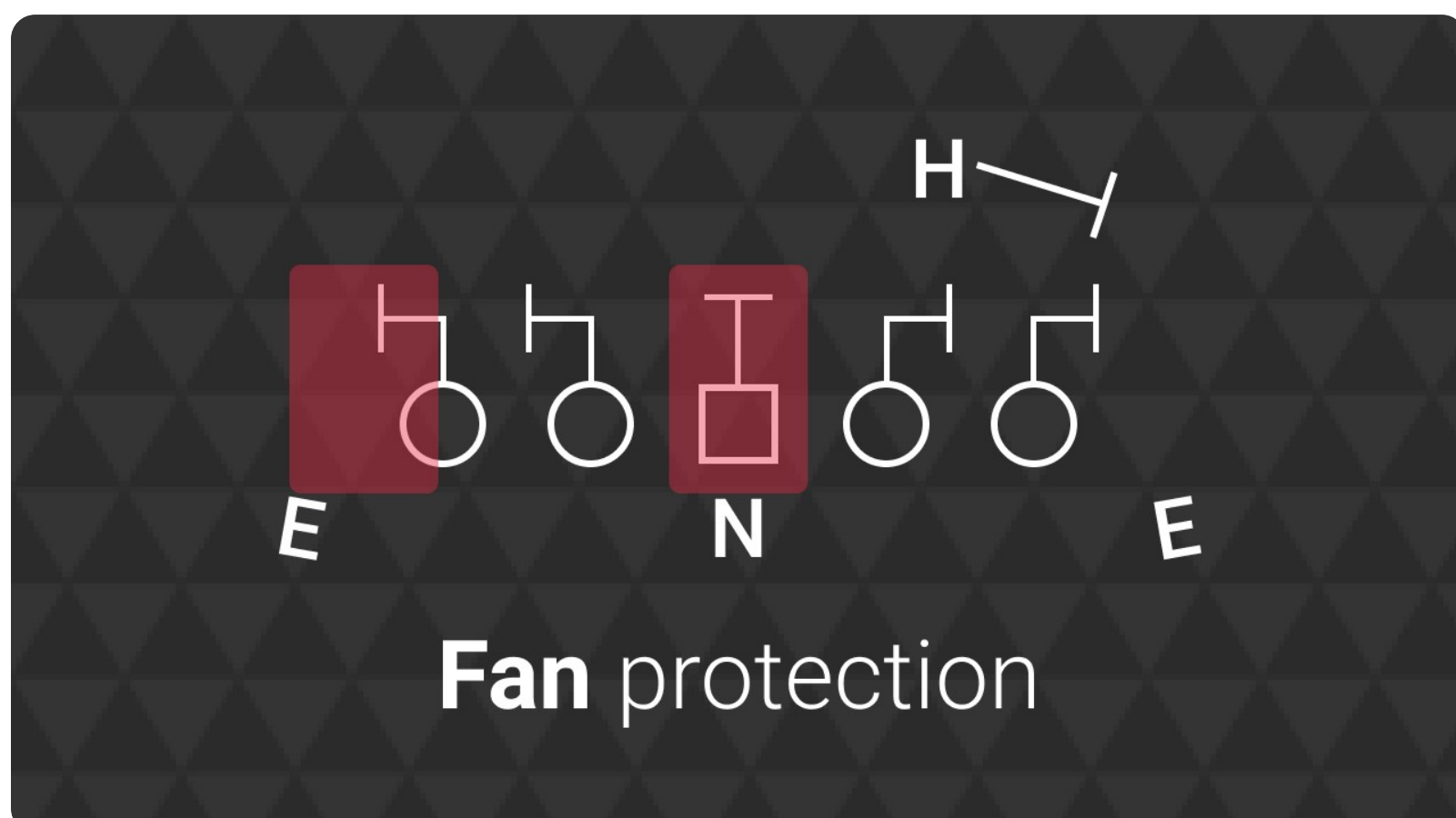
Not a great situation for the D-Line.

However, even when rushing 3 there are still ways to exploit your opponents protections so that you can get pressure on the QB.

The typical 3 protections you'll see against a 3 man rush are **fan**, **slide** and **kick**. Each of these protections have their vulnerabilities and can be exploited with the right game plan.

Exploiting fan protection

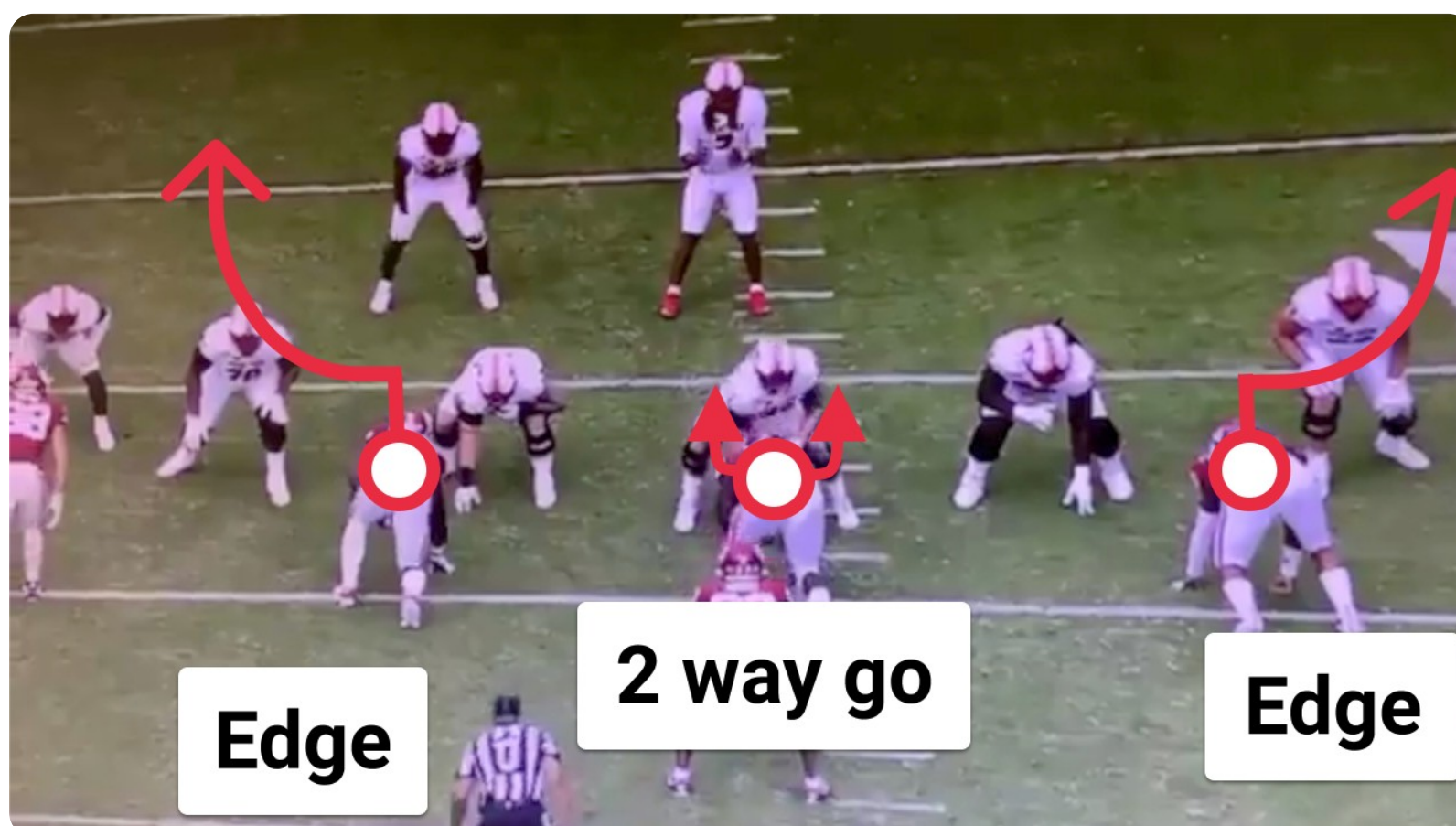
In fan protection the offense will double or triple team the ends and leave the nose 1-on-1 with the center.



Because the guards are defending the tackle's inside, the ends need to stay outside and rush the edges.

Furthermore, the nose who's 1-on-1 with the center needs to win quickly and get in front of the QB so he can't escape.

click [here](#) to see example



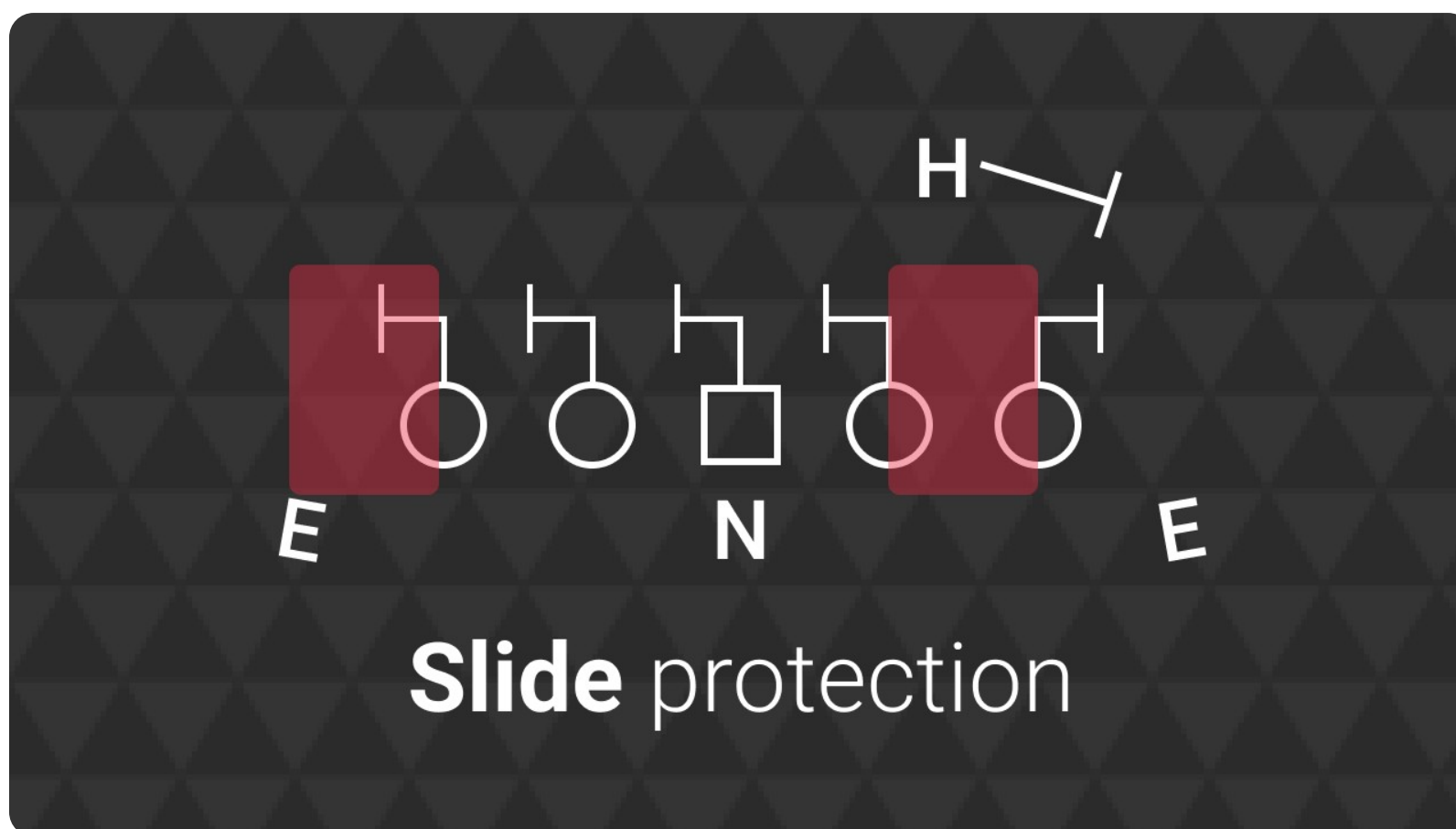
The result of any football game is ultimately determined by who wins their 1-on-1 match ups.

So if you have a 1-on-1 in a 3-man rush you must win!

Exploiting slide protection

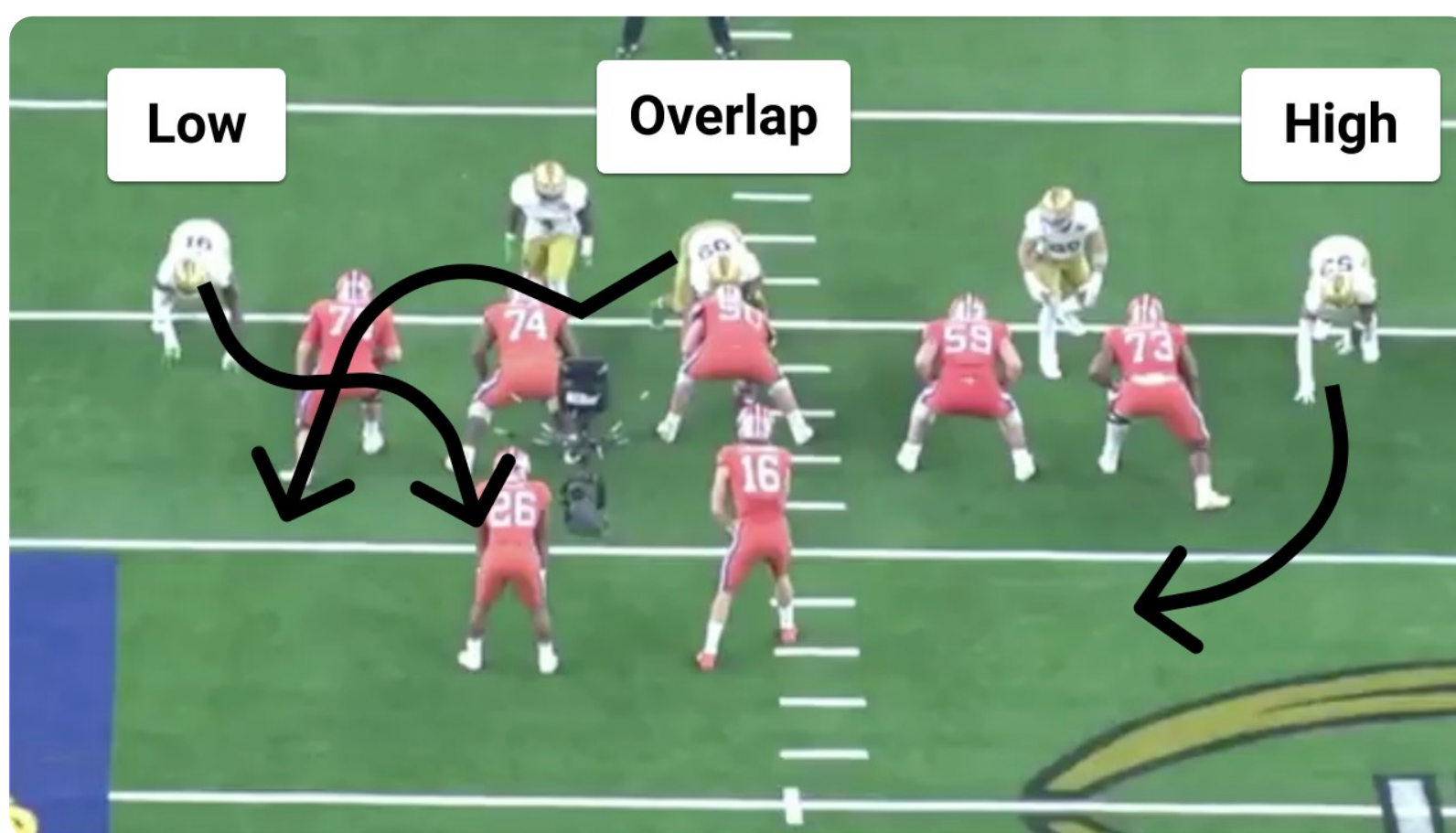
Slide protection has a more even distribution of blockers to D-linemen than fan.

The offense typically will double the nose and both ends.



To avoid these doubles coordinating a unified rush attack is the key to defeating this protection.

The best attack I've seen against this protection is the **crazy stunt**.



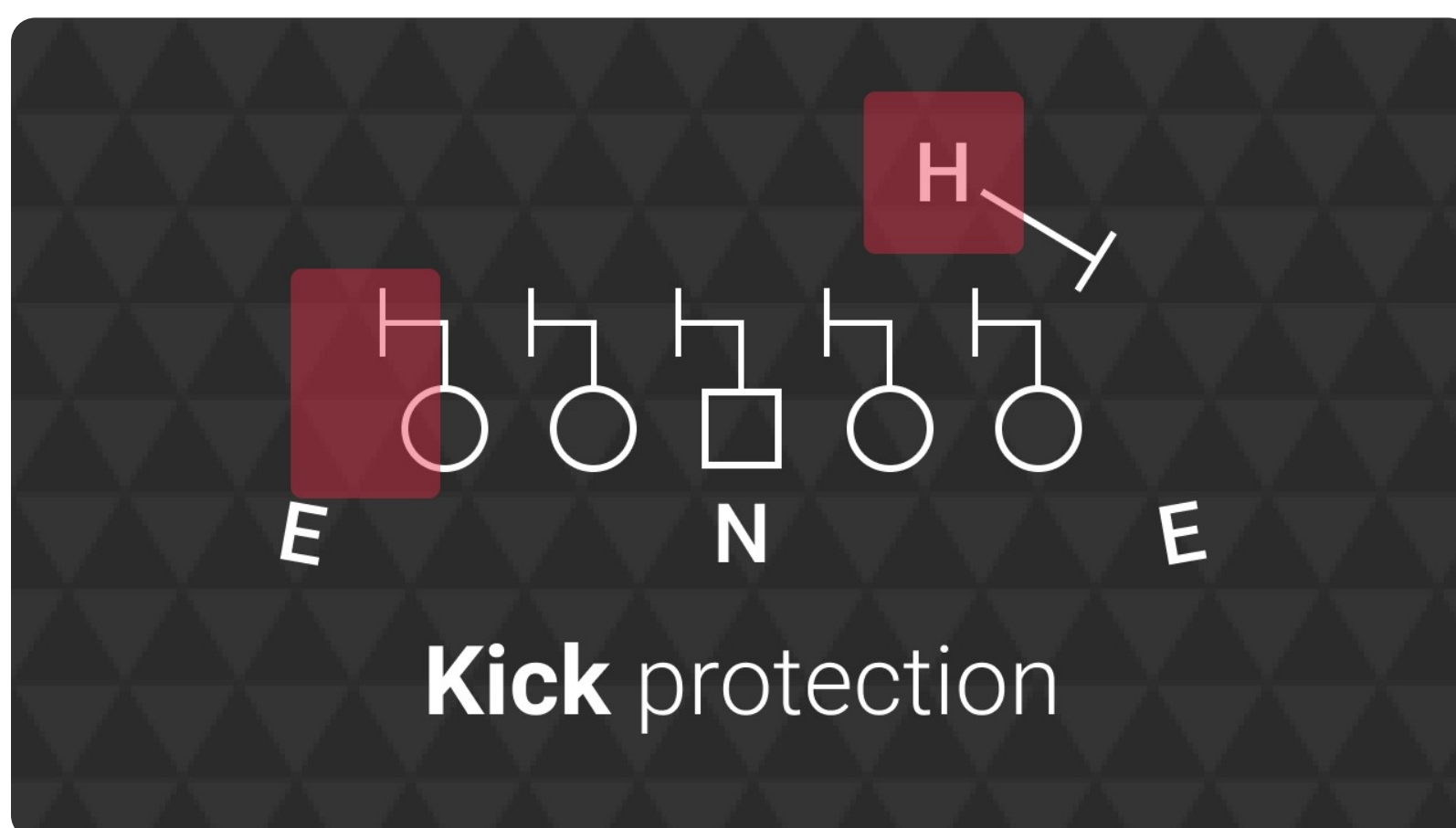
Here are the assignments for this stunt.

The crazy stunt is an amazing tool against slide because it neutralizes the power of the double.

By rushing where the lanes are open you avoid the double and position yourself to only take 1 man on at a time.

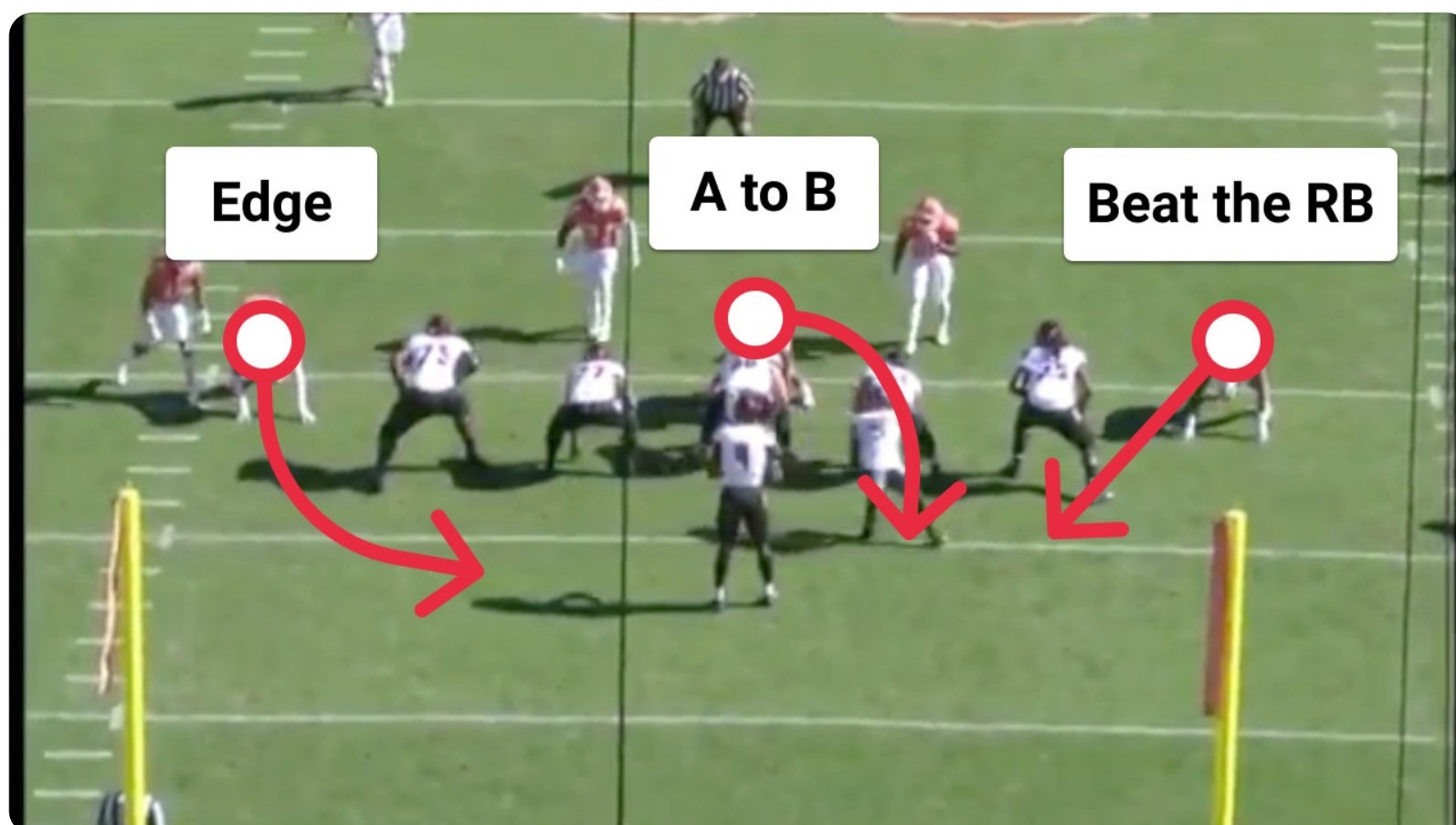
Exploiting kick protection

Kick protection is the easiest to take advantage of. Whenever you tell a RB to block a DE you got a major mismatch.



So, to defeat this protection the DE has to win their 1-on-1 match up with the RB. Any DE should have a massive strength advantage so winning shouldn't be too difficult.

click [here](#) to see example



The Nose needs to balance the rush by rushing to the side of the back. If he feels the end come under the back he can wrap outside for contain.

The DE away from the back is restricted to an outside rush because the guard is protecting the tackles inside.

I personally wouldn't recommend rushing inside when you got a guard ready to knock your block off.

To reiterate getting pressure with a 3 man rush is all about seizing open lanes (edge) and winning 1-on-1 match ups (DE vs. RB).

A final word

Rushing with 3 can be tough and often you will have to maneuver and coordinate to avoid doubles, but if you can get pressure with 3 it's absolutely devastating for the offense.

Just think. You bring in 6 guys to block 3 and you can't even do that.

Devastating...

4-man rush

When I was at the Panthers, my coach Erik Washington taught us one of the best systems I've personally seen for rushing 4.

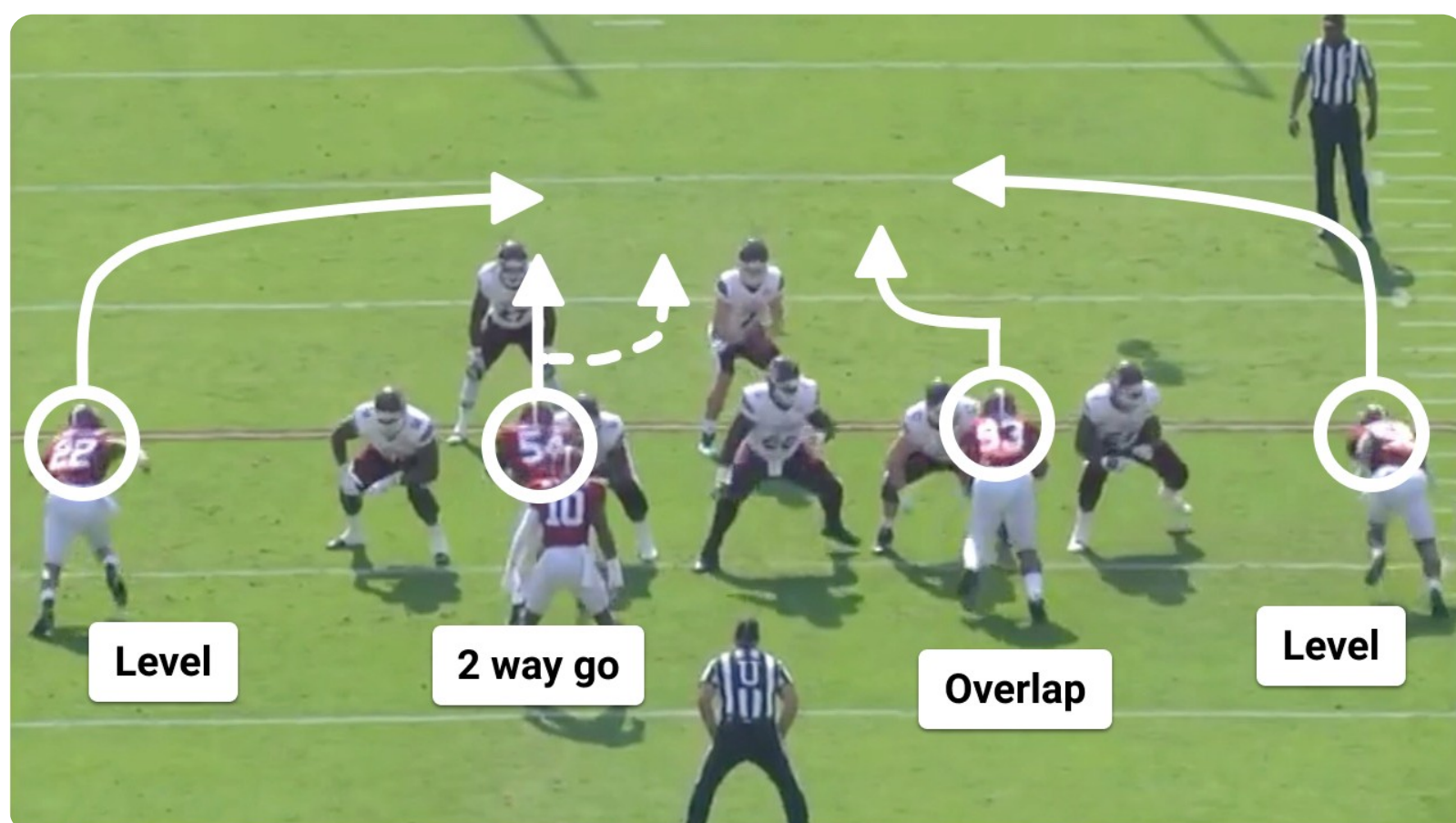
It's called **the green system**.

In obvious passing situations he would single in our "green" call and we all knew to pin our ears back and get after the QB.

The whole idea with this system is to pressure to the QB without giving him anywhere to scramble.

That means the entire D-line needed to rush as a unit and we did this by assigning **level**, **overlap** and **2 way go** rusher responsibilities.

click [here](#) to see example

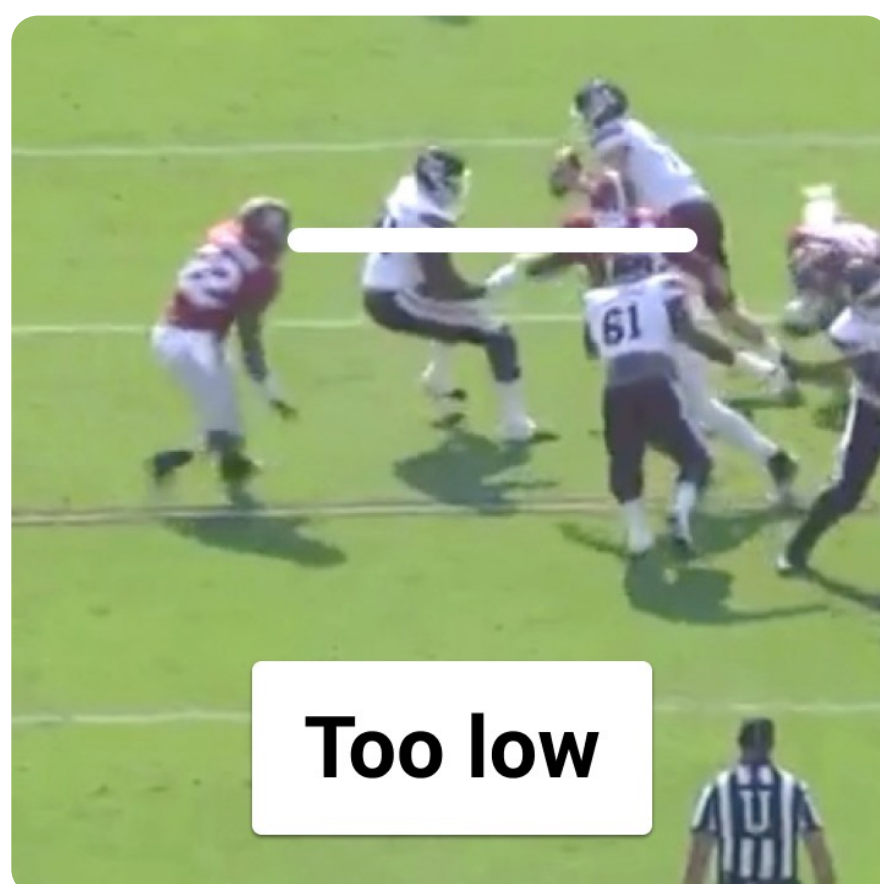
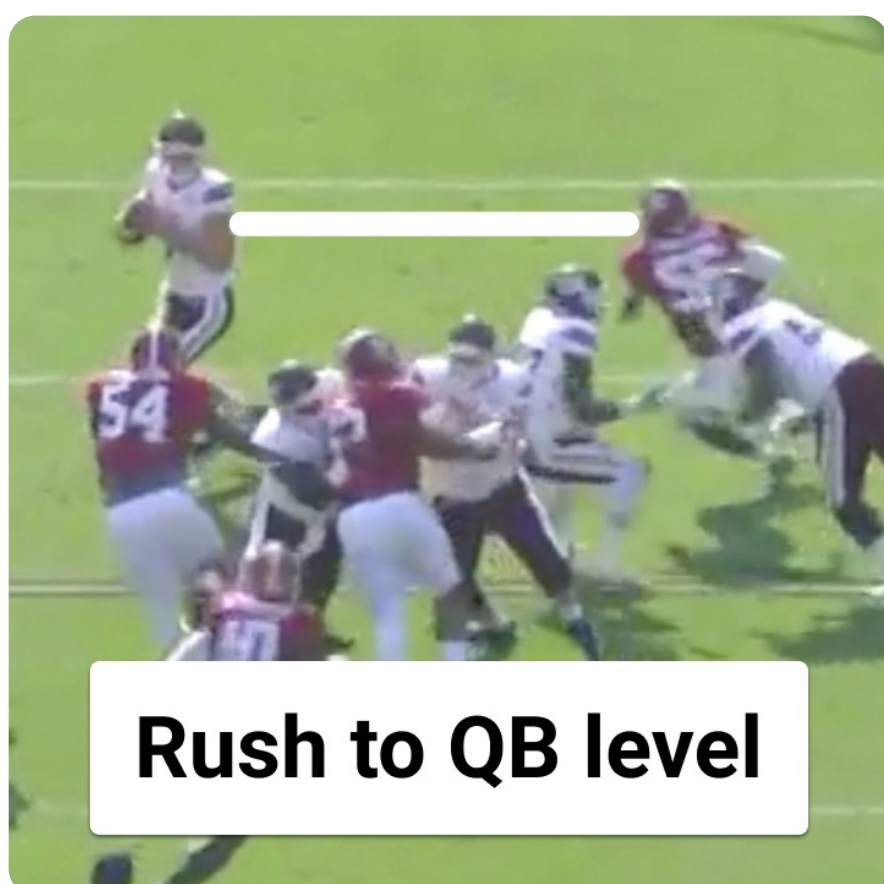


Level rusher

The responsibility of the level rusher is to aggressively rush from the edge without letting the QB break contain.

The level rusher does this by making sure he doesn't rush past or beneath the upfield shoulder of the QB.

click [here](#) to see example

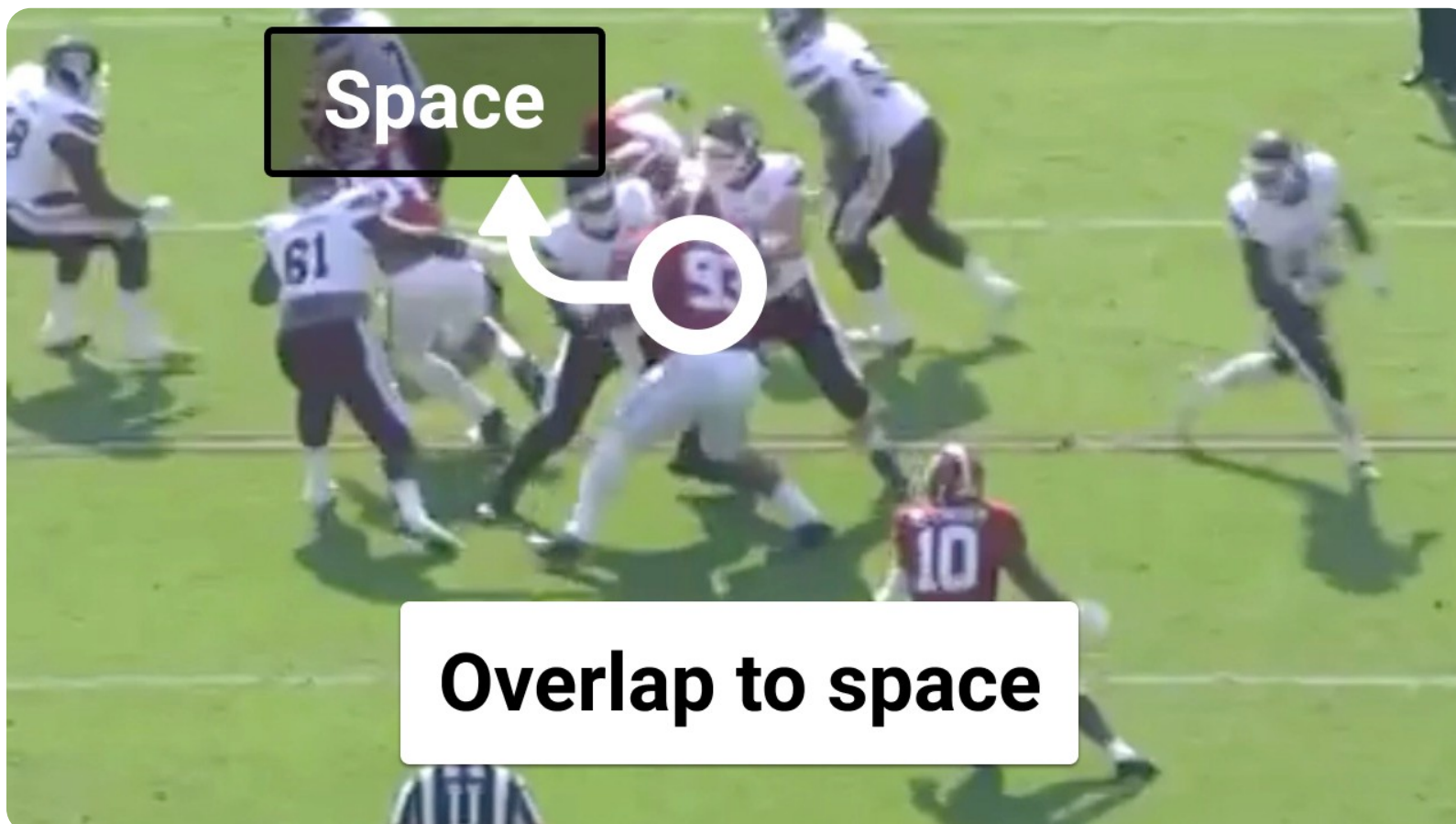


Overlap rusher

This rusher needs to counter to the A-gap initially to attract the double team from the guard and the center. This allows the other 3 rushers to have 1-on-1's.

If he feels another rusher out of his lane he can wrap that rusher to make sure the rush is balanced.

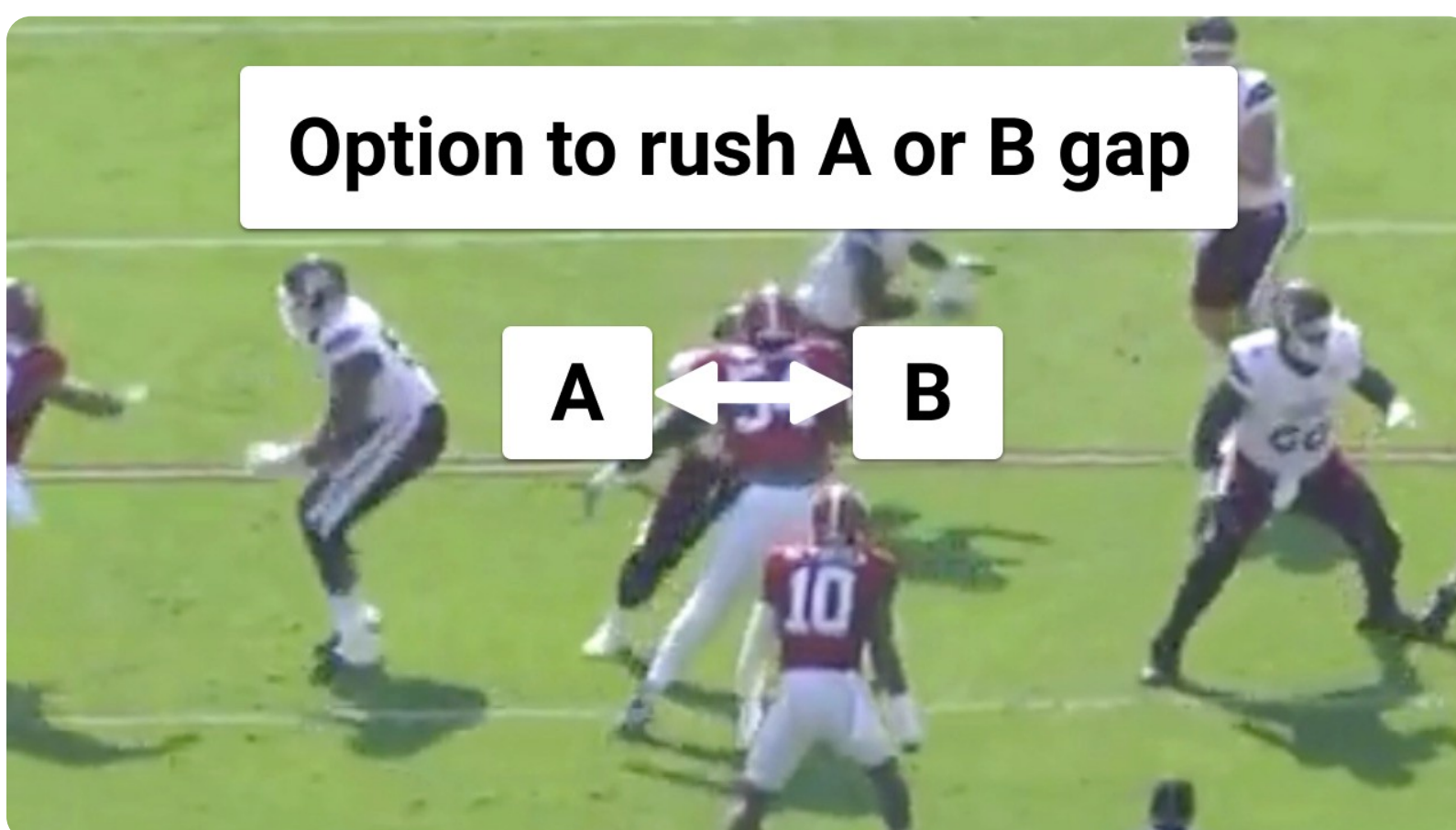
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2 way go rusher

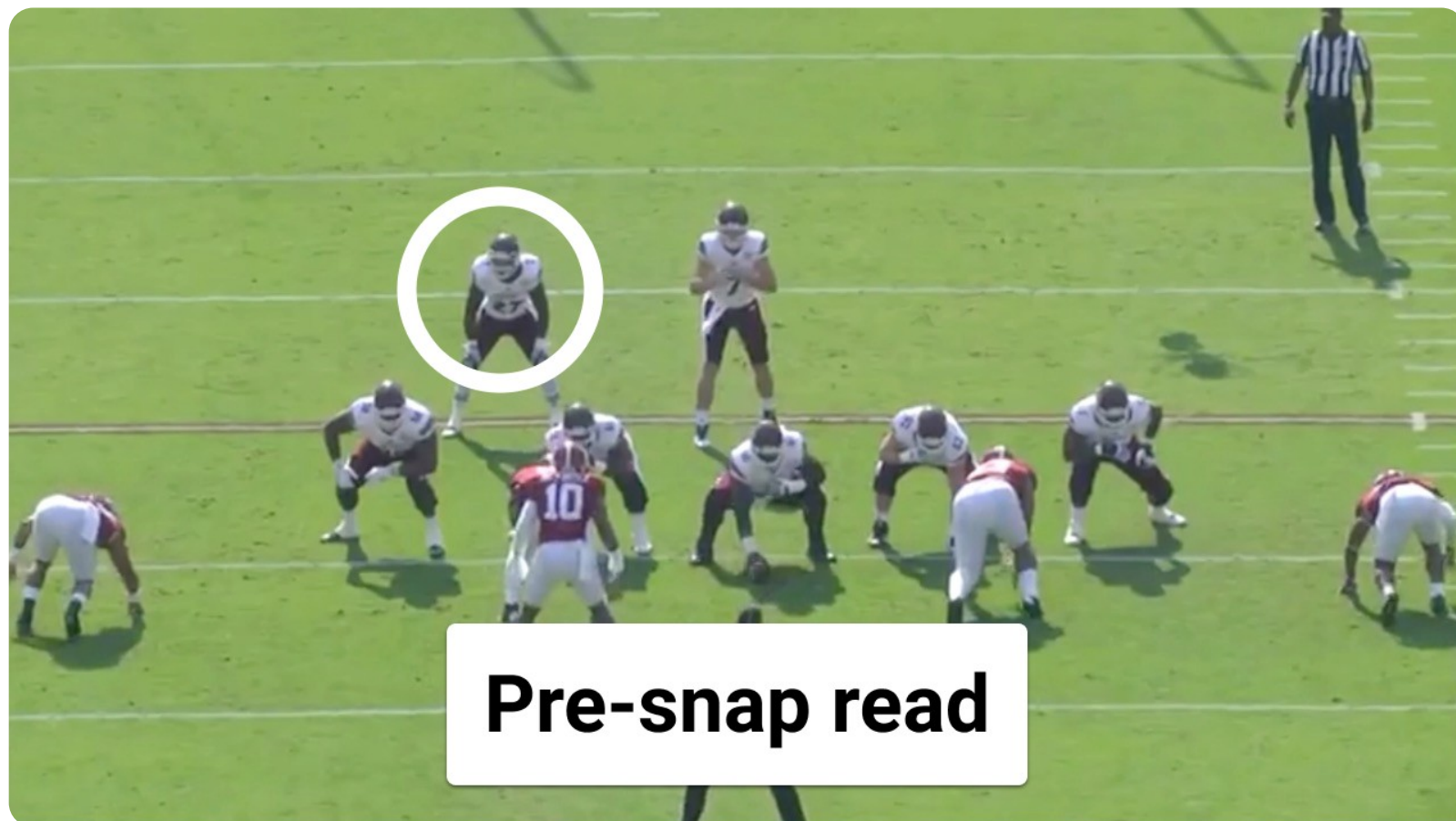
This rusher has the option to win in either the A or B-gap. He just can't get washed by the QB or rush too far upfield.

click [here](#) to see example

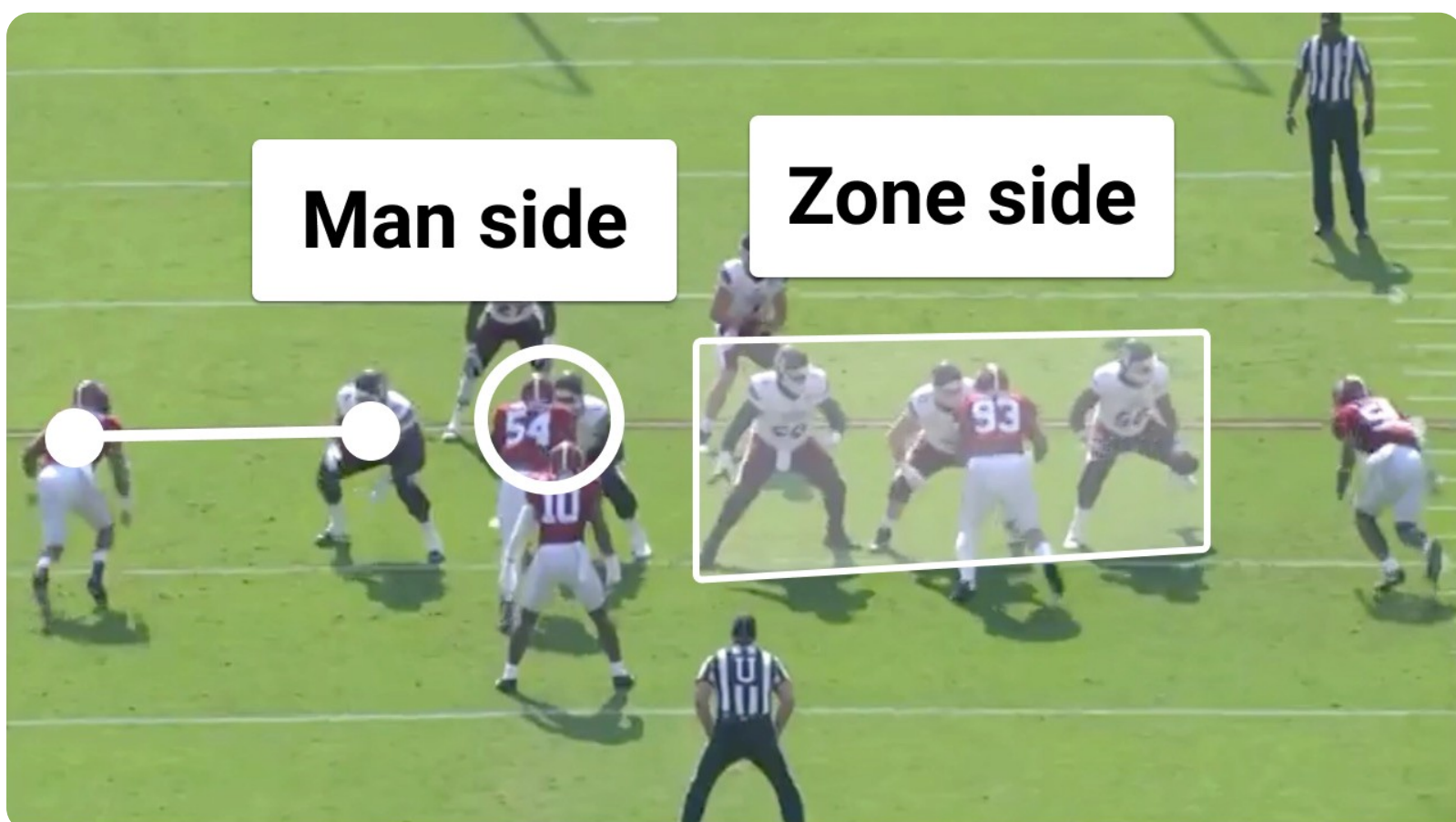


How to determine responsibilities

The ends will always be level rushers; however, the 2 way go and overlap rusher will be based off a pre-snap read.



The RB or point are typical pre-snap reads that will tell you the man and zone side.



In a perfect world you want the overlap rusher to the zone side and the 2-way go rusher to the man side.

Coaching points

- ① Use the green system only in obvious passing situations
- ② DEs are always level rushers
- ③ Assign 2-way go to man side and overlap to zone

5-man rush

In 2015 I remember the Ottawa Red Blacks and their 5-man rush.

In every obvious passing situation they would line up 5 guys and base rush, stunt or twist.

It was an extremely simple game plan, but one that got them great pressure and won them a Grey Cup.

I thought to myself this way of rushing makes a lot of sense.

And you wanna know why I thought that? Because you know exactly what you're going to get.

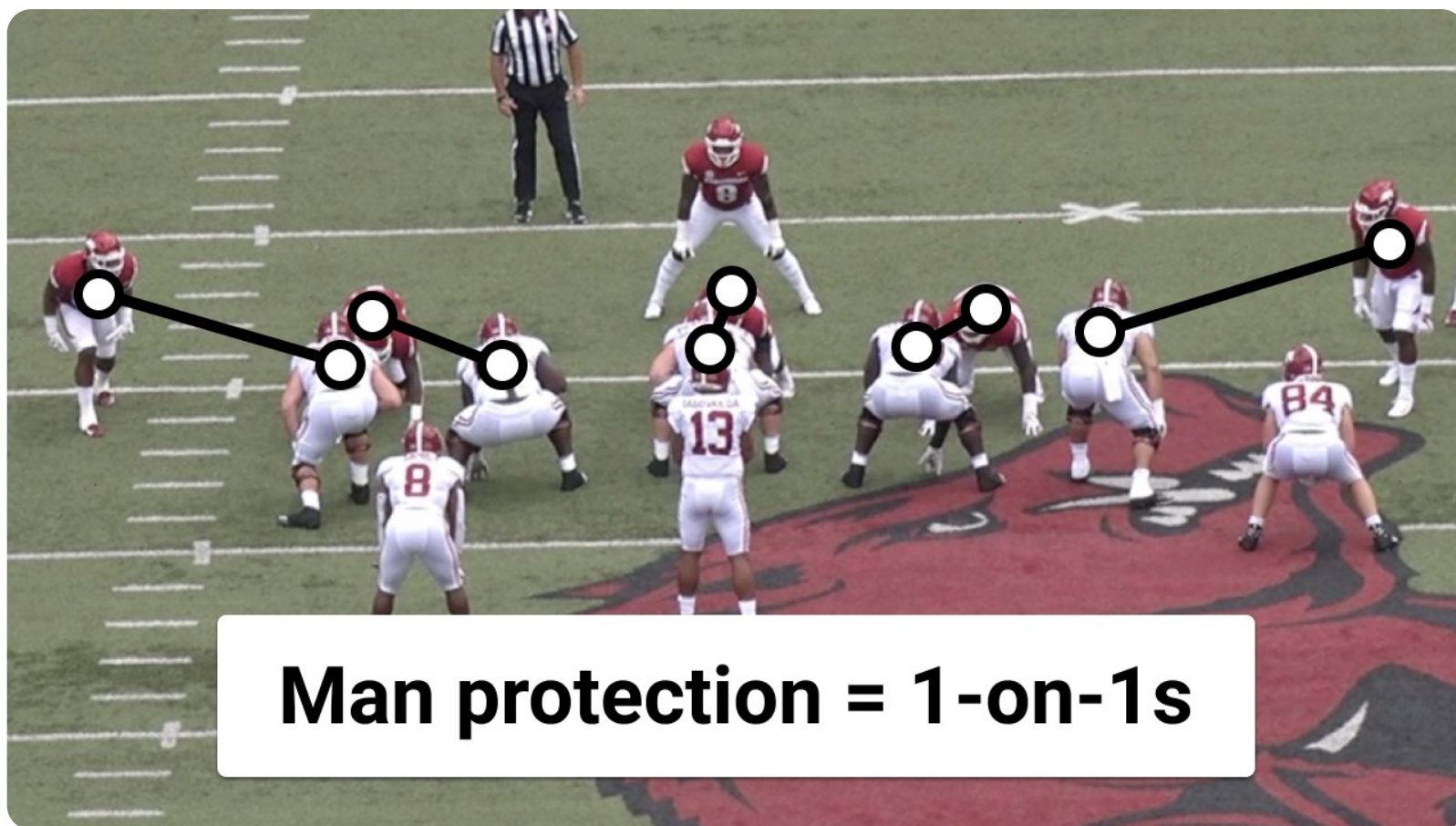
You see when you're rushing as a unit you're always looking for 1-on-1 match ups.

And you know what's the best way to get those 1-on-1 match ups?

Rush 5

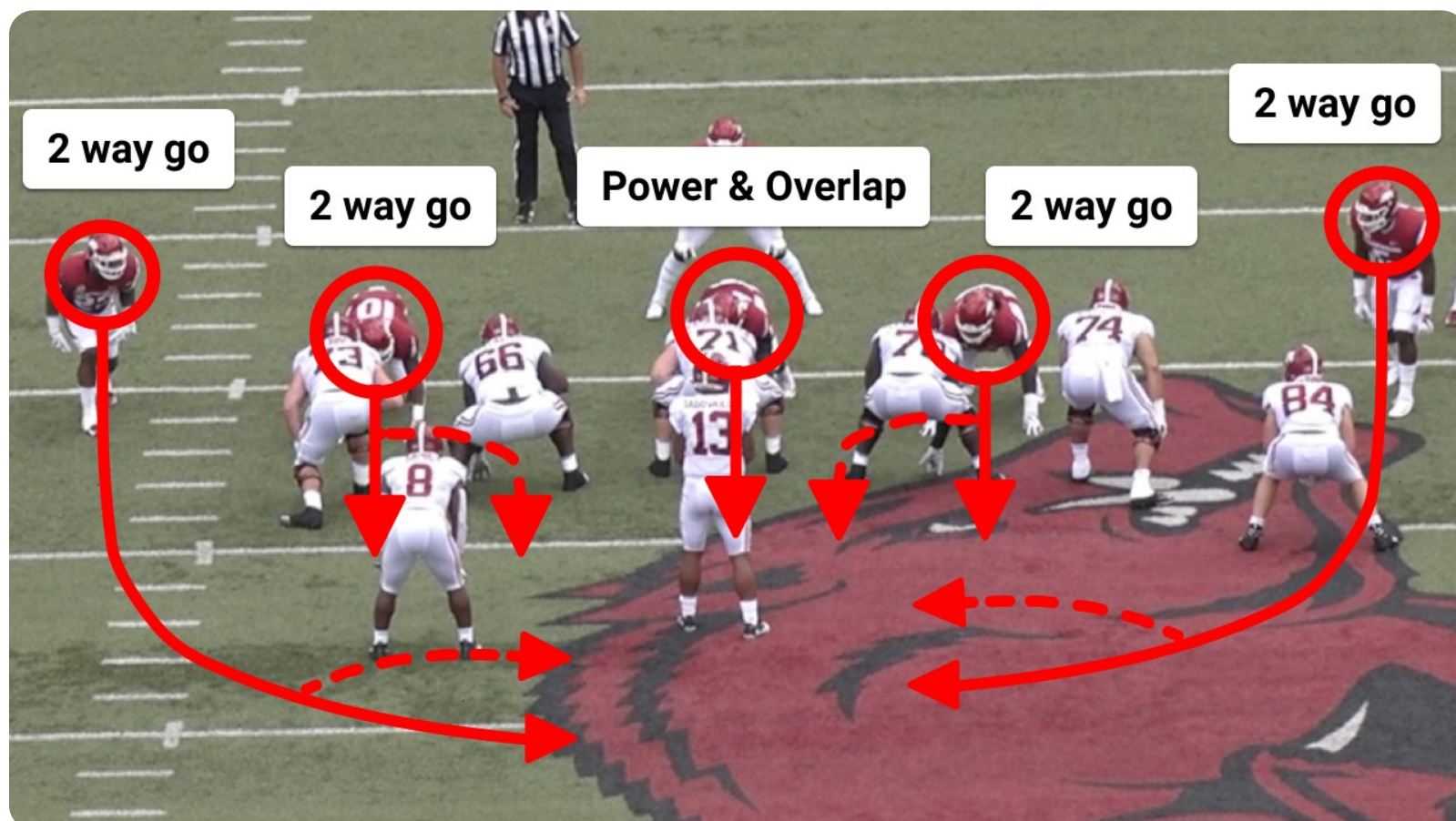
When you got 5 rushers on the line the O-line now has to man the entire D-Line.

This gives your defensive line 1-on-1s across the board and some really interesting options like **base rushing, twisting or running games.**



Base rush

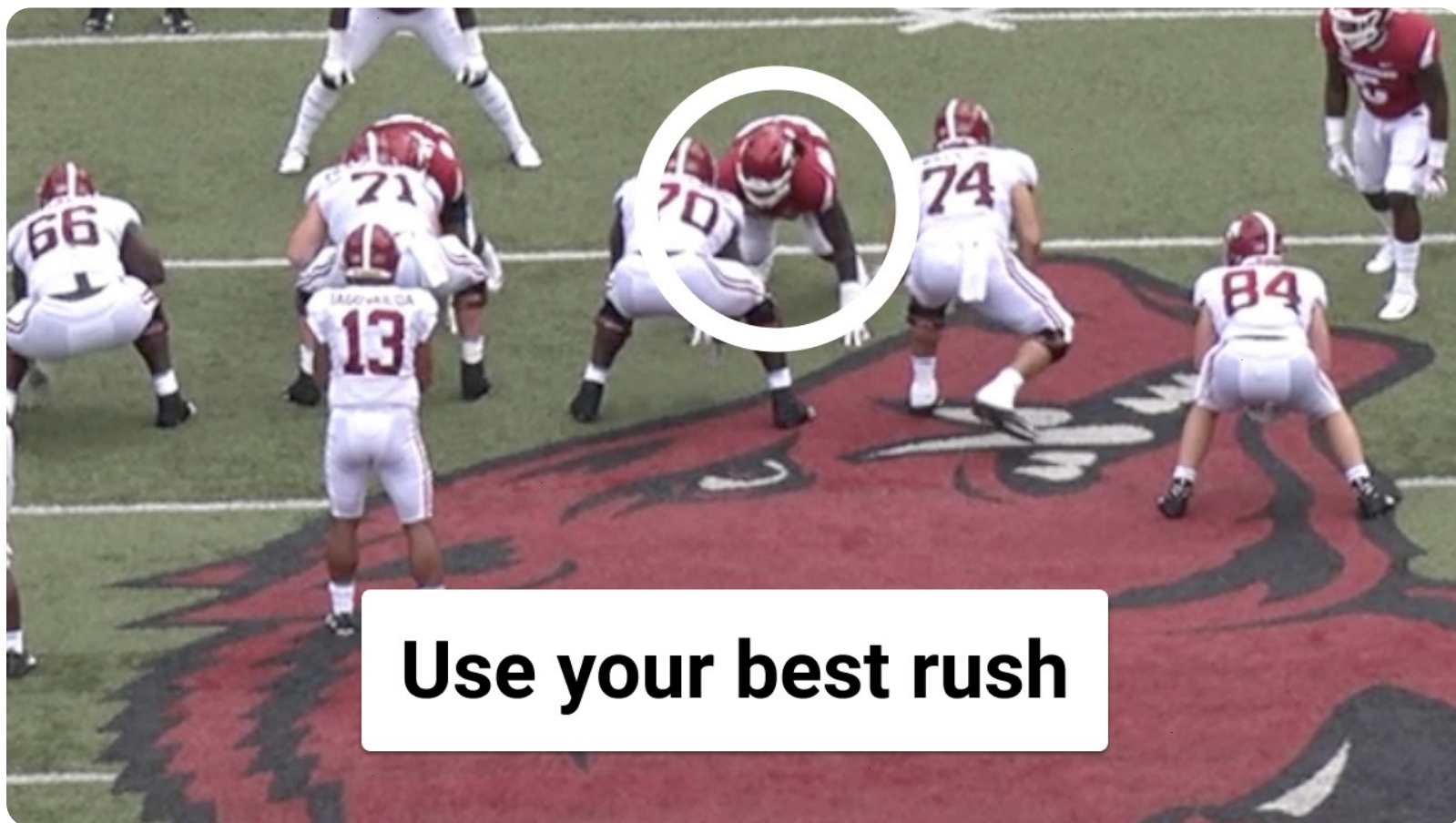
First option is a base rush. With this type of rush, The ends and 3-techs have a 2-way go while the nose is responsible for powering and overlapping.



2-way go

The 2-way go rushers have to win their 1-on-1s. Now is the time for them to use their best rush (inside, edge or power) to win!

click [here](#) to see example



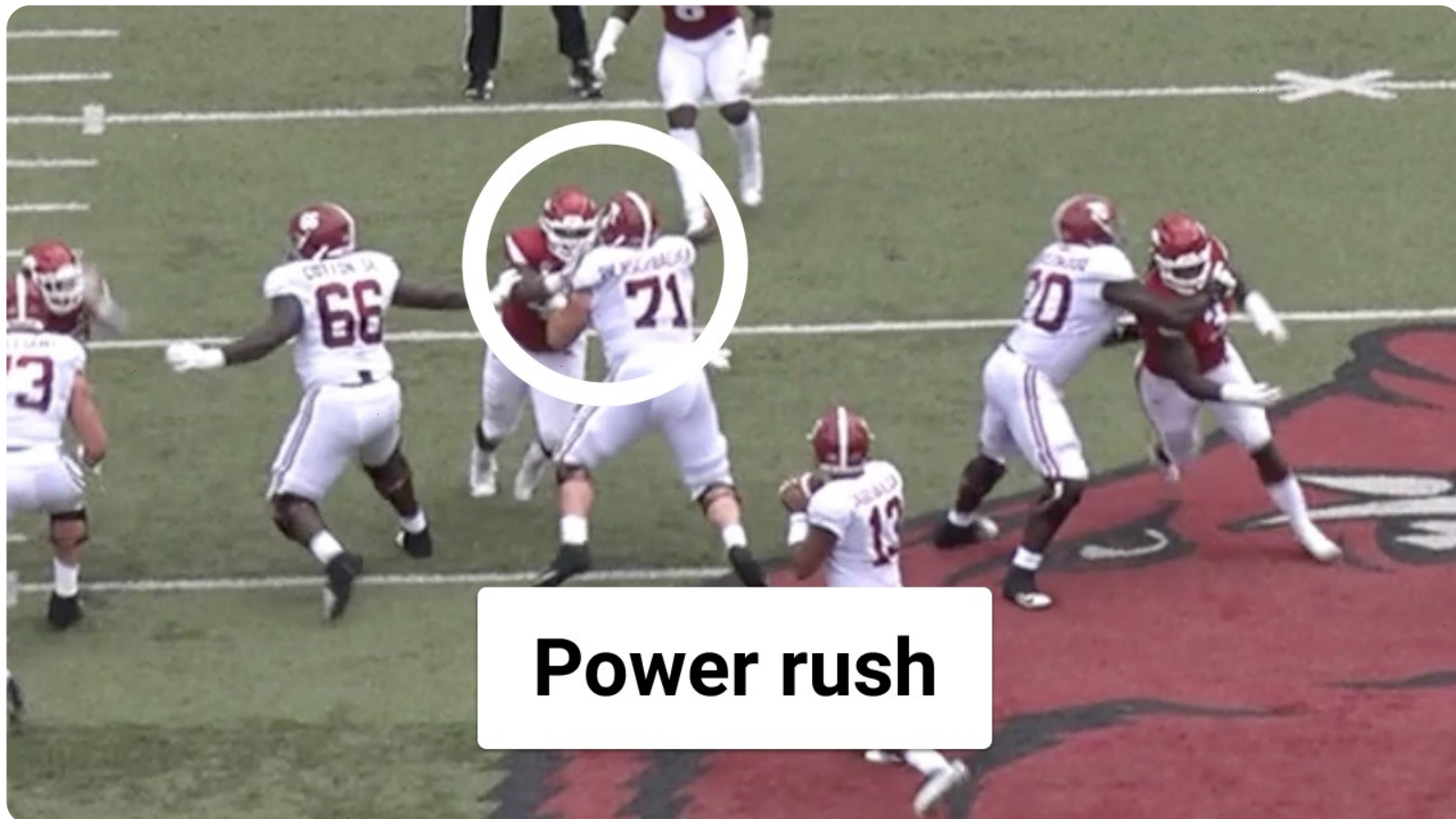
Power and overlap

I know.. I know.. noses always get the short end of the stick, but you need the nose to work as a safety valve for this rush.

You see for the other 4 rushers to have freedom to win their 1-on-1s, they need to know that the nose is backing them up just in case you get they get pushed out of their rush lane.

So the nose needs to power rush the center so he can't help any of his fellow blockers and overlap to fill any vacant rush lanes.

click [here](#) to see example



If you want to put the offensive line on an island with your best rushers the base rush is the way to do it.

Just make sure you are confident you got some dogs up front who can win their 1-on-1s quickly because if they don't, you're laying your secondary out to dry.

3-man twists

Your second option is a 3-man twist.

If you notice that your opponent's O-line has a tough time passing off their assignments, running a 3 man twist is a great way to free up your guys.

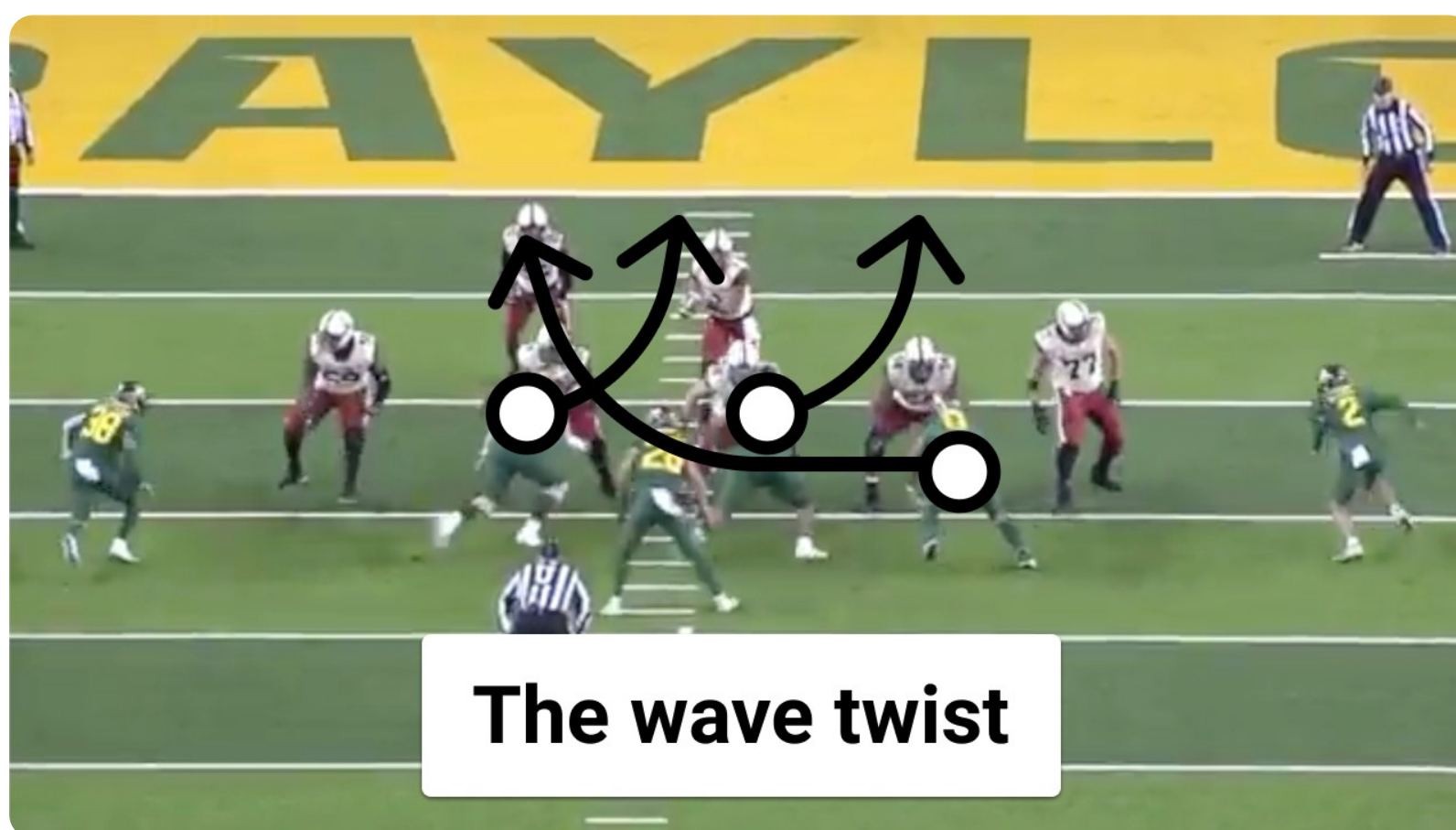
For any twist you will have penetrators and wrappers.

The penetrators aggressively penetrate their assigned gap, where as the wrapper loops around the penetrators to the opposite gap.

One twist that I have rarely seen fail with a 5-man rush is the wave twist.

For this twist, have the nose and field 3-tech penetrate and the boundary 3-tech take 2 steps upfield to attract the eyes of the guard then wrap to the opposite B-gap.

click [here](#) to see example



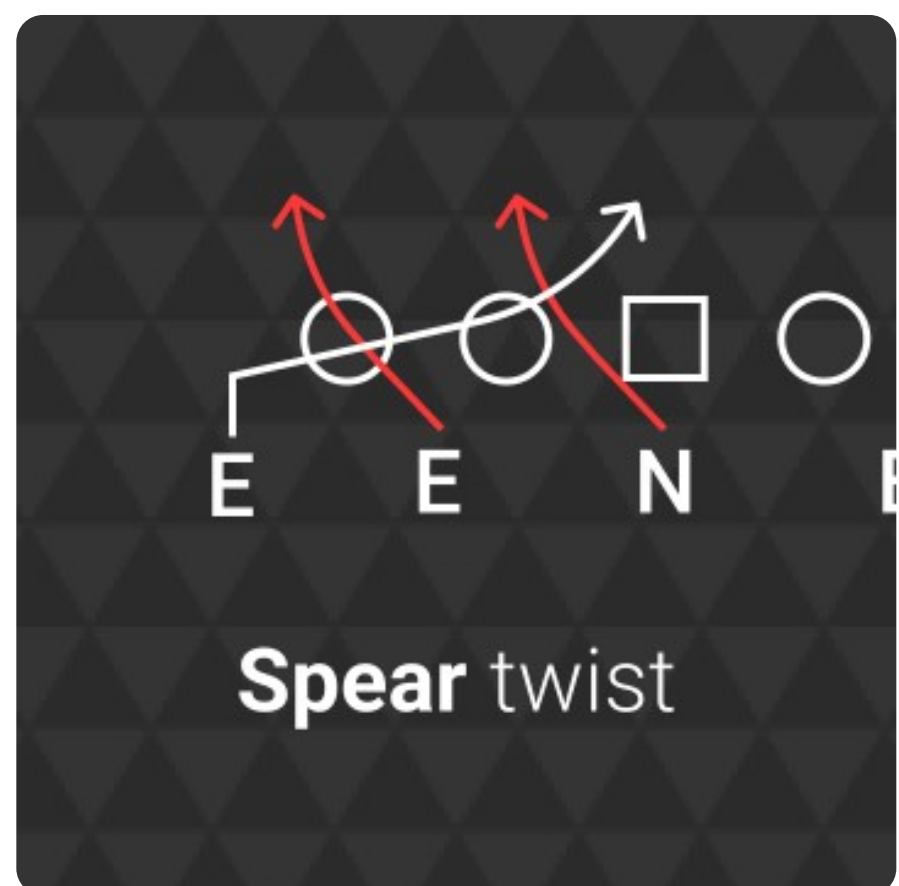
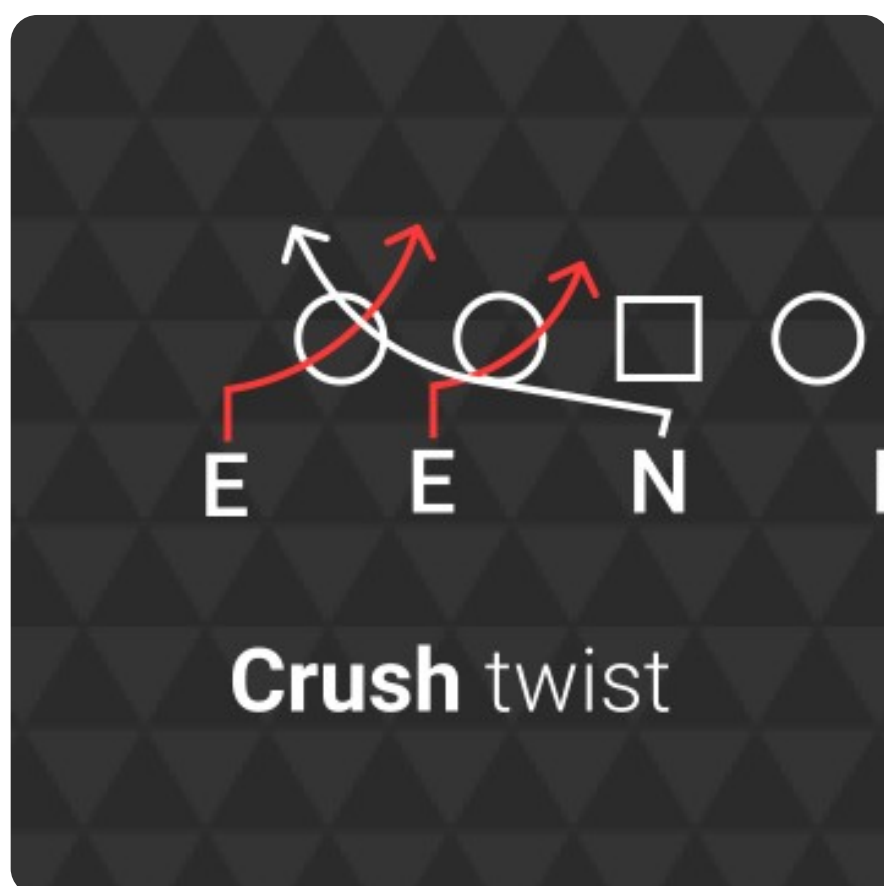
The ends on the other hand need to contain rush to make sure the QB doesn't escape outside.

That means they cannot under any circumstance make an inside move.

The only place for the QB to escape is off the edge and if the ends make an inside move you're giving the QB an easy way to escape.

You can also execute **outside twists** that involve the end. These are great to use if you think your end, 3-tech and nose are better at 3-man twists.

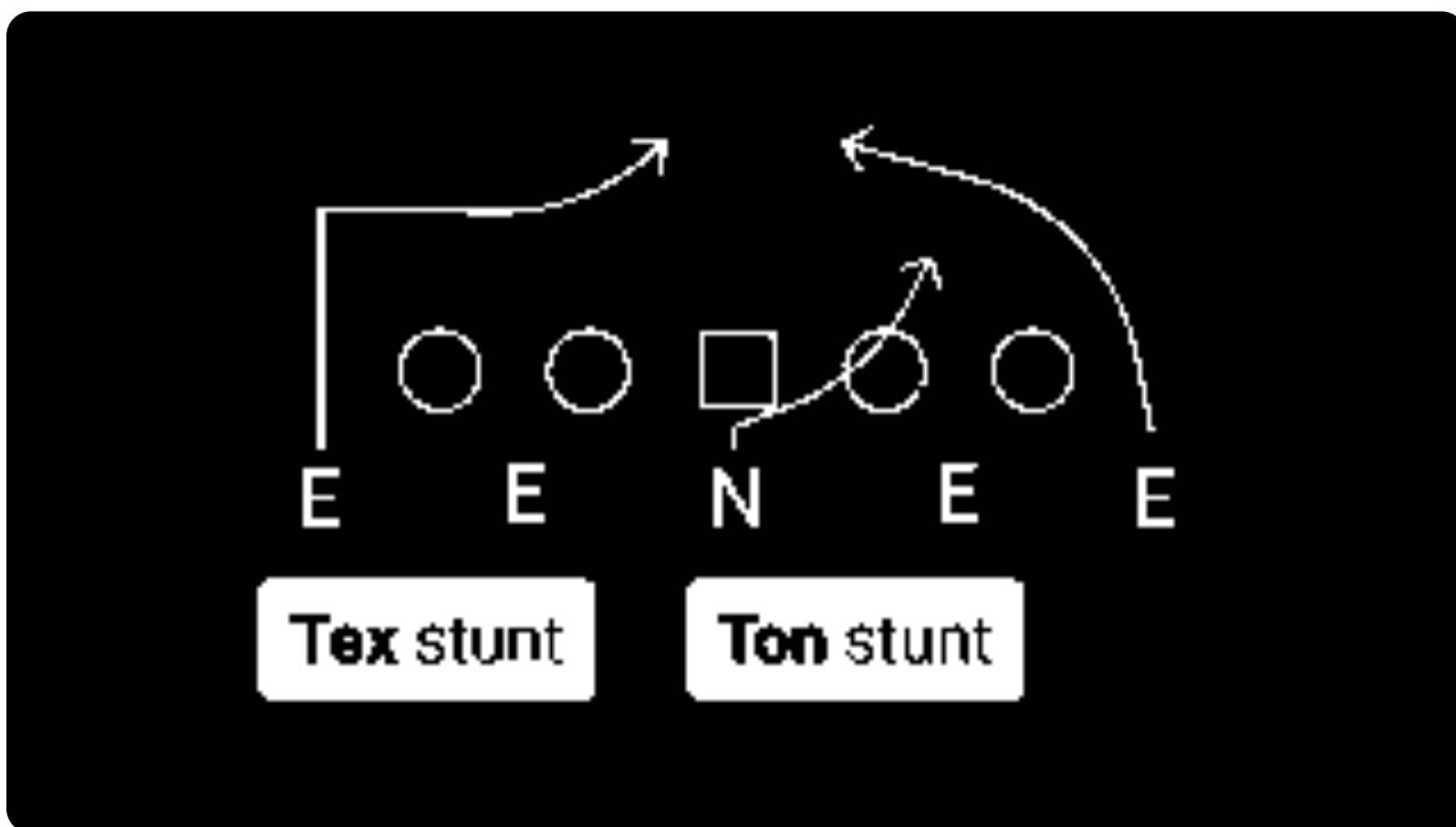
Here are a few examples...



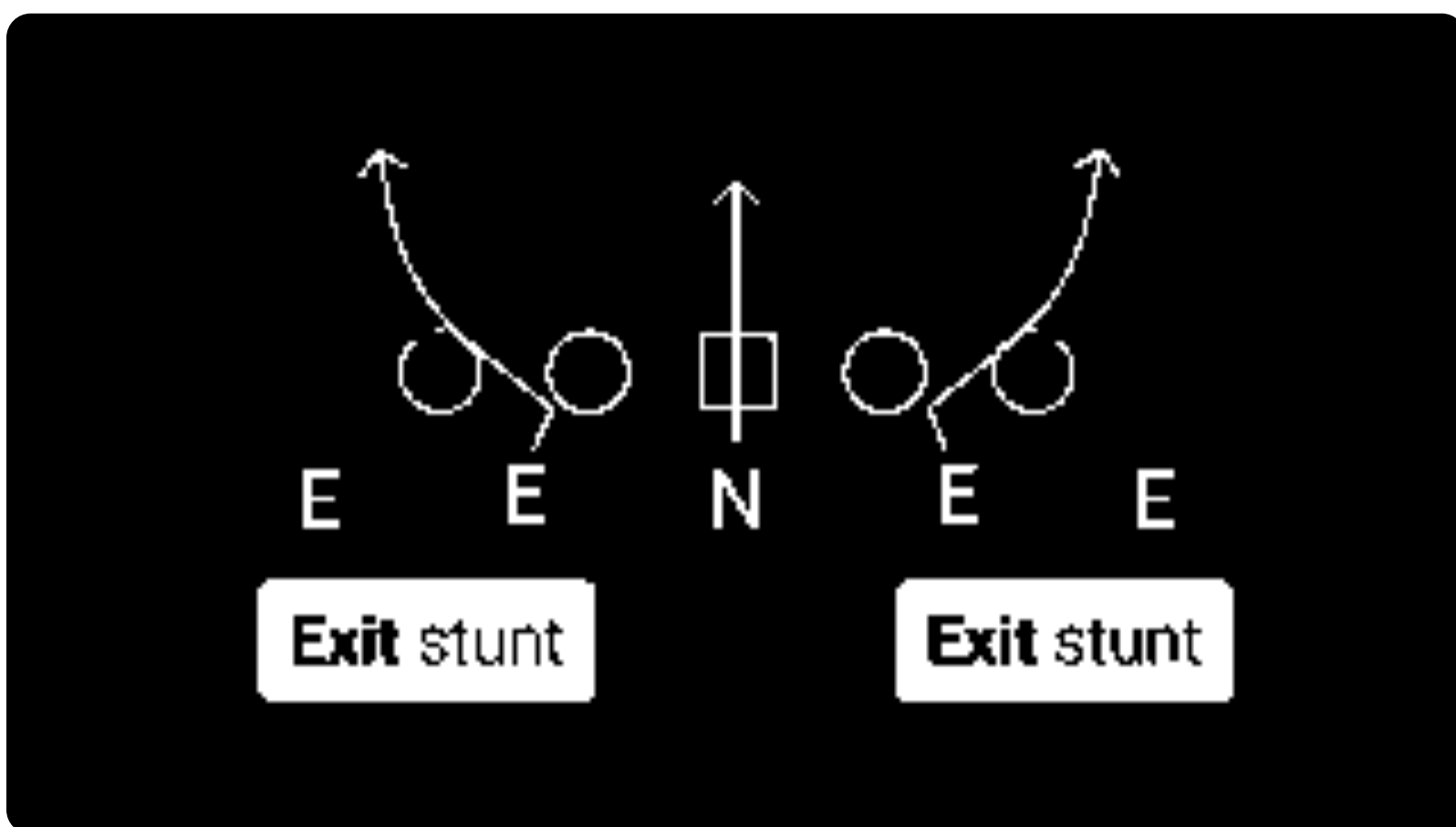
2-man games

In a 5 man rush you can mix and match multiple 2-man games on the inside and outside.

For example you can run a TON stunt (tackle first nose wrap) with an TEX stunt (tackle first end wrap) on the opposite side



You also could run a double EXIT stunt (end first tackle wrap) and occupy the center with the nose tackle.

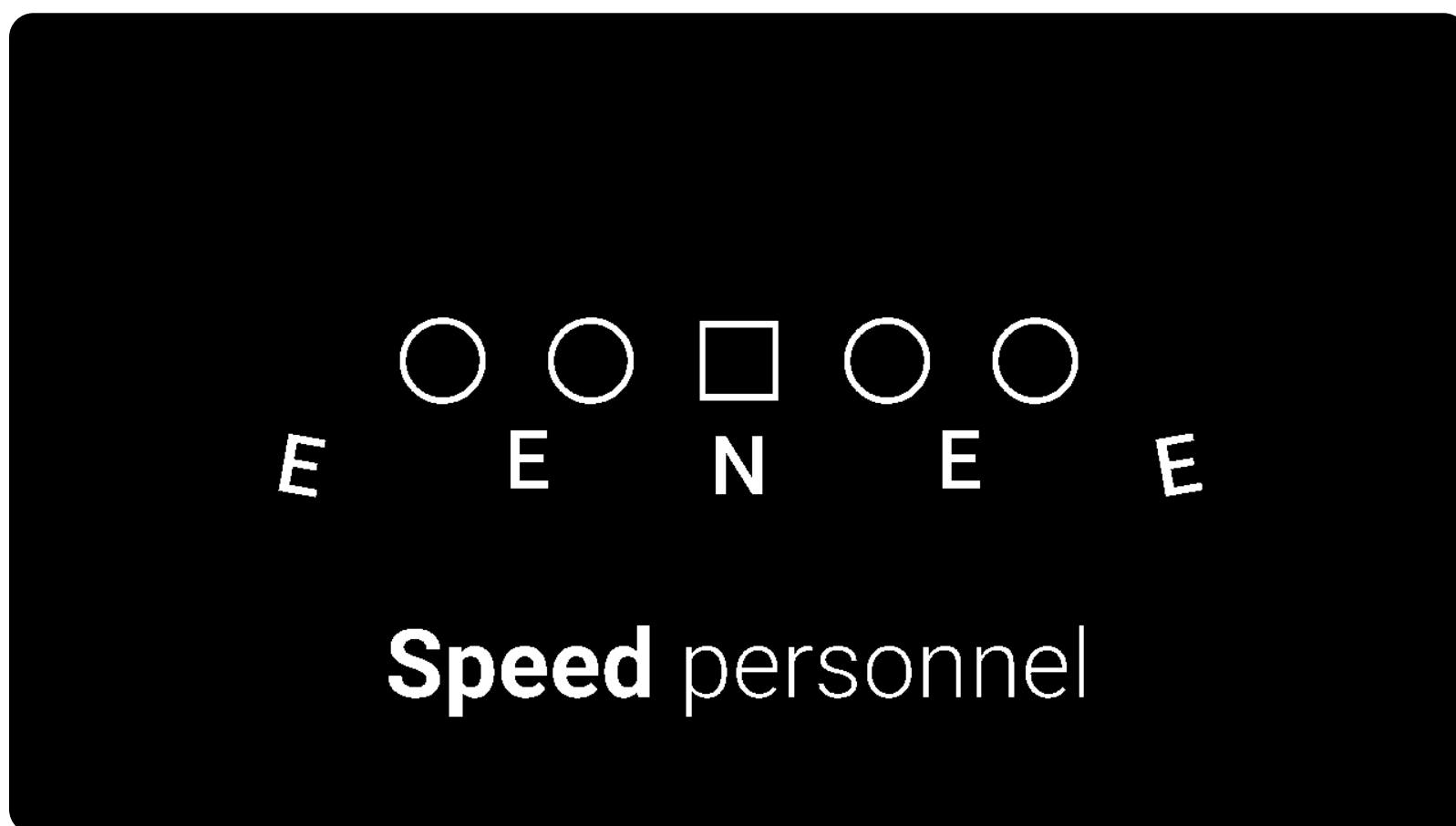


The key here is to have your guys who are good at stunts running them against the blockers who are bad at passing off stunts.

Personnel

There are some really interesting personnels you can mix and match in a 5-man rush

One of the best is the “**speed personnel**”. In speed you to put 4 DEs out on the field and your best interior rusher.



This personnel is great because anytime you can get your best rushers 1-on-1 with guards, you're almost always going to get sacks, hits and hurries

A final word

If you want predictable protections and consistent pressure on the QB a 5-man rush is the way to go.

I've seen defenses master twists, stunts and base rushes with 5 and it was absolutely lethal once they got the hang of it.

So whether you are running a 4-3, 3-4 or any other kind of defense, using a 5-man rush will give you a deadly weapon to disrupt opposing offenses.

Coaching points

- ① Use a 5-man rush to get man protection from the O-line
- ② Use a base rush to create 1-on-1s for you D-line
- ③ Use twists and games if your opponent can't pass off their blocking assignments

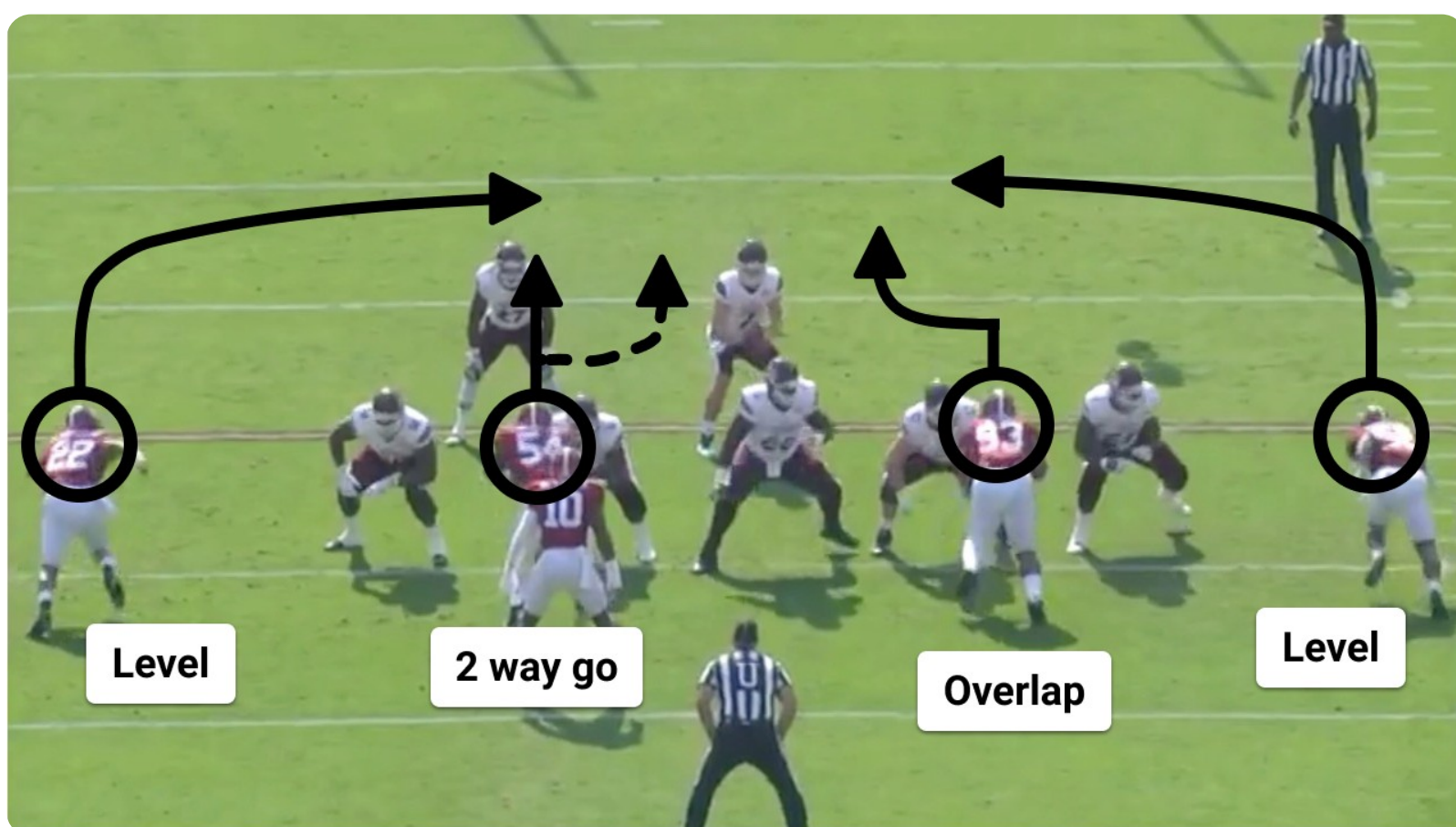
Rushing in a 3-4

Many teams at the high school, college and pro level are using 3-4 concepts in their defenses. I can see why.

3-4s give you flexibility with play calling and are great at making QBs 2nd guess their decisions.

In passing situations though, 3-4 defenses still need to still rely on the balanced rush principles of a 4-3 defense.

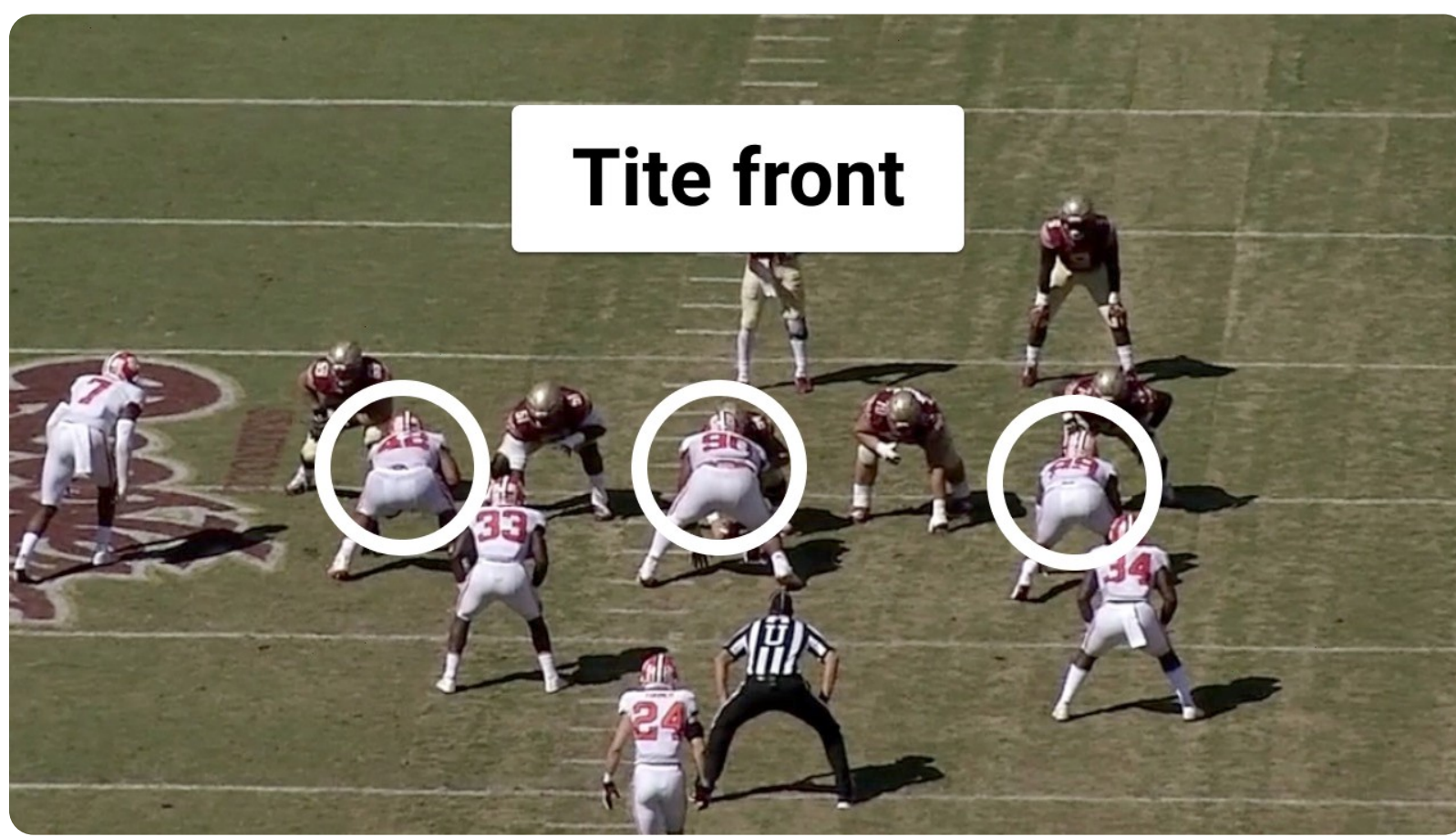
You see with any pass rush attack you want an even distribution of rushers so the QB can't scramble.



So, whenever you're sending 3, 4 or 5 rushers in a 3-4 defense there are unique responsibilities that each rusher must execute to ultimately create a balanced and effective rush.

To make things simple let's use a classic 3-4 "**Tite**" front to illustrate the responsibilities and challenges of rushing from a 3-4.

click [here](#) to see example



Defensive ends

The DEs have the toughest job of any rusher in any defense. They are responsible for **level rushing form a 4i**.

Because the blocker has outside leverage on them, it's just about impossible to threaten his outside edge with pure speed.

So rather than using speed you need to play a little cat and mouse with a technique I call "**the hook**".

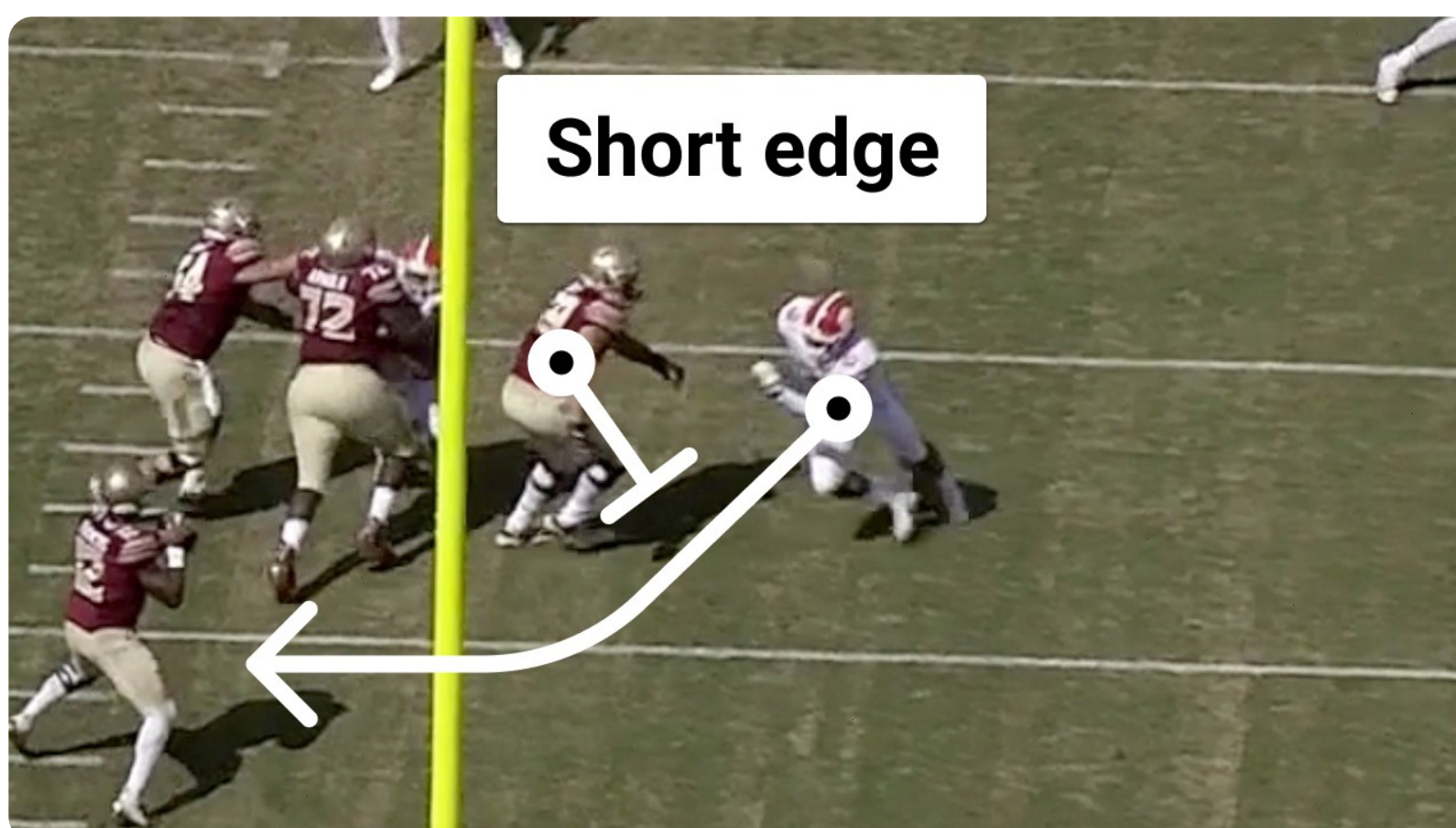
To execute a hook first fake as if you are rushing B-gap.

Then, when you feel your opponent commit to his inside gap, swim, club or stab his outside shoulder back to the C-gap.

click [here](#) to see example

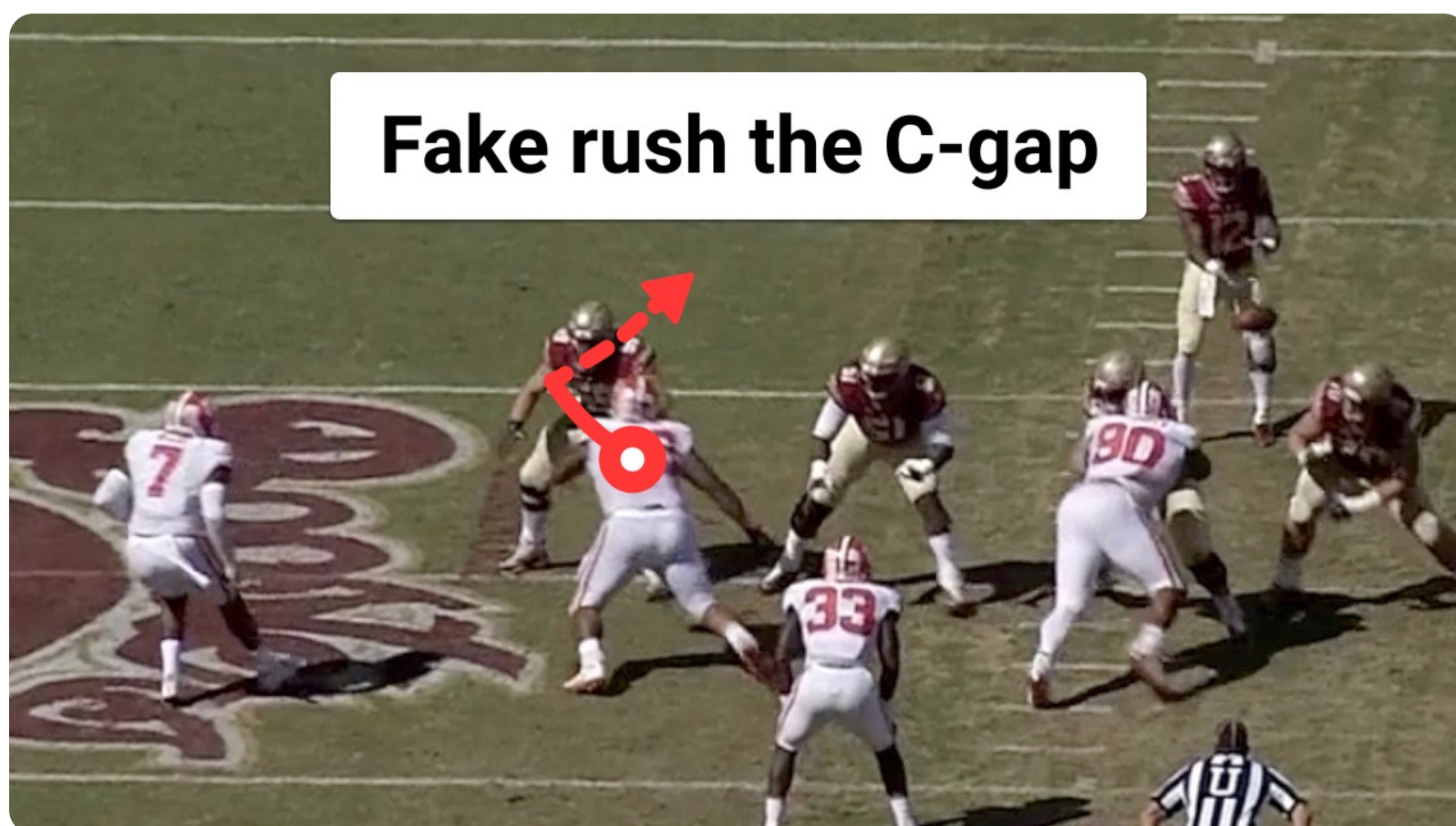


You now have a short edge to work with that will make it easier to turn the corner and get to the level of the QB.



Another variation of the hook is to fake as if your are rushing to the C-gap, but then rush vertically in the B-gap.

click [here](#) to see example



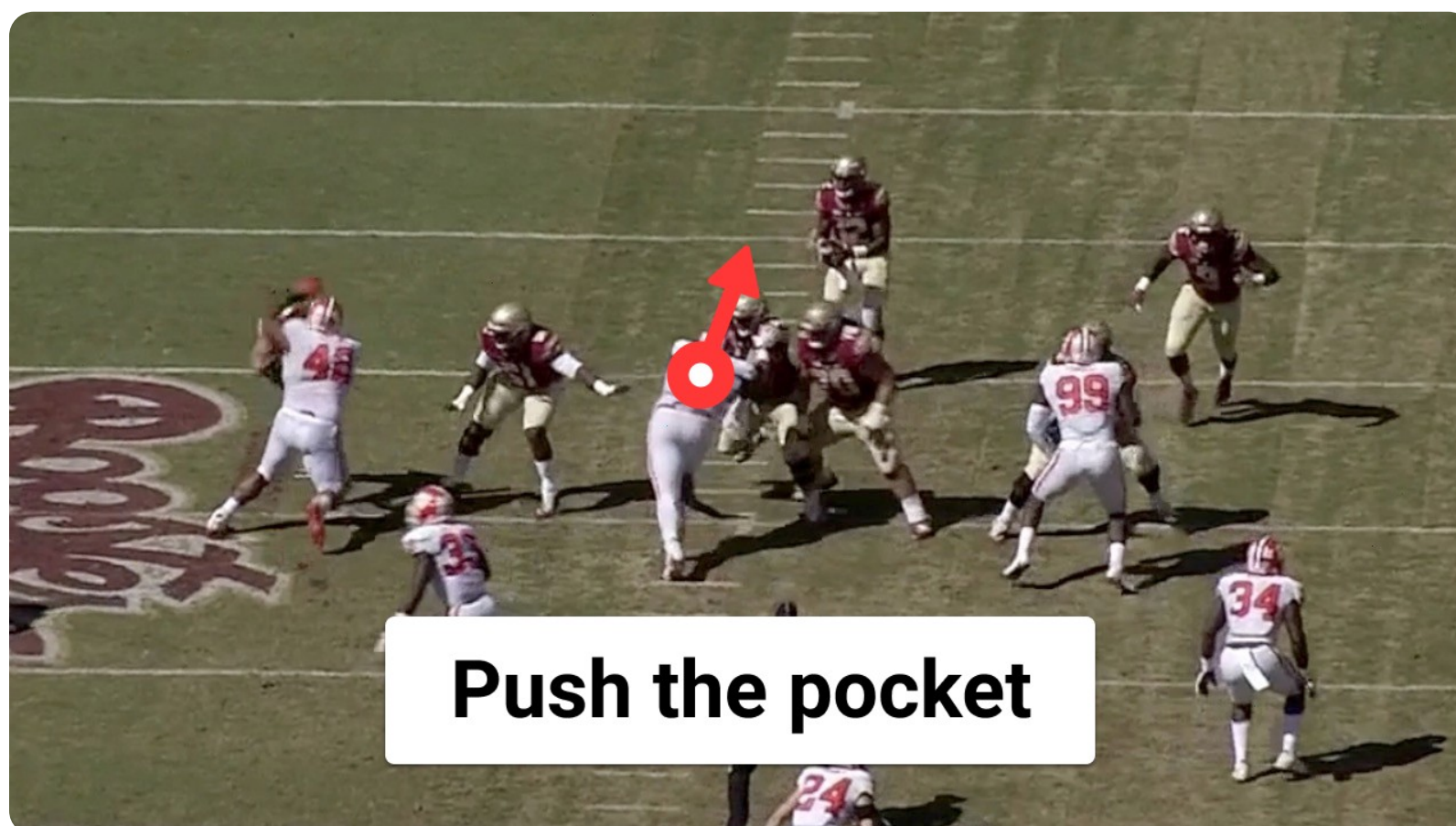
The key here is to rush one man at a time (the tackle first and then the guard) so you don't get stuck in the B-gap and open up a scramble lane for the QB.

Nose

In a base 3-4 the offense will often slide their protection and double the nose.

That means he needs to push the pocket by powering one of the double teamers and look for a potential overlap.

click [here](#) to see example



There are times though where the offense will fan their protection and leave the nose 1-on-1 with the center.

click [here](#) to see example



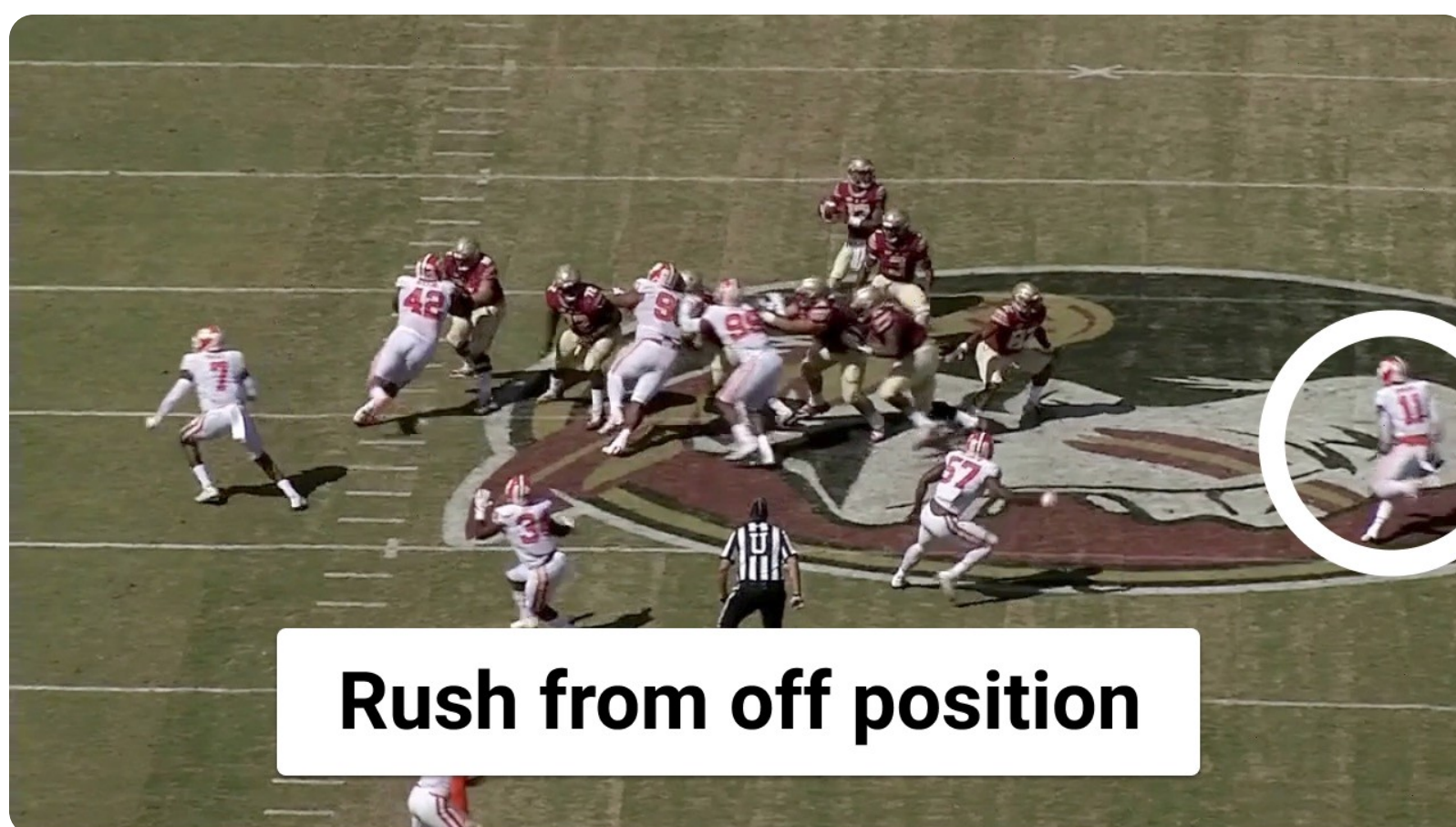
It's best in these protections to use jabs to fake out the center and give you a clear path to the QB.

Outside linebacker

My example defense does not include a rushing outside linebacker, but since this is a staple of any 3-4 I want to take a brief moment to talk how to do it right.

Now you can add in an OLB on the edge or in the interior, but the big key here is that the OLB starts from an off position.

click [here](#) to see example



Many 3-4 defenses tell their outside linebackers to do this because they want to disguise where pressure's coming from.

This is why studying snap counts is key for successfully rushing as an outside linebacker.

You see you don't want to be too early or late on your approach

Too early and you've given away what defense you're playing. Too late and you won't get any pressure on the QB

Studying the snap count helps you avoid both of these situations and ensures you'll be just right with your timing.

So how do you time a snap count?

Well, the typical snap count will look something like this...

"Red 80 Red 80 set hut!"

The trick is to **approach the LOS at the middle of the snap count** so the offense can't adjust their blocking assignments.

So, start from an off position and then when you hear the second red 80, sprint to the LOS and key the ball so you don't go off sides.

Then, once the ball moves transfer your eyes from the ball to the chest of your opponent to execute your pass rush move.

If you time up your approach just right, you should be able to easily beat your opponent with speed.

Just think you have all this momentum built up and your opponent is standing still.

That's a prime situation for a sack lunch!

A final word

Rushing from a 3-4 does present unique challenges; however, with the right coaching, any player can overcome these challenges and get some great pressure on the QB.

Step 8: Correct common mistakes

Avoid rushing down the center

A common mistake I see many young pass rushers making is that they consistently rush down the center of their opponent.

The problem with doing this is that you give **too much surface area** for the blocker to grab

via [rivalsseries](#)

click [here](#) to see example

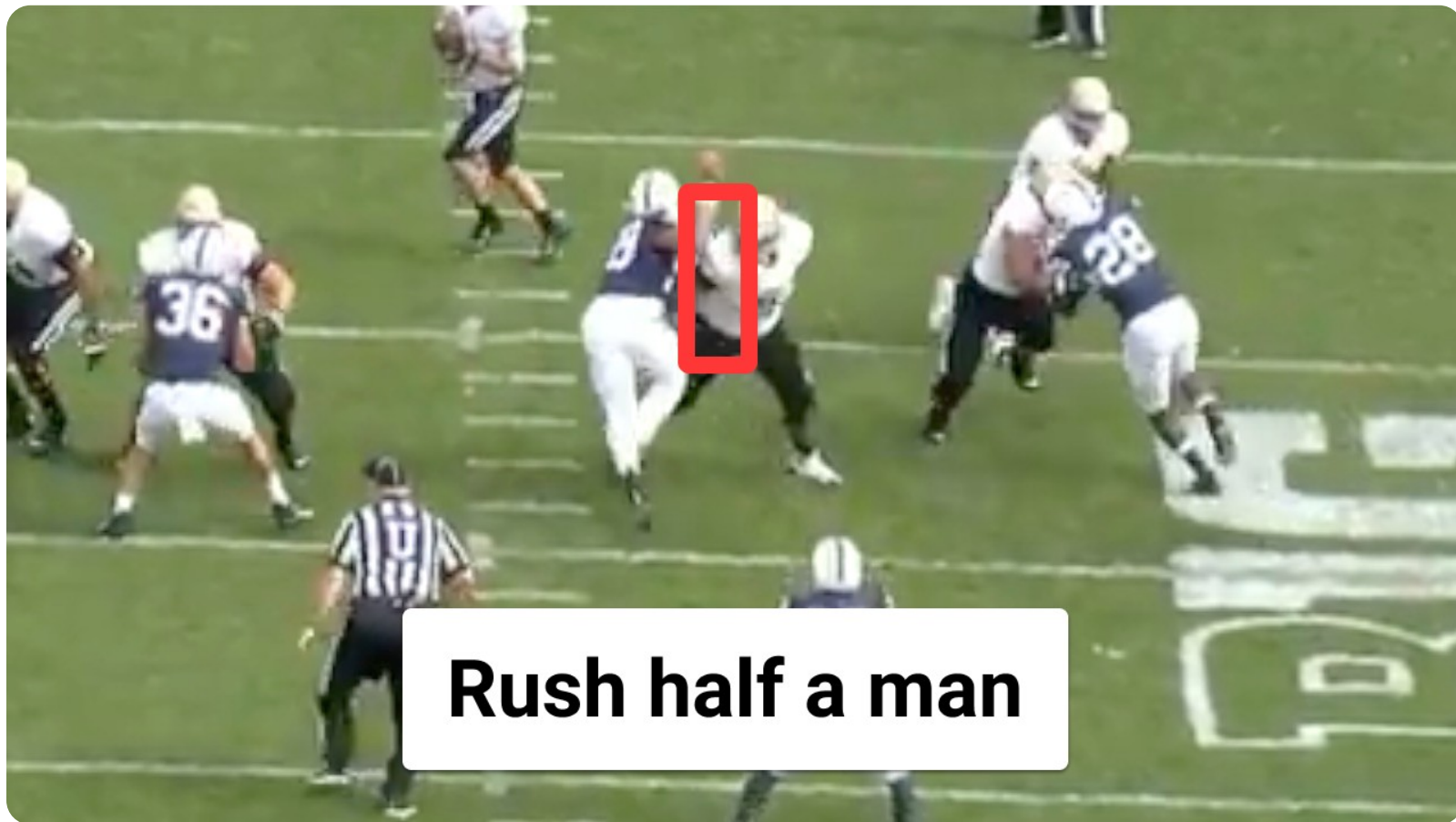


And unless you have hulk like strength your opponent will stop you in your tracks.

So, rather than rushing down the center, instead **rush half a man.**

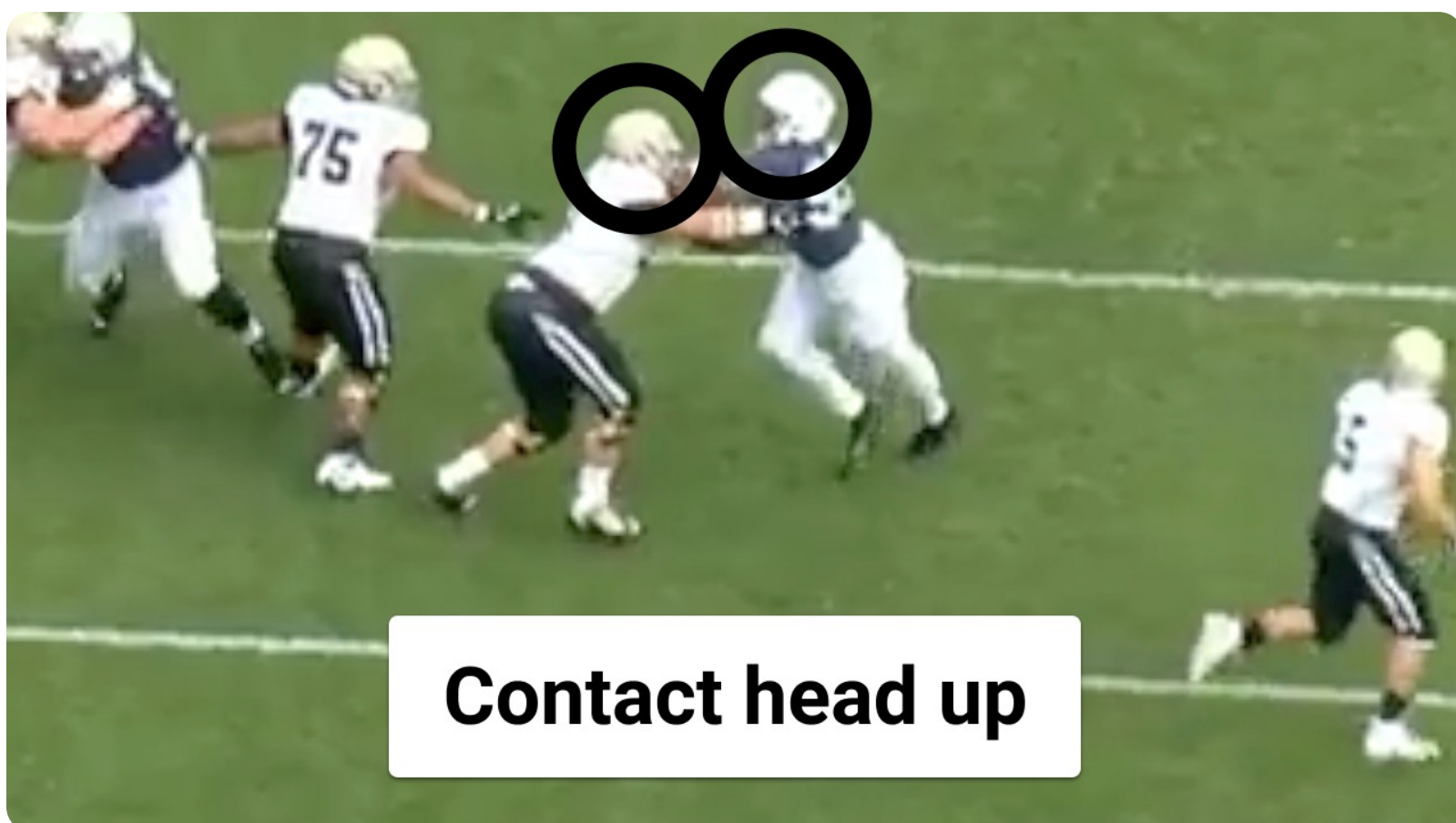
Working half a man greatly **reduces your blocking surface area** and gives you a greater ability to avoid the punch of the blocker.

click [here](#) to see example



But what about the power rush? Don't you need to rush down the center to power? The answer is yes and no.

Yes you will typically contact your opponent head up on a good power rush.



However, as your opponent sinks his hips to stop the power the only way you'll get to the QB is if you work to half a man by flipping your hips and throwing off to his soft side.

click [here](#) to see example



Drilling half a man

How you practice is how you'll play.

If you drill from a stationary head up position you will be stationary and head up when you play.

Instead **start from or work to an off set position** in your drill work.

Drill work is all about building habits and to build the habit of working half a man in a game you first need to do it in practice.

click [here](#) to see example



click [here](#) to see example



Football is a game of inches and you can't afford to waste any time getting to the QB.

So instead of rushing down the center of your man and wasting time, rush half and **GET TO THE DANG QB!**

Space is your enemy

When young pass rushers start out, they often feel uncomfortable with closing distance between them and their opponent.

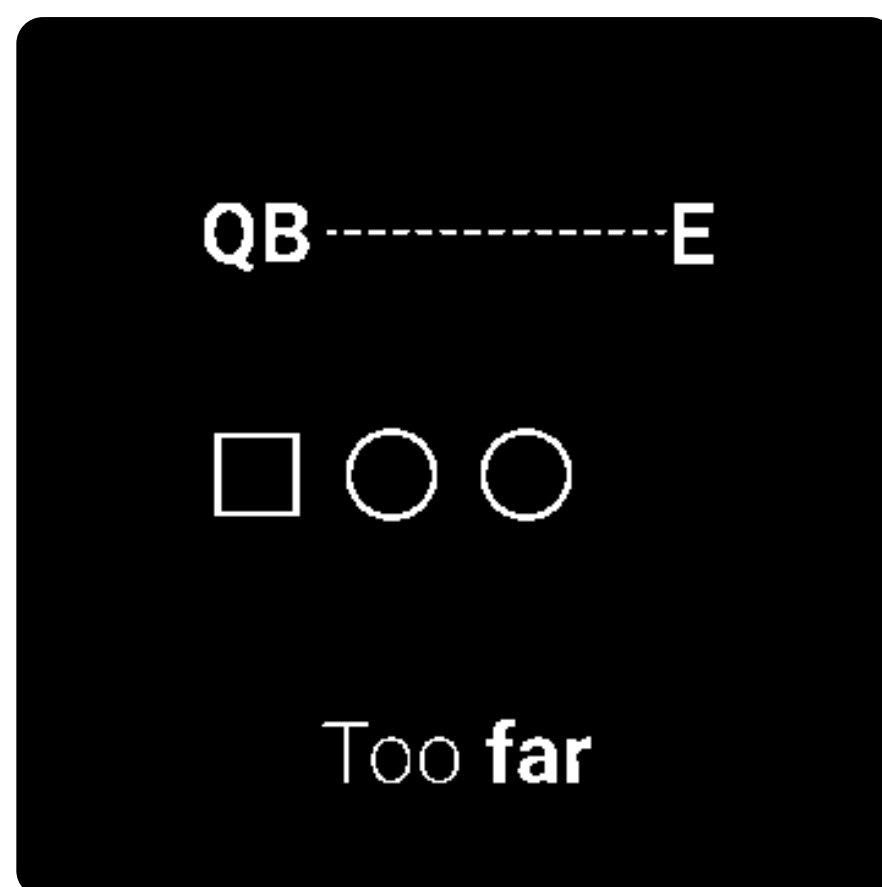
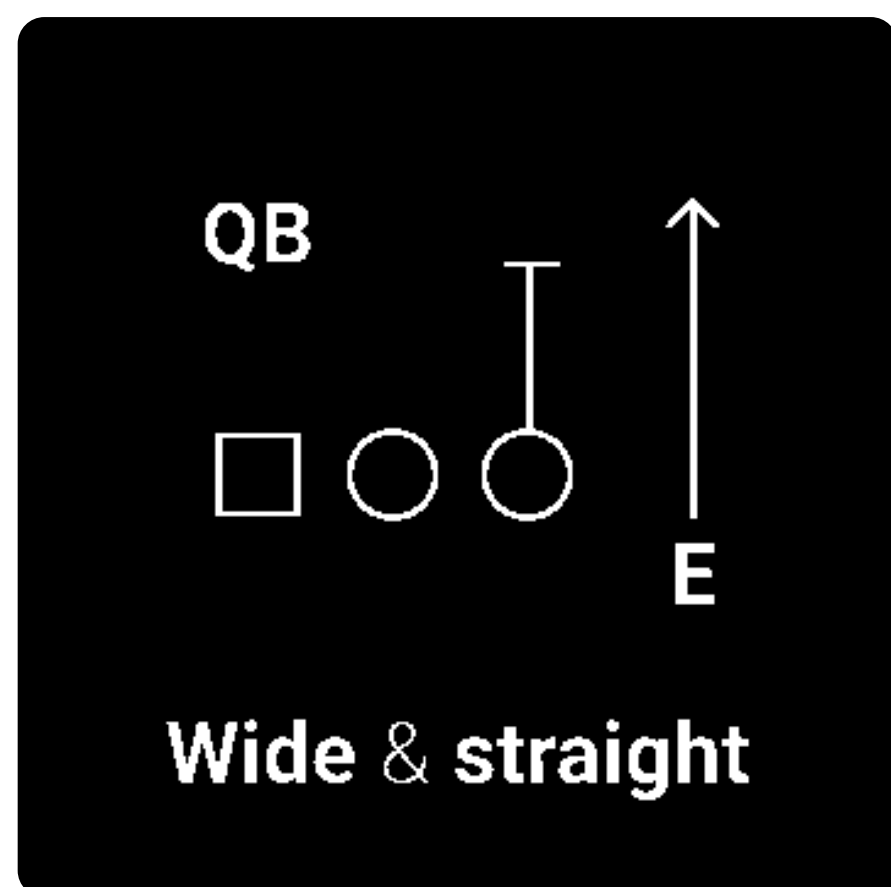
They dance around them thinking, “The blocker won’t hold me if I’m far enough away.”

All though this is true, this totally misses the point of **why** you pass rush which is to... **AFFECT THE QB.**

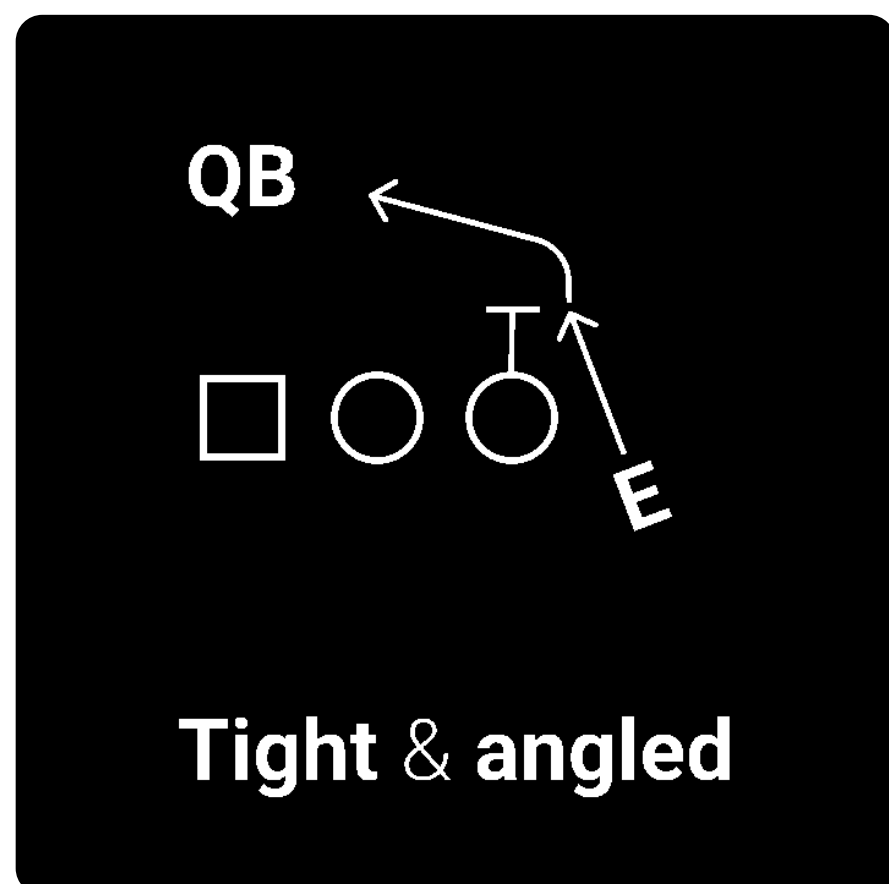
The 2 paths

Let’s look at 2 different rush paths as an example.

By aligning wide and rushing straight up the field you avoid the blocker, but you are much too far from the QB to affect him.



But, if you **align tighter** and **angle your rush path**, you will contact the blocker, but will be on a path to the hit, hurry or sack the QB.



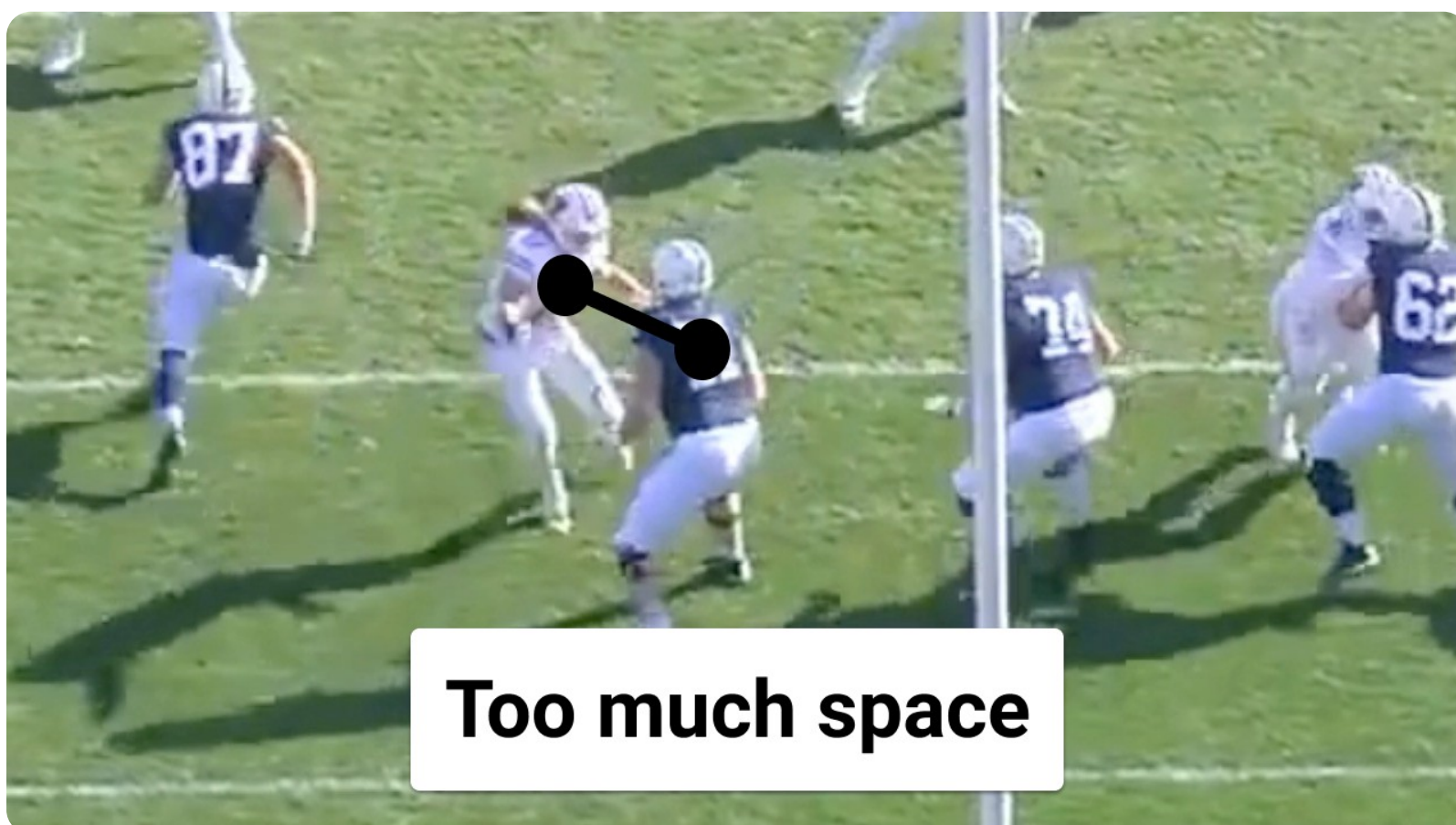
So, if you do want to get hits, hurries and sacks I would strongly recommend choosing first the correct rush path.

Stay tight

Secondly, make sure to **stay tight to your opponent** when turning the corner.

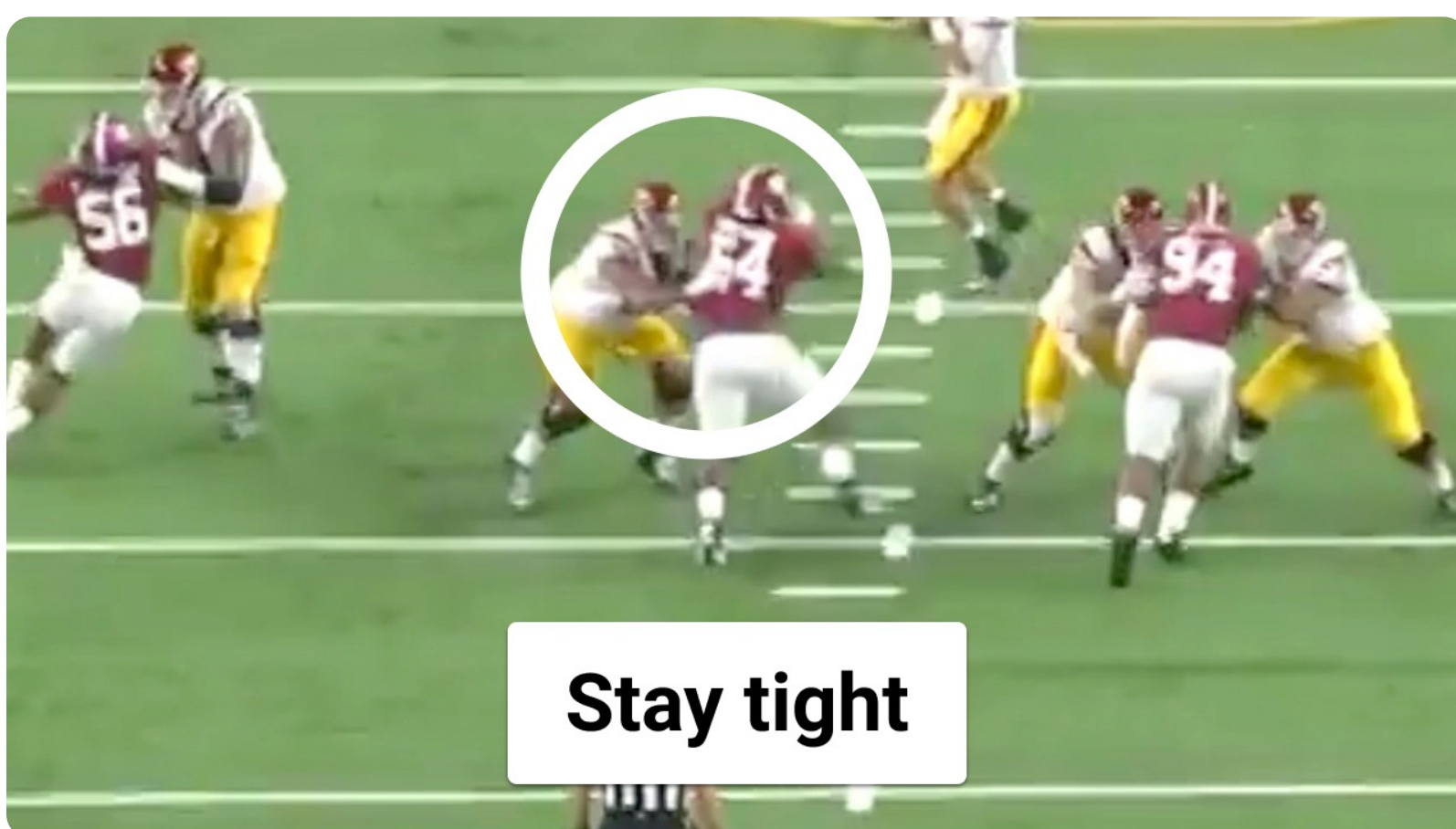
Too much space will give your opponent the opportunity to reset his hands and stop your rush.

click [here](#) to see example



On the other hand, a “tight turn” will prevent him from recovering and give you an uninhibited path to the QB.

click [here](#) to see example



Practice working in close spaces

To get comfortable rushing in close spaces you need to drill in close spaces.

For example, when hand fighting be no further than a yard from your drill partner.



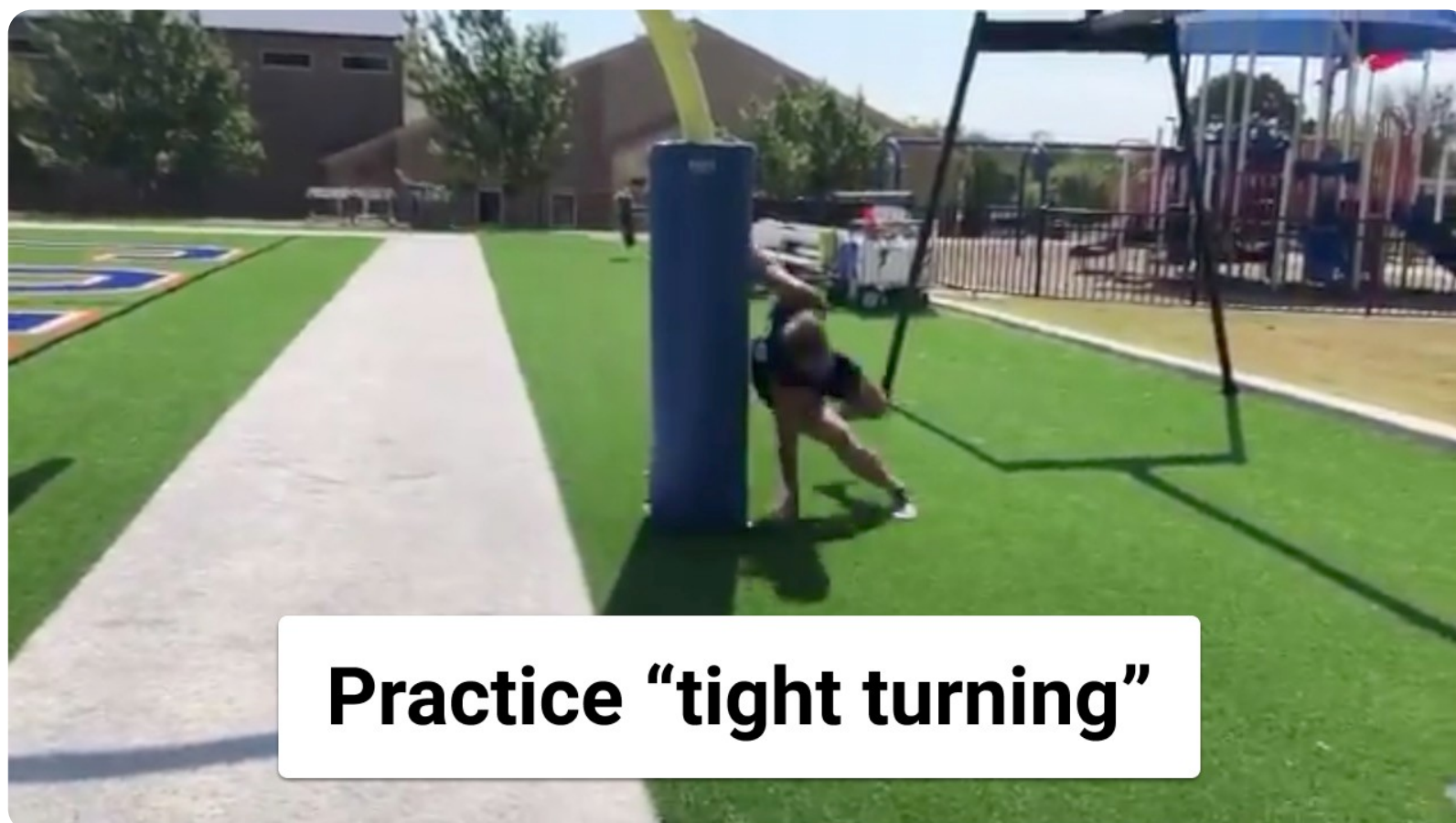
This puts you at the same exact distance you would be before executing a pass rush move in a live situation

And as you practice more from these uncomfortably tight positions you will feel more natural threatening your opponent in live situations.

Same goes for turning the corner.

As you practice “tight turning” it should become more and more natural and transfer to the game.

click [here](#) to see example



I know playing this tight can feel a bit awkward at first, but ultimately the **tighter you are to your man the closer you ultimately will be too the QB.**

And that my friends is why we pass rush.