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Training the “Nub” Side Corner in the Run Game

Category: [Defense](#)

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By Mark Hendricks

Defensive Coordinator

Lenape High School (NJ)



Bio: Mark Hendricks is currently the defensive coordinator at Lenape High School in New Jersey. Prior to his time at

Lenape, Hendricks was the cornerbacks coach at James Madison University from 2008-2012. He was also the defensive coordinator at Rowan University (NJ) for a season.

Editor's Note: The following transcript was written and recorded by Mike Kuchar.

It's clear that many offensive coordinators try their hardest to manipulate formations so that they get their tailback in a one on one situations with a Cornerback. This is typically done by having the strength of the formation away from the Tight End and having the Corner aligned on the same side of the Tight End (**Diagram 1**). And why wouldn't they? Corners have traditionally been known as one of the weaker tacklers on the team. Well, there are ways to train your "nub side" corner to make plays in both the run and pass game- and Coach Hendricks details all of these methods in this report.



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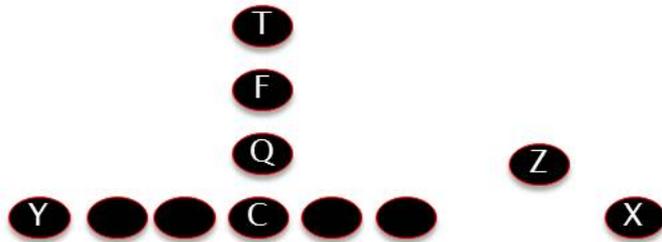
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- [Special Report](#) 108
- [Blitz](#) 102
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Diagram 1 Pro Formation vs. Nub Corner



C

6x3

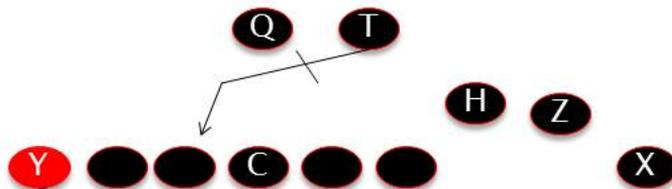
CB aligned away from formation strength
CB is 6 yards deep, 3 yards wide of TE



Nub Side Corner in Man Coverage

In most occasions, that backside Corner will be in a man to man situation with that backside Tight End. Hendricks will have his Corner at a 6x3 alignment (which is six yards deep, and three yards wide) but maintaining outside leverage. "He needs to show up against the run, but may not be needed to contain the football." According to Hendricks, he will often have a Defensive End or Linebacker to that side as the contain player. The reason is mainly due to zone read schemes that will arc the tight end. "The tight end release looks like a pass route," says Hendricks. "North Carolina busted it against us two years ago because the tight end ran the boot off the inside zone play (Diagram 2)."

Diagram 2 TE Arc (Boot) vs. Nub Corner



C

TE Arc releases and runs Drag in boot concepts
CB in man situation



Hendricks will use what he calls a man-on-man key in these situations. "We read high and low hat of Tight End," said Hendricks. "If the Tight End blocks, we come on hard vs. run. If the Tight End releases, we stay over the top and keep leverage on him, but we can't stay stride for stride with him." Many times when the Corner is alone on that Tight End, Hendricks will play a "I and O" (inside and outside coverage) with the remaining linebacker to his side against the Tight End and the back (Diagram 3). "What we prefer to do is what we call 'Joe' where the Corner will play tight end regardless and the linebacker plays the back (Diagram 4). "The Tight End could crack linebacker and they can swing the back (Diagram 5). You need to have both because of the crack scheme. If the Corner is manned up, he will not slide or shuffle. He has to chase any true crossing route to work through up field shoulder."

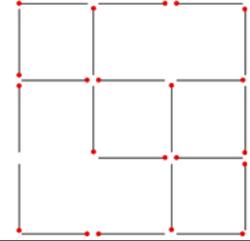
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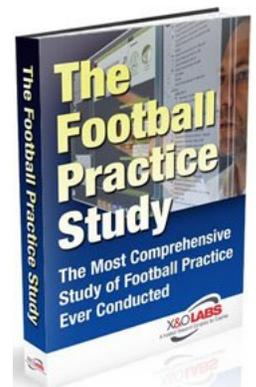
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Diagram 3 CB in Inside/Outside vs. TE

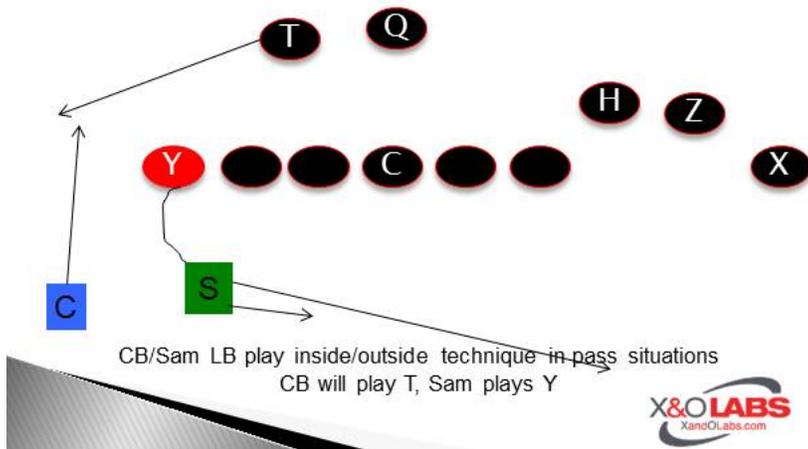


Diagram 4 "Joe" Technique

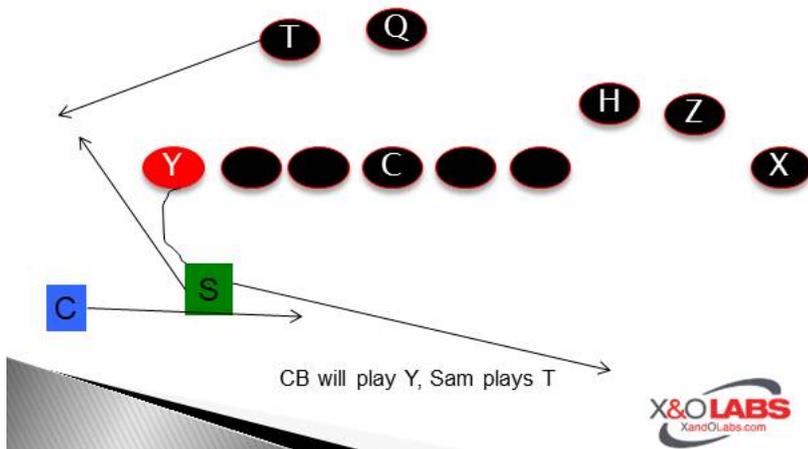
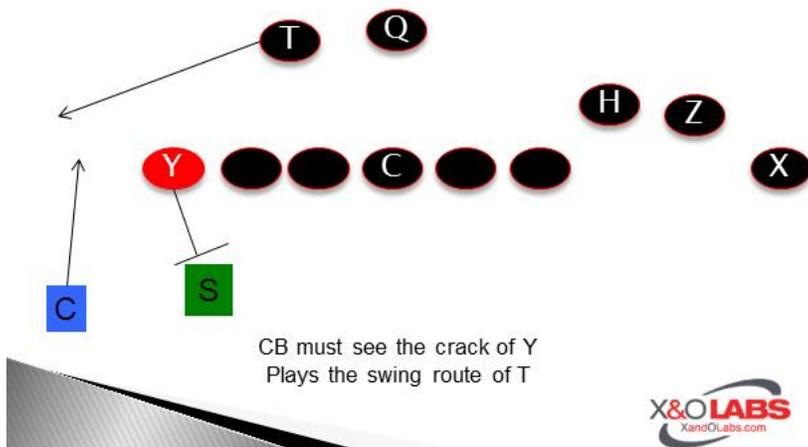


Diagram 5 Y Crack/TB Swing



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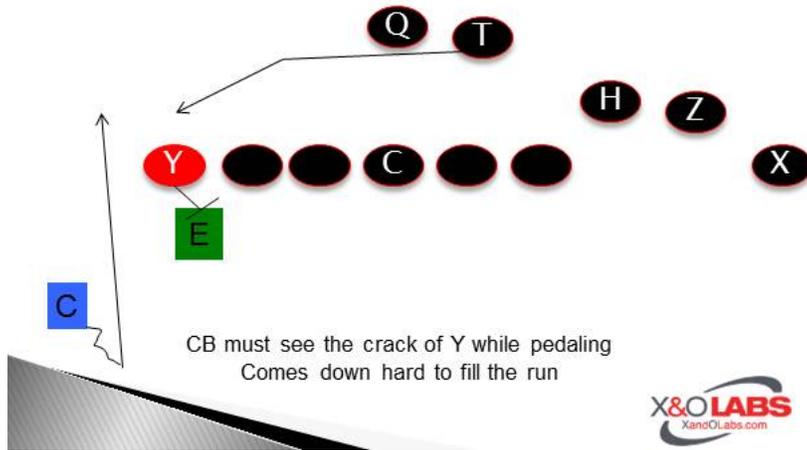
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The Corner must be ready to show up if he gets a crack block by the Tight End - who he is keying. Hendricks calls a "crack block" anytime that Tight End blocks down. So, even if the Tight End blocks down on the Defensive End, the Corner must be ready to show up in the run game **(Diagram 6)**. "We talk about 'staying at the level' of the Tight End," said Hendricks. "He will tempo pedal out, but when he sees crack block he will go."

Diagram 6 Y Crack/TB Swing



Nub Side Corner in Two High Rotations

In two high rotations, Hendricks likes his Corners wider because they are not box players. "No matter what happens, we don't want anybody running up the sideline," said Hendricks. In order to do this, he'll have his corners 5x4 off the Tight End **(Diagram 7)** with the purpose of leveraging perimeter runs or options. One of those perimeter runs mentioned could be the Truck, or double pull concepts **(Diagram 8)**. "If he gets a down scheme by TE and a pull by Tackle or Center in truck, we will take work to takes his legs out," said Hendricks. "Lineman don't want to see it. We will try to hit that as fast as you're handing the ball. We're reading the V of the neck of the TE. When we see that down and the puller or FB coming to get us, we're going like a bat out of hell right now to set the edge. If the back is hell bent on getting outside, we need to make sure he runs the hump so that our defense can run it down."

Diagram 7 Nub Corner in Two-High Coverage

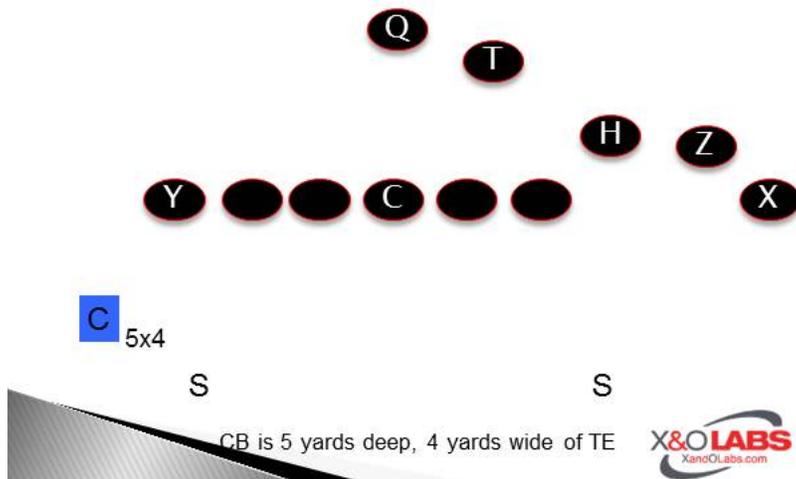
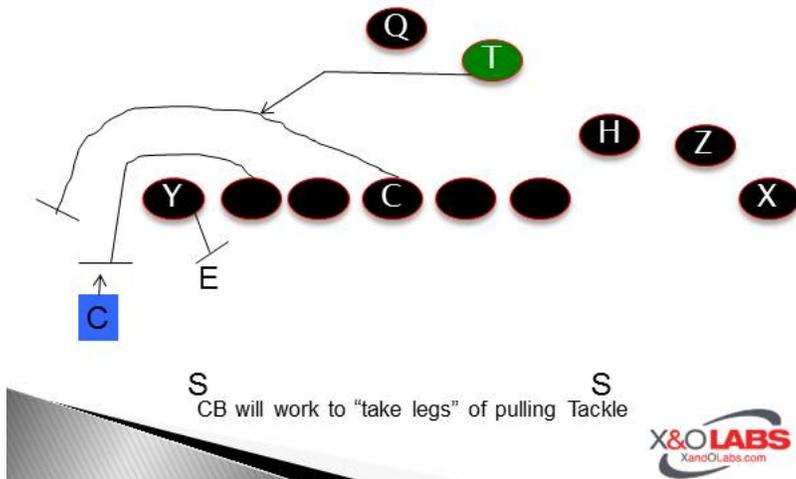


Diagram 8 Truck vs. Nub Corner



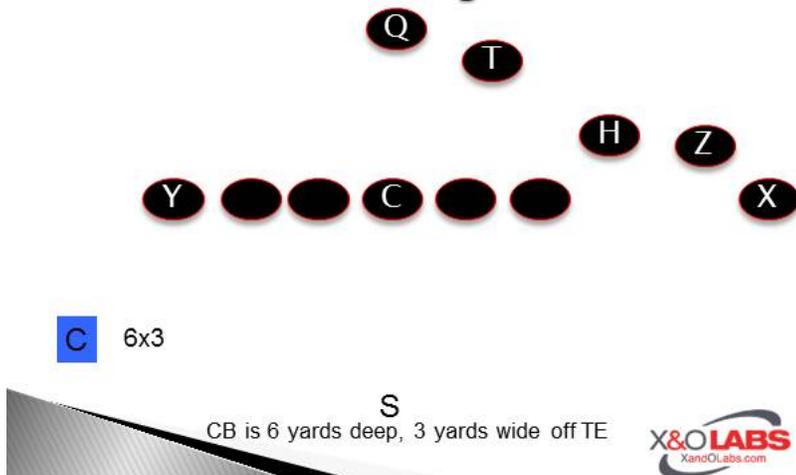
Our coaching point on taking the legs of the Tackle is be high on the shin. We're not going for knees, we're going for shin. I want to go outside in and cut vertically. With bigger body OL, they are used to it. We want to reduce the space. Sometimes this technique depends on coverage on whether or not we hit it too fast. If you're a flat defender you are going right now. I either wait for it and run the risk of getting my butt handed to me, with guys that are 180 pounds. The best thing we have is speed. We'll be throwing legs in the process with it if we go hard. It's a whole lot different than cover three when someone else is responsible for containing the football."

The Quarters Coverage Study: An In-Depth Research Analysis of the Most Universal Coverage in Football

Nub Side Corner in Three Deep Rotations

In three-deep rotations, Hendricks prefers to have his Corners at a 6x3 alignment off the Tight End (**Diagram 9**). He plays with a 7-technique Defensive End, which causes the outside linebacker to see the down block and set the edge. "When our corner gets a run block we just say 'bounce at the level.' We don't want to get in the line of scrimmage and have the ball cutback. The CB becomes the guy unaccounted for so he must be in a position to make the tackle. The Sam (outside linebacker) is the force player. The corner cannot be too fast fitting outside the Sam. *More times than not, the CB should be fitting inside of the Sam.* He wants to be at the level of the ball. He's six yards deep, three yards wide. We define it by flow. Hard flow is anything that's downhill, fast flow is anything that's outside. Hard flow plays (life off tackle schemes) most of the time do not get to the Corner. The Sam and Mike are involved. On fast flow schemes (like outside zone or toss), the Corner is involved quite a bit because he's the extra defender out there. Offensive coaches want that corner to be responsible for the run game."

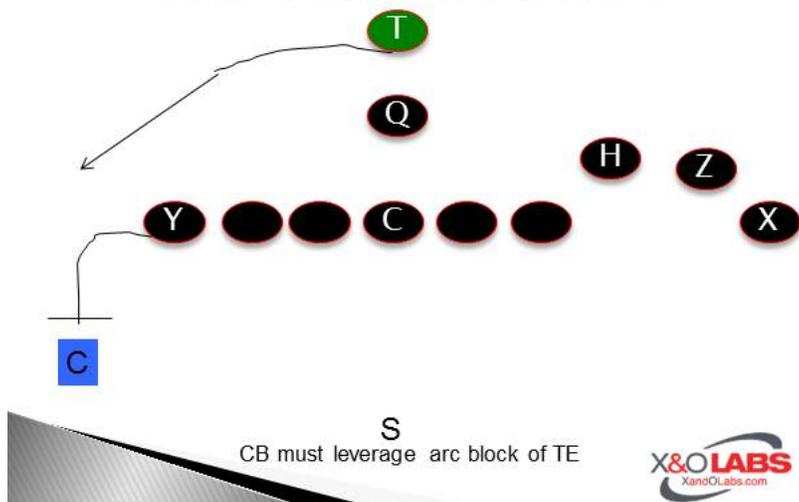
Diagram 9 Nub Corner in Three Deep Coverage



Block Destruction on Tight End

According to Hendricks, one of the techniques he really has to rep is block destructing a Tight End on an arc block (**Diagram 10**). "We react to what we see. It's a challenge we really like- because we have the 'make them miss' mindset. We will give an inside jab move, move followed by a rip or a swim. We want to make him miss. If we're in flat and halves situation (and we are the flat defender) with an arc block we will hard jointing it by keeping outside shoulder clean and attack the inside breast plate with his inside hand trying to gain some extension and shock and shed it when he sees the ball coming. If that's something you're not working on a daily basis they get lost there. You're dealing with cover guys who make their money covering, not defeating blocks. Most of what I've done with them, I've done the same thing with my linebackers."

Diagram 10
Nub Corner vs. TE Arc



Cowboy Blitz

At times when Hendricks feels he wants his Corners to be more aggressive to the "Nub" side of formations, he will blitz them off the edge. According to Hendricks, it was his number one pressure at James Madison University last season.

"We move up to a yard on the tight end, with inside foot up and rip with the inside arm with our body is low to the ground," said Hendricks. "The only thing you have to your advantage to the three man side is your speed. You will not be more physical than those guys. When he comes off the edge he's the force player. We will get up on that Tight End and come off the edge.

Our reads will depend on whether or not the QB is in gun or under center. If he's under center, we're going to the football. If you're in the gun with the back to my side, I'm going to read the QB. If QB facing me, I'll take QB on zone read plays (**Diagram 11**). If the QB has his butt to me with the back on the other side, I'm taking dive (**Diagram 12**). Back is to the same side as Corner, QB's face to the Corner, so corner plays QB. Back is on other side, QB's butt is to corner, so the Corner takes dive.

Diagram 11
Cowboy Blitz (back to CB Side)

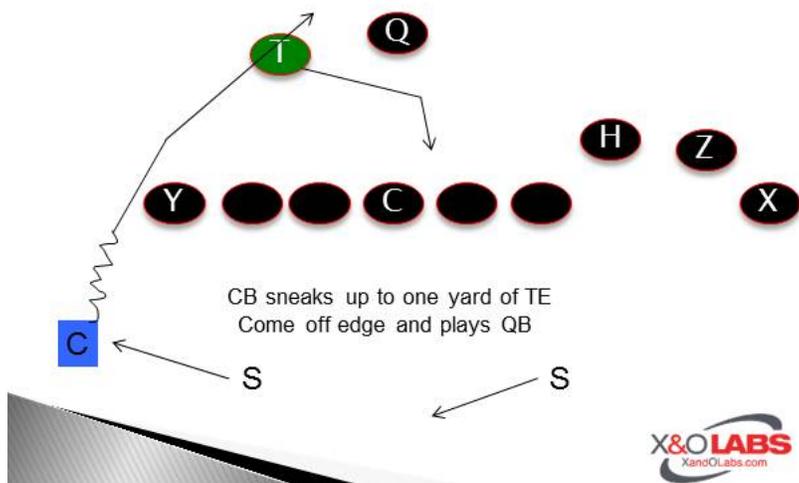
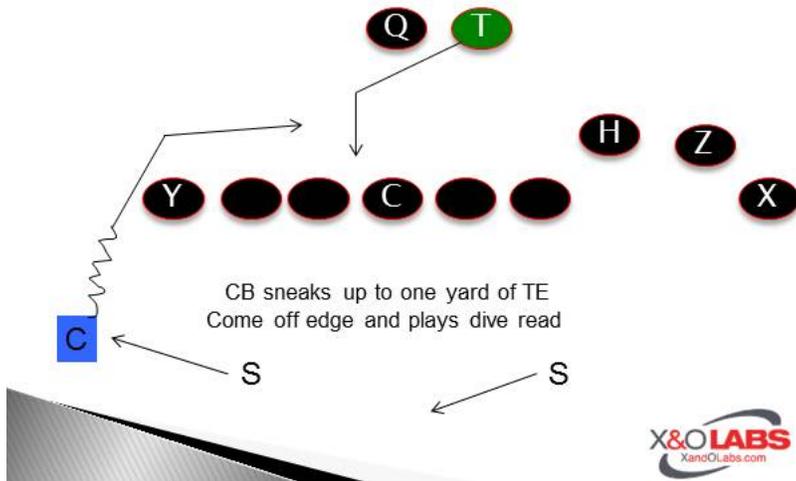


Diagram 12 Cowboy Blitz (back away)



Conclusion

We felt it was important to publish this piece because Cornerbacks are often the neglected player in the run game. Mark Hendricks does a terrific job explaining how to take on blocks based on coverage responsibility and run schemes. Understanding this material will not only make your Corners more physical in the run game, but smarter players overall.

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