

# Slide Protection Schemes and Technique

**Part I: 3-Step Passing Game**  
**Ken Wilmesherr**  
**Offensive Line Coach, Grossmont College**



Depending on defensive personnel, defensive structures, blitzes, dogs, line stunts, slants, twists, and personnel match-ups, it is important to incorporate half and full-line slide protection schemes into the three and five-step passing game.

Slide protection is a zone protection scheme. This means we don't chase defenders.

It is imperative that offensive linemen are very efficient when they execute the slide protection scheme as it relates to the three-step or five-step launch point of the quarterback.

In part one of this article will cover the key points of slide protection as it applies to the 3-step passing game. Part two will cover 5-step slide protection.

## **3-STEP SLIDE PROTECTION SCHEMES AND TECHNIQUES**

### **I. 3-Man, Half-Line Slide Protection Schemes**

Half-line slide protection is a zone protection scheme to the slide (or call) side. The center will make the call and the guards will echo the call. Each offensive lineman to the call side is responsible for blocking a specific gap.

It is crucial the offensive linemen to the call side maintain the proper spacing in order to decrease the pass rush lanes for the defense.

Most of the time we will slide away from the tight end; however, that may vary depending on our opponent's defensive structure and blitz package for that week.

Half-line slide protection can feature three and four-man slide schemes which are usually based on if the center is covered or uncovered.

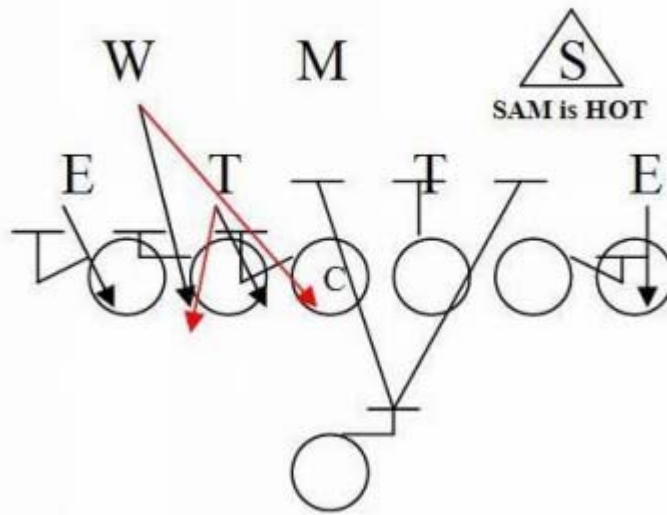
You can run three-step half and full-line slide protection to or away from the tight end. You can also keep the tight end in to block if protection is breaking down.

In a one back set, if the tight end is in the route you will have six to block seven, so you should build hot reads into your three-step slide protection package.

#### **1. Slide Protection Scheme Away From The TE When Will Is Blitzing A Or B Gap**

When the Will linebacker is blitzing the weak A or B gap; the center declares his responsibility to the weak side, working with the weak guard and tackle.

**Slide Protection Scheme Away From The TE (Left)  
When The Will LB Is Blitzing A Or B Gap**



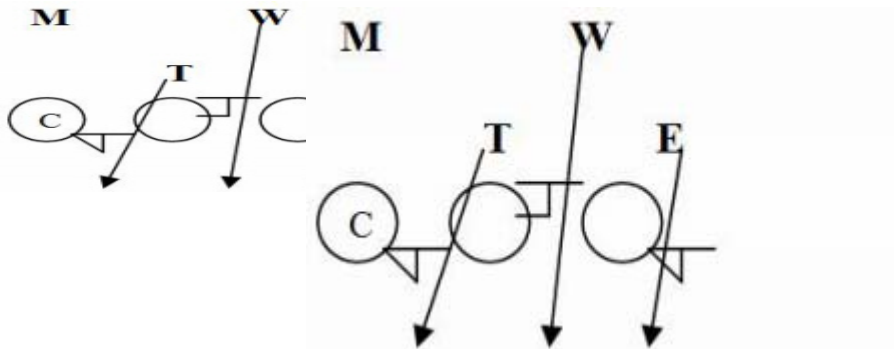
As demonstrated in Diagram 1, in this protection scheme the center, left guard, and left tackle are sliding to the left and are responsible for the left A, B and C gaps. They are setting on the defender over them while looking to their gap responsibility.

It is imperative the offensive linemen hold space. The right guard is BOB (big on big). The right tackle is also BOB; however, if the tight end is in the route and the right tackle is uncovered, then he will pass set on the 7 technique.

The running back will look inside out to the Mike linebacker to the Sam linebacker. If both the Mike and Sam blitz, then Sam is hot (the quarterback will know that Sam will be unblocked, and a receiver will be responsible for filling Sam's vacated zone).

Each sliding offensive lineman must punch with his inside arm (use his lever), which will help close off rush lanes while helping the lineman next to him in the slide.

Here is an example of a weak-side blitz from the right of the offense.



The center has declared his responsibility to the right. Three offensive linemen are sliding to the right, responsible for the gaps to the right.

Offensive linemen are setting on the defender over them and holding space looking to gap responsibility.

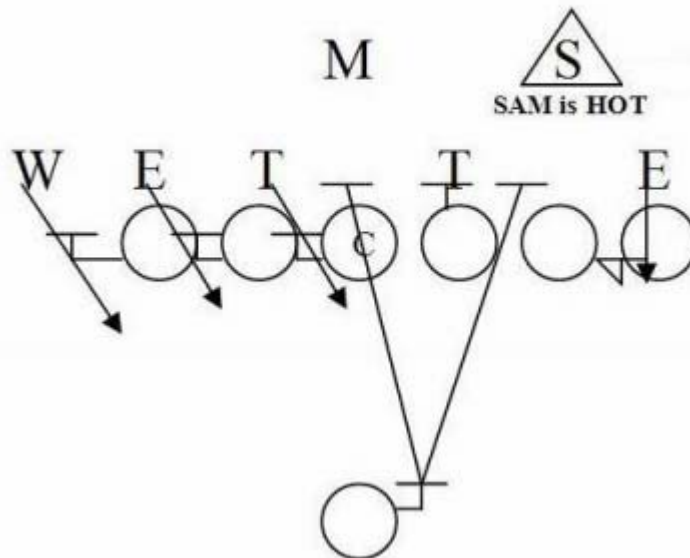
The Sam linebacker is hot.

## 2. Slide Protection Scheme Away From The TE When Will Is Blitzing Off The Edge

In this scheme, the weak tackle will make a call to alert the weak guard and center that the Will linebacker has walked up to the edge, ready to blitz the weak C gap. The center will declare his responsibility to the weak side, working with the weak guard and tackle.

As demonstrated in Diagram 2, three offensive linemen to the call side are sliding to the left setting on the defender to their outside. In this scheme, the offensive linemen to the call-side will kick directly to their gap responsibility and block any defender who comes to them.

Slide Protection Scheme Away From The TE (Left)  
When The Will LB Is Blitzing Off The Edge, (C Gap)

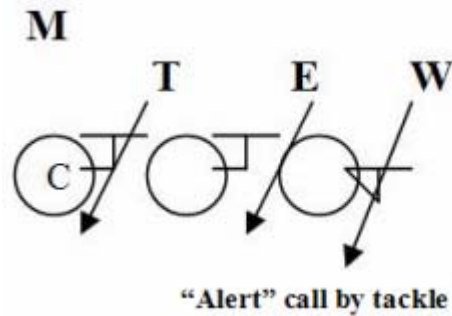


T

They must be careful not to gain a lot of width when executing the slide. With Will blitzing the edge, linemen should expect the down defender to pinch, and if they over set (set too wide) they will give up the inside, thus allowing easy quarterback pressure.

The right guard and tackle are both BOB. The running back will look inside out to the Mike linebacker to the Sam linebacker. If both the Mike and Sam blitz, the Sam is hot.

Here is an example of a weak-side blitz from the right of the offense.



The center has declared his responsibility to the right. Three offensive linemen are sliding to the right, responsible for the gaps to the right.

The linemen are setting on the defender to their outside. The tackle made an alert call when he saw the Will linebacker on the edge.

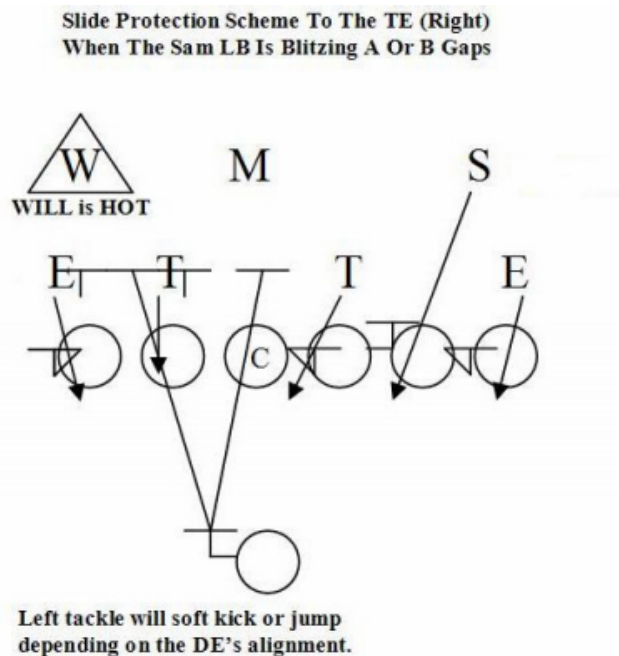
The Sam linebacker is hot.

### 3. Slide Protection Scheme To The TE When Sam Is Blitzing A Or B Gap

When the Sam linebacker is blitzing the strong A or B gap, the center declares his responsibility to the strong side, working with the strong guard and tackle.

As demonstrated in Diagram 3, in this protection scheme the center, right guard, and right tackle are sliding to the right responsible for the right A, B, and C gaps. They are setting on the defender over them looking to their gap responsibility. It is imperative the offensive linemen hold space.

The left guard is BOB (big on big). The left tackle is also BOB. If the left tackle has a 5 or wide 5 technique, he will soft kick and get width. If the defensive end is tight he can jump.



The running back will look inside out to the Mike linebacker to the Will linebacker. If both the Mike and Will blitz, the Will is hot.

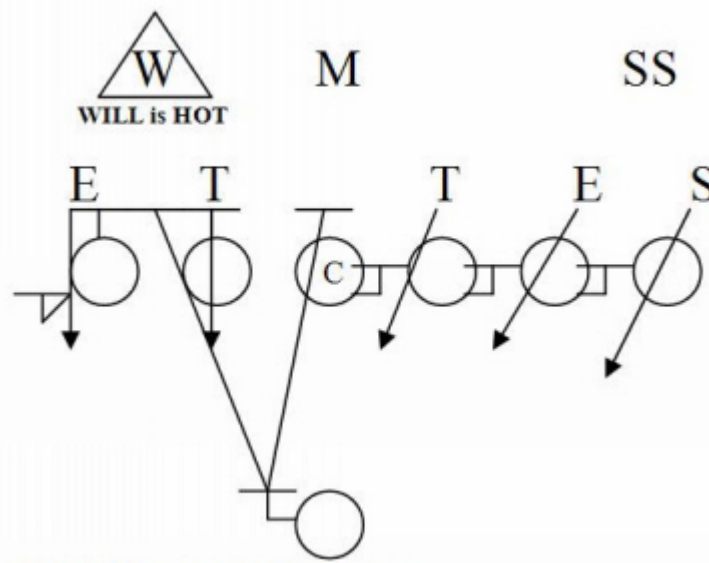
Each sliding offensive lineman must punch with his inside arm (use his lever, which will help close off rush lanes while helping the lineman next to him in the slide.

#### 4. Slide Protection Scheme To The TE When Sam Is Blitzing Off the Edge

In this scheme, the tight end will make a call to alert the strong tackle, guard and center that the Sam linebacker has walked up to the line of scrimmage, ready to blitz the strong C gap. The center will declare his responsibility to the strong side, working with the strong guard and tackle.

As demonstrated in Diagram 4, three offensive linemen to the call side are sliding to the right setting on the defender to their outside. In this scheme, the offensive linemen to the call-side will kick directly to their gap responsibility and block any defender who comes to them.

**Slide Protection Scheme To The TE (Right)  
When The Sam LB Is Blitzing Off The Edge, (C Gap)**



**The left tackle will soft kick or jump depending on the DE's alignment.**

They must be careful not to gain a lot of width when executing the slide. With Sam blitzing the edge, linemen should expect the down defender to pinch, and if they over set (set too wide) they will give up the inside, thus allowing easy quarterback pressure.

The left guard and tackle are both BOB. If the left tackle has a 5 or wide 5 tech he will soft kick and get width. If the defensive end is tight he can jump.

The running back will look inside out to the Mike linebacker to the Will linebacker. If both the Mike and Will blitz, the Will is hot.

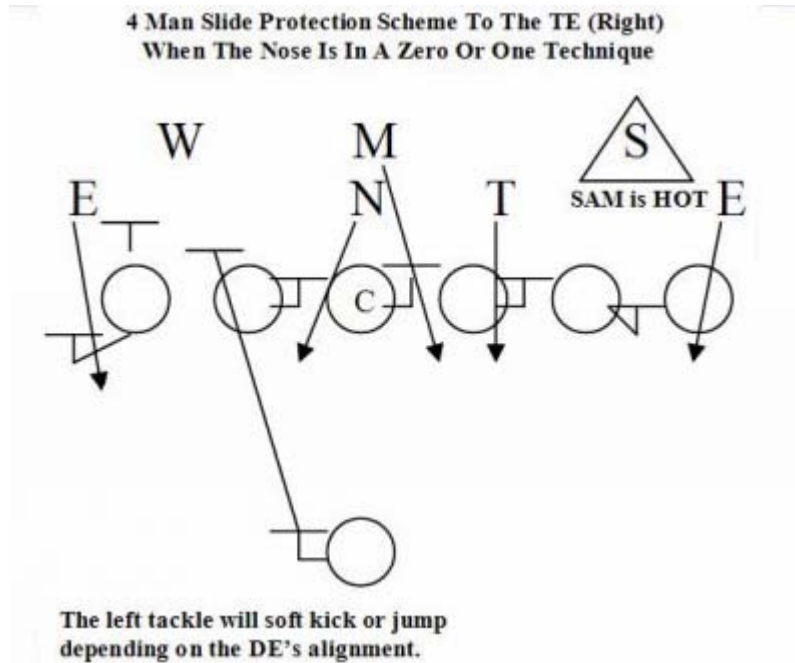
The tight end is in the route.

## II. 4-Man, Half-Line Slide Protection Schemes

In this protection scheme the center has a zero or a 1 technique.

### 1. 4-Man Slide Protection Scheme To The TE When The Nose Is In A 0 Or 1 Technique

As demonstrated in Diagram 4, the center is declaring his responsibility to the strong side, working with the weak guard, strong guard, and strong tackle.



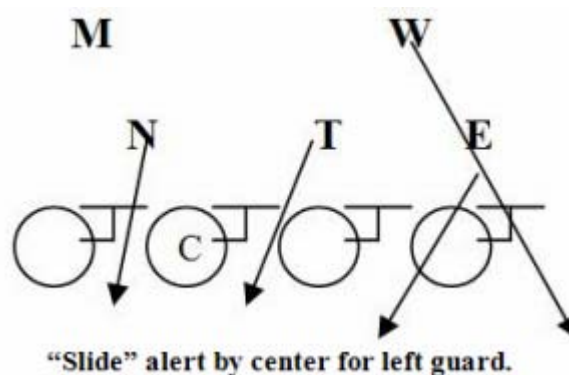
“Slide” alerts the left guard he is in the slide. The offensive linemen in the slide are responsible for the gaps to the right setting on the defender to their outside.

The left tackle is BOB. If the left tackle has a 5 or wide 5 technique, he will soft kick and get width. If the defensive end is tight, he can jump.

The running back will block the Will linebacker. Sam is hot.

The tight end is in the route.

Here is an example of a weak-side blitz from the right of the offense.



The left guard is uncovered, so the center declared his responsibility to the right. Four offensive linemen are sliding to the right, responsible for the gaps to the right.

The offensive linemen are setting on the defender to their right, looking to their gap responsibility. The left tackle is BOB.

The Sam linebacker is hot.

### III. Full-Line Slide Protection Scheme

In the full-line slide protection scheme, all linemen are involved in the slide regardless of the defensive structure. Full-line slide protection is used primarily with three-step drop passing game.

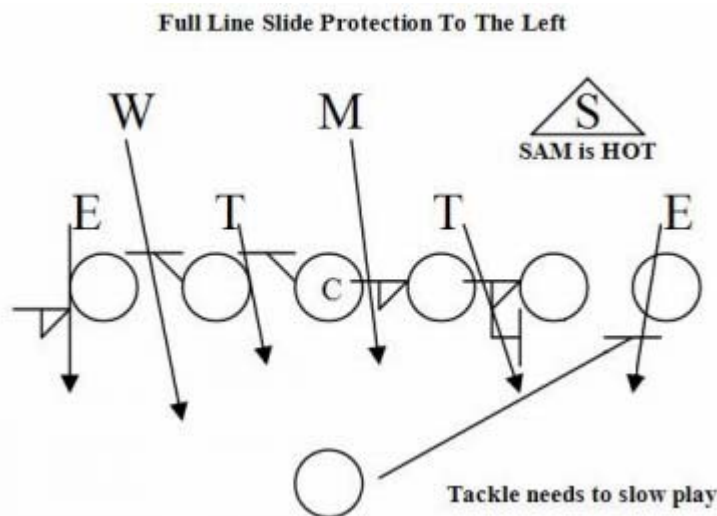
It is an audible protection scheme versus blitz packages by the defense. It is also a zone protection scheme in which each offensive linemen is responsible for blocking a specific gap.

The key to the full-line protection scheme is canceling gaps. Each offensive lineman will set in his gap and engage the defender who rushes into their gap or area and run him into another area.

The offensive tackle away from the call-side is now the last lineman in the slide. Therefore it is imperative he slow plays his gap.

#### 1. Full Line Slide Protection to the Left

This is total slide protection to the left tackle from the right tackle. Offensive linemen are responsible for the gaps to their left.



If protection is called away from the offensive tackle (right tackle is away from the call-side), it is imperative the right tackle does not turn his back to his gap too soon and not make the block on the appropriate defensive lineman. The right tackle must slow play in case of blitz and slant for the second-level defender. He must be patient if the linebacker is off the line of scrimmage.

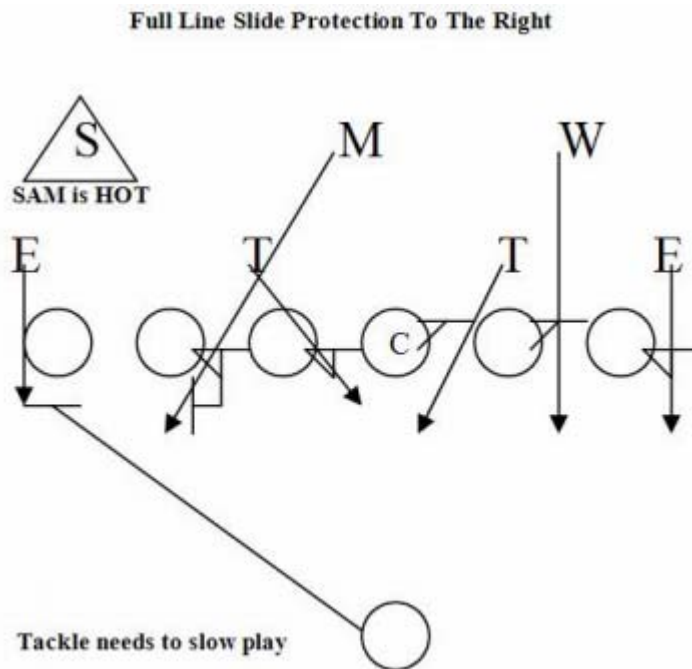


When the right tackle takes his pre-snap read and reads the defensive end is pinching, he should anticipate the pinch and block the defensive end now.

The running back works to the Sam linebacker or the defensive end if the tight end is in the route. If the tight end is in the route, Sam is hot.

## 2. Full Line Slide Protection To The Right

This is total slide protection to the right tackle from the left tackle. Offensive linemen are responsible for the gaps to their right.



If protection is called away from the offensive tackle (left tackle is away from the call side) it is imperative the right tackle does not turn his back to his gap too soon and not make a block on the appropriate defensive lineman. The left tackle must slow play in case of blitz and slant for the second-level defender. He must be patient if the linebacker is off the line of scrimmage.

When the left tackle takes his pre-snap read and reads the defensive end is pinching, he should anticipate the pinch and block the defensive end now.

The running back works to the Sam linebacker or the defensive end if the tight end is in the route. If the tight end is in the route Sam is hot.