

DEFENSIVE BACK TRAINING MANUAL



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Defensive Back Mindset

- To be the best you must believe in your ability to be successful.
- DBs have to be some of the most confident players on the field at all times.
- If you think you may get beat, you will get beat.
- But here's the thing...all DBs get beat, it's your mindset in how you prepare and recover to minimize how often you get beat.
- The way to success is through preparation. Don't settle for mediocrity.

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Defensive Back Play

Purpose of DBs:

1. Prevent the long ball/big plays (+15 yards)
2. Create turnovers - command field position
3. Minimize opponent's passing game
4. Defend the run on the perimeter

DB's Responsibilities:

1. Defend against opponents passing attack
2. Defend against opponent's runs
3. Defend against opponent's inside plays by crashing the middle
4. Be great tacklers

The team that makes the fewest mistakes at DB will win football games. To eliminate mistakes, DBs must concentrate! Every play is a new contest! To be a great in the secondary, you must eliminate the big plays

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Important Factors for DBs on Pass Defense

- **Keys:** Always read your keys and never make a mistake. Your most important asset as a DB are your eyes. Keep your eyes honest! You cannot have your eyes closed or head down. You also cannot get your eyes stuck in the backfield. Watch your keys! Your keys will be defined by your coverage and responsibility. You must perfect your keys in practice.
- **Communication:** Be loud in pass defense. You **MUST** communicate with your other DBs on the field. This is the key to a good defender on pass defense. Never be the **SILENT** You must yell. "IN, IN, IN" or "CRACK, CRACK" when you see these plays developing, considering your responsibility. If there is a WR or Slot to your side, you should be communicating all possible plays to your other DBs based on the formation. "He can get deep and inside". Second - "He Can Get Deep Outside". Third - Always be aware of the Hitch & Go.
- **Positioning:** You must always have good position on the Receiver. Make sure you remain honest based on what coverage you are in. Whether you need to keep outside or inside leverage. This is the secret to a great Pass Defense...your position on the Receiver. There is a proper position for every type of pass. This factor alone can kill you as a Pass Defender. Start movement with Receiver and slightly outside of him. Remember, the sideline is an extra defender on your team. Make the offense beat you on the sideline.
- **Anticipation:** Anticipate as to when the quarterback will throw the ball. But remember, anticipation can also get you beat. It's important to study and know your opponents tendencies so that you know what to anticipate. Every quarterback will let you know when he is throwing the ball. But you've got to study him - this will allow you to get a jump on the ball - stay honest with fakes and always that your anticipation could be wrong - be ready to **REACT** if you anticipate wrong. DBs have to be **CATS** on the field with incredible reaction speed.
- **Interception:** Always have one thought in mind...**THE BALL IS MINE** - you have just as much right to the football as the receiver - Try to get both hands on the ball on every single play. If you intercept the ball, get outside as quickly as possible. Make sure that you yell a "Fire" call when intercepting to let your teammates know they should block for you. Play to intercept every pass thrown. This is what they call a **BALL HAWK**. There is not a quicker way to kill offensive momentum. Always intercept the ball at its highest point. Be sure to go through the WR body to intercept the ball - this allows you to still make the tackle if you miss - Don't gamble by going in front or inside the Receiver unless the ball is low and you are sure of an interception.
- **Pass Pattern Recognition:** Study their favorite routes - you will work against them during the week of practice - be able to recognize the pattern when it unfolds. This is vital for every DB in the secondary - Reading the pattern. You have to study film over and over to get this right. Spend at least 30 minutes each day watching film on your opponent! From studying the opponents film, you will be able to key in on tendencies and this will make your anticipation that much tighter. But remember, your opponent is studying you too! So beware of your own tendencies!

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DB Techniques

Stance

- In zone coverage, Corners make sure that you have an open stance on the outside of #1 so you can see the entire field from your vantage point.
- For safeties, have a staggered stance, with your inside foot in front.
- Make sure that your feet are parallel and shoulder width apart with a bend at the hips. The most important thing to remember is to always have a good stance with a solid base with your shoulders over your toes. But do not be a robot - your stance may vary based on your body type and ability.

Start

- Your start begins with a good stance
- For safeties, push off your front foot and step with your back foot.
- For Corners, push off of your front foot, and start your slide.
- Corners need to make sure that they keep your feet touching the ground. Do not bounce.
- First 3 steps are read steps
- Allow your shoulders to gradually rise, but keep them in front of your hips. Do not ever lean backwards, especially when coming out of your stance.

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DB Techniques (cont.)

Basic Keys

- Always read the ball to man in zone coverages. Keep your eyes honest.
- When in doubt, read the nearest receiver. Do not let a receiver run freely!
- In man coverage play through the man to the ball
- In passing situations, read the QB for 3 - 5 step drop
 - 3 step drop = quick game
 - 5 step drop = medium or deep ball

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DB Techniques (cont.)

Back Pedal

- Your backpedal should begin with 3 steps. This will enable you to be in proper body control, and give you a good opportunity to read the offense. Some techniques are different depending on the defense, but this is a general rule
- Reach back with each step and pull weight over feet. Stay low and bent at the hips. Just as running forward keep weight on the balls of your feet.
- This is not a bounce or a skip backwards. Raise your feet only high enough off the ground to have your feet clear the grass. You only gain speed with the backpedal if your feet are hitting the ground fast. If you are lifting your feet too high you are wasting motion (quick feet).
- Do not over stride when backpedaling. Take small to medium steps.
- Make sure that you bend your knees - this allows the feet to extend past the hips
- Keep feet tight to your body and no wider than hips; your waist should be bent and your shoulders should be slightly in front of hips
- Move your arms in a relaxed manner with your elbows, with elbows in. Arms should be at a 90 degree angle and relaxed.
- Stay in back pedal as long as possible

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DB Techniques (cont.)

Cushion

- In certain coverages you want to create a vertical cushion with the WR: You need a vertical distance between the DB and receiver. (typically 4 yards if not press coverage).
- In some coverages you want to have a horizontal cushion: Each defensive back must know his own speed and hips as to when his cushion is threatened to be broken. He must know the speed of the WR and when the gap is closing he must open his hips and execute a 180 degree turn.

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DB Techniques (cont.)

Weave

- The weave technique allows DBs to adjust back pedal according to the receiver's release. By weaving the receiver will not be able to get your square or get you to turn prematurely.
- Elements of a good weave include:
 - Know the angle that you need to take based on the coverage and tendencies of route running
 - Make sure that you use the proper back pedal technique
 - Use your opposite foot to push in your desired direction (push off left foot to go right)
 - Lead with your butt, and keep your shoulders square
 - Make sure you do not cross your feet

Turn & Go

- Throw your elbow and point your toe in the direction that you want to go. You need to clear your hips as quickly as possible to be effective.
- Use a low shoulder level to extend further.
- Make sure that you zone turn inside toward the QB when your comfortable cushion between the WR is compromised.
- Use the Man turn toward your man in man coverage if your cushion is broken

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DB Techniques (cont.)

Directional Read Of Quarterback

- It is extremely difficult and risky for a QB to throw across his body. Read the front shoulder of the QB for direction and elevation.
- Focus on the point of the shoulder as to what direction of the field he is looking to throw.
- Look at his shoulder level to determine the depth of the ball. Key shoulder level trajectory
 - If shoulders are parallel = short zone
 - If shoulders are up = deep zone
- Watch the QB's off-hand. When the QB's off-hand comes off the ball, it's time to drive to the interception point

Plant and Drive

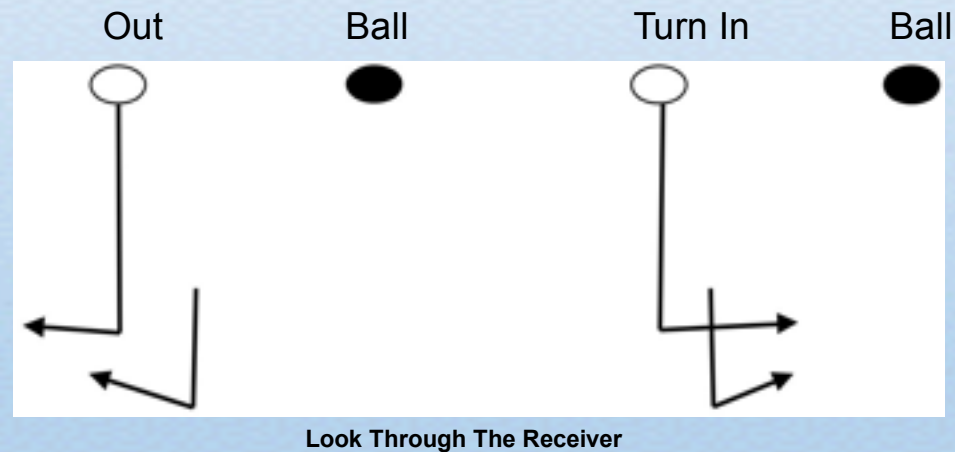
- Different coaches teach different break techniques. The point is to not waste any steps or motion regardless of which technique you use. Keep feet underneath, narrow base, and pads over toes
- Keep hips down
- Shorten stride length to keep power
- Push off foot opposite the desired direction, point toe of lead foot and hips in the direction you want to go
- It should feel like a leg churn. Drive for interception point.

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DB Techniques (cont.)

Playing the Ball

- Do not lose sight of your man! Always find your man first. In man coverage, you must always see the man that you are covering as you look for the ball.
- Keep the receiver in your vision as you play the ball. Look through the receiver to the ball.



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DB Techniques (cont.)

Playing The Pass

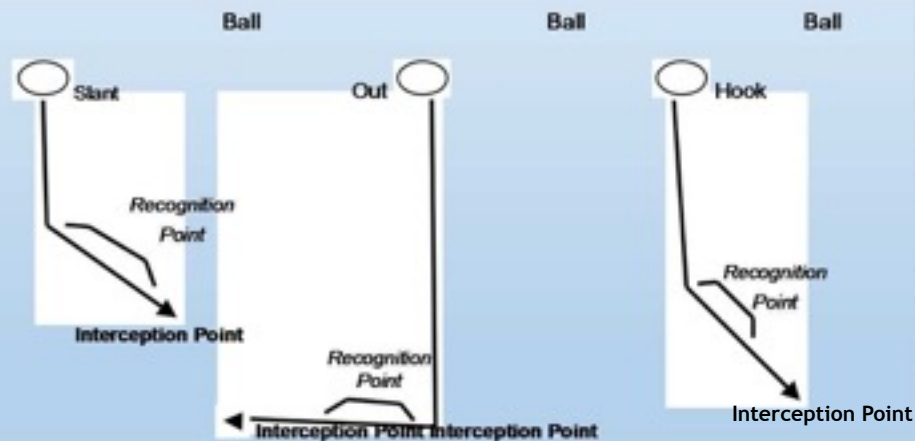
- What is the recognition point?
- It is the instant or spot at which the DB identifies the pass pattern being run.
- Pass routes are either short (1-5 yards), intermediate (6-15 yards), or deep (16+ yards) There are only three things a receiver can do at each level.
 - outside push
 - inside push, or
 - up field push
- Receivers are taught 3 main things when running a pass pattern
 - The type of release from LOS: It's extremely important that you maintain your leverage
 - Use a deceptive move: the WR wants you to open your hips the wrong way so that they can create separation. The DB has to maintain concentration and proper cushion
 - The pattern: the DB has to explode to the interception point at the top of the route.

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DB Techniques (cont.)

Interception point = The point where the pass will actually be caught and can be intercepted.

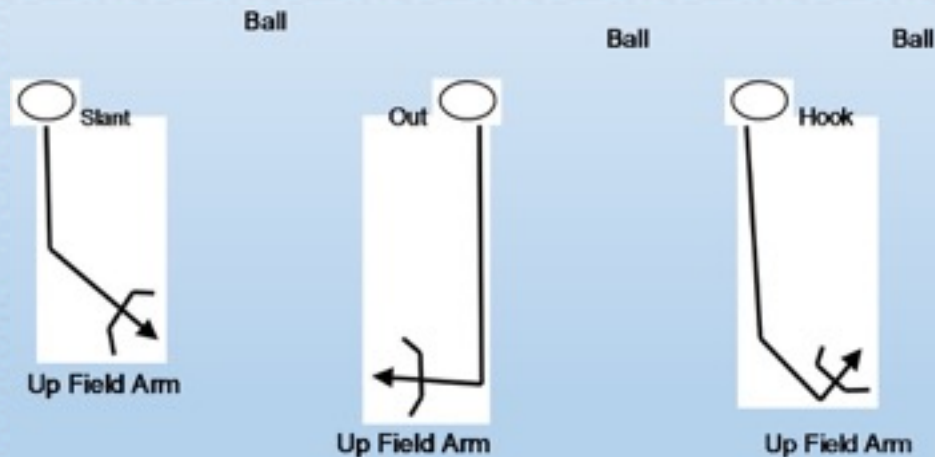
- 6 yards from recognition point for inside patterns and inside patterns coming to the ball.
- 8-10 yards from patterns going away from the ball
- When driving to interception point, do not lose site of the man that you are covering. Do not look for the ball until your cushion has been closed (make sure that you close on the upfield shoulder)



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DB Techniques (cont.)

If your man is going to catch the ball with no chance of you deflecting the pass or intercepting it, make sure that you rip for the upfield arm. This is the furthest arm from the ball. This will also ensure that if you miss that you can make the tackle. Remember an incompleteness is just the same as running a play that has failed to gain a yard.



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DB Run Defense

HOW TO BEAT A RUN BLOCK:

- The game comes down to beating the man across the line from you one on one and making a tackle. There are 4 basic steps to this:
 - **Blow Delivery:** You must first neutralize the blocker by delivering a blow to him. You must shock the blocker and stop his forward momentum with a quick explosive pop. Try to avoid hitting a bigger player square in the shoulders as they will often win that battle. Be careful doing this as you don't want to shield yourself from the play!
 - **Separation:** You must create separation from the blocker. Arm's length separation from the blocker prevents him from holding you and keeps your body away from his so that you can see where the ball is.
 - **Disengagement:** You must throw the blocker to the side, lift his shoulder and rip past him or pull his shoulder down and swim past him. Your escape must be quick, violent and explosive - Do not get into a tussle with the blocker. Their whole goal is to slow you down.
 - Your feet can never stop moving. Quick feet are a key to beating a block.
 - **Pursuit And Tackle:** Make sure that you take the correct angles and use the sideline as an extra defender. if you have already done the above. Never stop pursuit. You never know what can happen with second chance plays.

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Tackling

- There are 4 pieces to the textbook tackle
- **Hands:** Keep your hands by your side in leading up to the tackle so that you can explode them upward at the moment of impact. Your hands are like guns in the holsters, and at the moment of impact, you are pulling your pistols. Wrapping up is the key to tackling. Throw your arms into the armpits of the ball-carrier and squeeze your chest as if you were doing a chest fly weight lift.
- **Knees:** You have to keep driving your knees when you tackle. If you stop your drive you will get ran over. Starting from a balanced stance, you should drive your knees upward and into your opponent as you tackle. Your knees should continue to drive as you make impact and not stop throughout the tackle. This will help you to “run through” the ball-carrier.
- **Hips:** Your hips are the most important part of the tackle. Good hip movement comes from first having a proper stance and body position prior to the tackle. You maintain good body position by utilizing the “shuffle” technique right before impact. Keep your center of gravity low enough to get your leg power when you explode into the ball carrier.
- **Eyes:** You have to keep your eyes open when tackling. You have to see what you are hitting. Remember to keep your head up. Never use your helmet to tackle.
- If you are too high, you won't have any power to drive through the ball-carrier
- Don't tackle with our arms, tackle with our entire body. DBs are known for missing tackles. Don't miss tackles.

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Don't Get Beat Deep

- Expect every play to be a pass play.
- Always maintain your cushion. Don't let them get behind you
- Study all Backs and Receivers for their techniques and tipoffs, such as stances, pointing, glances, etc.
- Bait the long ball from the QB, be confident in your ability to intercept every pass. But don't be too risky.
- When the ball is thrown, take the quickest path to the ball. IT'S YOUR BALL. A ball in the air is fair game. Don't be timid.
- Always go for the interception at the highest point, Never sit and wait on it. Attack the ball
- Keep all running plays inside.
- Never leave your feet unless it is to go up to intercept the ball at the highest point...unless you absolutely have to.

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Proper Pass Defense

- Understand all the coverage concepts. When a coverage is called in the huddle, think through all scenarios based on what you know their tendencies to be. Know your responsibility in both run and pass situations. Know where your help is.
- Know WR substitutions as they come into the huddle. Check the formation of the offense coming out the huddle.
- Recognize and call the strength of the formation and its direction. Know formation strengths or keys as to certain plays
- Make sure you know the call on the field. The free safety should quickly glance to the sideline for any adjustments from the defensive coaching staff.
- Get and maintain proper position on your intended receiver. Keep your hips and shoulders square for as long as you can with the receiver.
- Practice the ability to see the ball being thrown. Get proper position on the interception and play only the ball

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Approach & Positioning

- Hitch Route - force and attack the receiver through his outside shoulder. Force him to the inside where your help is. Recognize this route immediately.
- Out Route - drive to the Receiver's upfield shoulder. Go through the receiver from a top position. As you drive to the receiver, mentally think of an Out and Up route. This will allow you to adjust much quicker.
- Blitz Situations - close your cushion down on the receiver. Anticipate the ball being thrown quickly. The pressure will force things to happen much faster. Many interceptions happen during blitz situations.
- The best possible position to be in on any type of WR's route is to look through the receiver to the football. Keep your eyes honest. See the QB throw the ball
- Make sure that you maintain proper cushion on a receiver. Do not allow the receiver to get closer than 3 yards to your position in Zone coverage
- Position yourself for the interception or the pass break up. By being in proper position on a WR, you will be close enough to strip or punch the football. Remember you can reach across the WR's face by using your inside arm to contact the ball.
- Look for collisions. Believe that you can physically intimidate receivers.
- Know the routes that you must defend against with and without help from another defender. When you have an outside position responsibility on a receiver, don't go for an inside fake with an inside position responsibility it's just the opposite.

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Approach & Positioning

- When driving on a football with a receiver in front of you, keep one arm on each side of him and go through his shoulder blades to the ball. Try to punch the ball out while securing the tackle
- To properly drive on a quick slant or post route, drive down the line for a collision point. Drive flat at him and for the incomplete pass. Make sure that if you go for the ball you can still make the tackle. Decrease or squeeze the angle for the route.
- Basic position on a receiver:
 - The basic position on a receiver will depend on the coverage call
 - The basic reference point is the receiver's shoulder
 - Vertical cushion is difficult to maintain on a fast WR. Most DBs are beat because they compromised the cushion.
 - In Man coverage, keep tight on the hip - but not so much that you lose your leverage to react. Remember you must react much quicker to a receiver in this type of coverage.

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Playing For Interceptions

- Do not hesitate. You must aggressively close the distance on a football in the air. Catch the ball at its highest point
- Remember that it is your ball too. Total concentration must be on the football when it is in the air. Play the football, not the receiver.
- Most people make fun of DBs not being able to catch. Catch the football out in front of you with both hands. Work in practice on catching the ball in front of you with your hands. This takes practice.
- Don't let the WR make a second chance catch. When contact is made on the football and you cannot control the catch, knock it down to the ground not in the air for a possible reception
- Keep your pursuit on play away. When the football is thrown in another zone across the field, drive to the ball. You will get there for a possible tip or to block for the interception.
- When making a break in any direction, drive full speed. Practice a 5-step burst of speed in every angle break drill in practice this is a great advantage.
- By being aggressive, you can learn to intimidate a player. Go through a receiver's face mask for a ball.
- If you cannot go for the interception, then go for the pass break up. Punch the ball with either hand as you secure the tackle. The ball will come loose if the receiver has not put the ball away.
- Learn to judge the long ball. This can only be done by practice. Watch the point of the ball and use one extra step when judging the ball
- Be ready to intercept a pass if it is deflected - don't quit on the ball.
- Remember, you have equal rights to the ball once it is in the air so play rough, but always play the ball not the man

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Creating Turnovers

3 Ways to Cause Fumbles:

- Accidental - Center/QB Exchange, Handoff miscue
- Knock loose - proper tackling (eyes on ball)
- Stripping ball - 2nd & 3rd player (50% of fumbles happen to QB scrambling)

Recovering Fumbles:

- Situational football, you have to know the situation of the game - are you ahead? what is the field position? what is the time and score?

There are two basic methods of fumble recovery

- Scoop and score - this will change the momentum of the game if you can turn a fumble into position points for your team
- Cradle and cover - only try to scoop and score if you have a clear path. Otherwise fall onto the ball into the fetal position.
- Fight for the ball underneath the pile. Many possession changes in to dog fight for the ball.

Interceptions

- Most interceptions come during zone coverage. Develop the mentality that the ball is YOURS

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Defensive Back Pre/Post Snap Progression

Pre-Snap Situation Recognition:

1. Down & Distance
2. Field Position
3. Hash
4. Time in the game; the time in the game will determine most coaches play calling. Know how much time is remaining in the 2nd and 4th qtr.
5. Score: in the lead = use time; Behind = conserve time

Calls & Communication

Communication is an essential part of successful defensive back play. Whether it is seeing the formations, calling out the strong side of the field, or calling coverages, it is crucial to the defense that you are loud and clear

Zone Coverage Basics

- Be as deep as the deepest and wide as the widest man in your zone
- Always keep your receiver far enough in front so you can see through to the passer
- Never break until the ball is thrown
- In zone coverage, carry a receiver approximately 5 yards and do so cautiously. Watch for a crossing man into your zone
- If two men come into one defensive man's zone, the defender is responsible for the deeper man of the two
- The purpose of zone is to keep everything in front. Don't worry about short passes being completed in front of you, they may lead to a first down, but long completions will bring touchdowns
- Keep your eyes honest. Look through the receiver into the the passer on any zone defense
- Talk to your teammates - this will improve your coverage and allow for the necessary understanding amongst all the defensive backs. BE LOUD AND REPEAT

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Zone Coverage Basics (cont.)

Zone Advantages:

- Provides for long ball security:
 - Cardinal rule of zone is to never let a receiver get behind a defender. This helps stop the long TD
 - Soft pressure of zone defenders makes it harder to achieve the long pass
- The zone defense is simple to learn because the defender has:
 - An area to cover rather than an individual
 - Plays ball from the time it leaves the passer's hand
 - Not paying as much attention to fakes because of this
- The defender in the zone has a clear picture up front which allows him to:
 - Determine running plays from passing plays
 - See the Quarterback as he throws the ball.
- The Zone pass defense has a good depth which helps keep the secondary from getting caught too shallow
- Interceptions will be greater because of the positions of defenders on the field
- Eliminate mismatches of Man to Man coverages.

Zone Disadvantages:

- Higher completion percentage of short passes - this can be offset by great anticipation.
- Giving up certain areas of the field depending on the zone coverage called

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Man Coverage Basics

- Concentrate on the man not the QB. Keep your eyes honest.
- Make sure that you have proper body positioning and leverage on the WR
- Keep your eyes on the man you are covering at all times
- Don't look for the ball unless you are on your man's hip. Play the man first and the ball second
- If you are playing man coverage with 1 high safety: Force #1 outside and #2 inside towards the safety
- If you are playing with 2 high safeties: Force everything inside
- Play the WR tighter than you would in zone coverage
- Expect quicker patterns. When you play man coverage you are usually coming after them with a hard pass rush or a blitz.
- Do not lose leverage on the WR. Do not get in a head up position with receiver.
- If you get beat deep, fix your eyes on the receiver and drive until you close the gap before looking for the ball.

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Man Coverage Basics (cont.)

Man Advantages:

- Speed is required! Allows you to play tighter on the receivers and use your best athletes against theirs
- Man coverage allows you to keep more people in the box to defend the run
- Man coverage allows for you to put more pressure on the QB.
- It disrupts the WR release point and makes it more difficult for receivers to run proper routes. You can also disrupt timing for the QB & WR.

Man Disadvantages:

- The DBs have their back to the defense, so you are much more vulnerable to big runs if they break the LOS
- Since you have to play tighter on the WR, you are more susceptible to deception and double moves.
- DBs cannot cover for as long, so if the QB creates time for himself, WRs can get open.
- You are vulnerable to the big play.

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Defensive Back Film Review Guide

Study the WR each week!

1. What is their release technique? _____
2. Do they have any fake technique? (Look For Head Fakes, Stutter Steps, Arm Movement & Body Leans)
3. _____
4. WR Type: Speed or Possession
5. How does the WR's speed relate your speed? Faster Same Slower
6. What is the toughness scale? Physical Fair Soft
7. What are their favorite patterns? _____
8. Does he have any tipoffs? Yes No What are they? _____
9. Deep & Inside: _____ Deep & Outside: _____
10. Deep & Straight: _____ Short & Inside: _____
11. Short & Outside: _____ Quick Passes: _____
12. How do they do in press coverage? Good Fair Poor
13. How do they do in off-coverage? Good Fair Poor
14. Who is their primary receiver on 3rd down? _____
15. What is their run ability after catch? _____
16. How does he carry the ball after catch? Tight or Loose

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Defensive Back Film Review Guide (cont.)

Study the OL each week!

How are the O-Line splits?

Base Formation: _____ Play-Action _____ Drop-Back _____

Goal-Line: _____ Short-Yardage _____ Plays To: _____

Plays Away: _____

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Defensive Back Film Review Guide (cont.)

What are the QB tendencies?

1. How is his arm strength? Excellent Good Fair Poor
2. How is his accuracy? Excellent Good Fair Poor
3. Is he affected by pressure? Always Sometimes Never
4. What are favorite thrown routes? : _____
5. Does He Look Before Throwing? Always Sometimes Never
6. Will He Run? Always Sometimes Never When: _____
7. Is he easy to fool on coverages? Always Sometimes Never
8. What is his footwork? 1-Step 3-Step 5-Step 7-Step Sprint Out
9. How does he run play action? Always Sometimes Never
10. Does he run fakes well? Always Sometimes Never
11. How does he tipoff when he's passing? _____

Defensive Back Film Review Guide (cont.)

What is their Run technique?

Dive: _____	Double Team: _____
Pull: _____	Trap: _____
Down Block: _____	Reach Block: _____
Influence Blocks: _____	Man: _____
Special Play: _____	Option: _____

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Defensive Back Film Review Guide (cont.)

Other Items

1. Short Yardage Technique: _____
2. Goal-Line Technique: _____
3. Toughest Plays For Me To Read: _____
4. Downs They Run The Draw: _____
5. Downs They Run The Screen: _____
6. Pass Protections Used: _____
7. Players Strengths: _____
8. Players Weaknesses: _____
9. What Must I Do To Successfully Complete My Assignments: _____