

Positions and Positional Play

a guide for players

Roles and Positions

- Technically, there are only two positions: Forward and Back
- However, within these, there are generally role specializations, and coaches expect players to play the same position differently
- As a player, you should make it clear what is expected of you and understand what your strengths and your teammates' strengths are so you can work together

Backs

- On offense, initiate the play, cut to the middle, and shoot from distance, like a guard in basketball
- On defense, outnumber and challenge for the ball like a defender in soccer
- Backs are typically the players to take free hits, and are more likely to be given the “green light” to take full-field shots. Practice those long kicks!

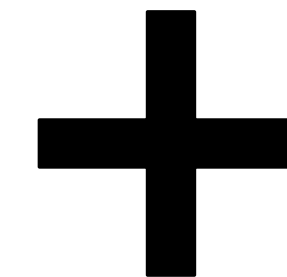


Crease Back

- Stays back when other players are running routes on set plays
- Defends against opposing half forward in a man to man defense
- Blocks opponents to give the loose back space in a zone defenses
- Passes and trails the play on set plays
- Key Skills
 - Crease Defense (strength, positioning, reactions)
 - Center Square 50/50 Balls (strength, jumping, timing)
 - Recovery Runs (speed, anticipation, focus)
- How you score
 - Long shots: kicks and swats from own half
 - Turnovers: forced errors when opposing net is empty
 - Shots: from point, from wing, and from slot
- Physical
 - Tall enough to win high balls over opponents
 - Big and strong to win contact in the crease



Football Fullback



Hockey Defenseman

A poll of players, coaches and fans revealed that the “perfect size” of crease backs is somewhere around 6’0”-6’4” tall and 245-275lbs

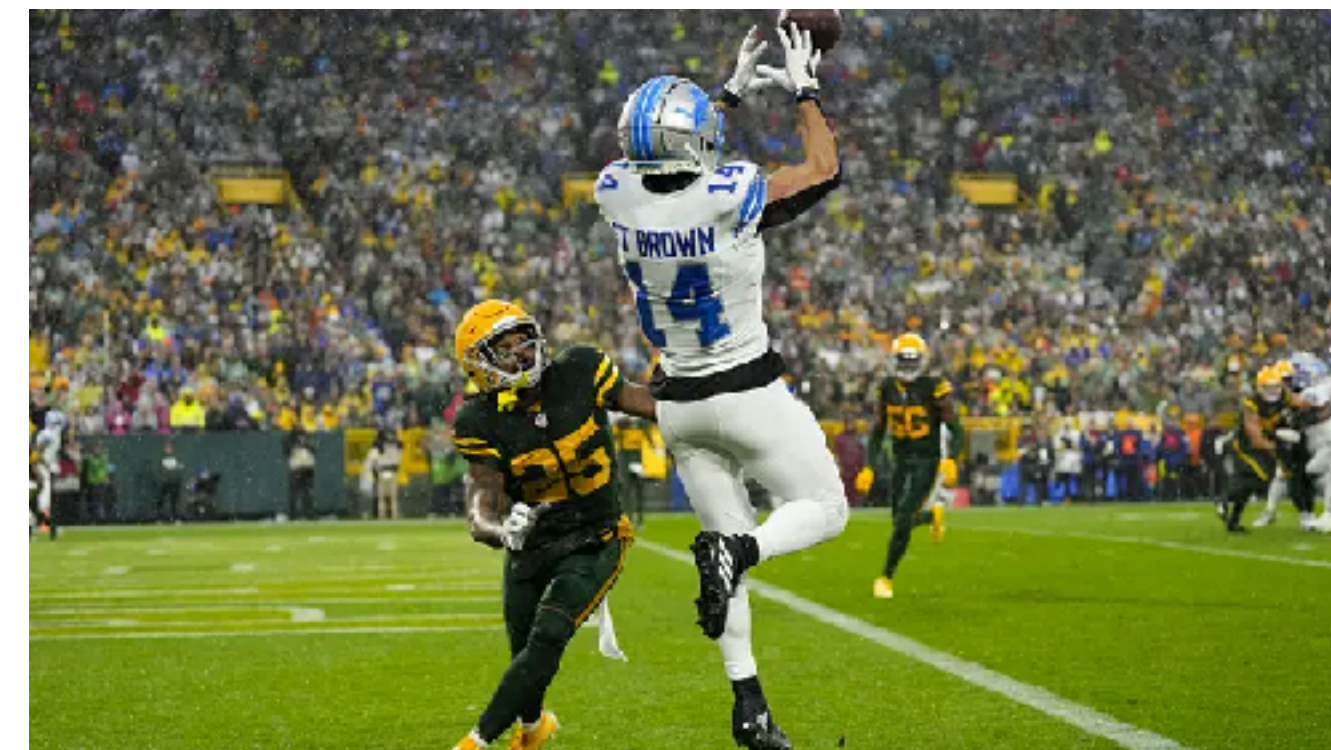
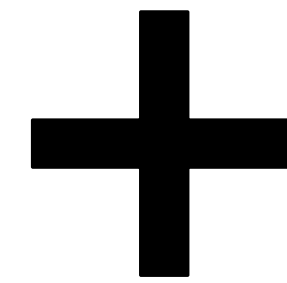
Loose Back

- First player back on defense if the team turns the ball over
- Defends against opposing full forward in a man to man defense
- Defends the goal in a zone defense
- Usually runs deep routes on set plays
- Key Skills
 - Shot Stopping (reactions, agility, bravery)
 - Route running (speed, deception, agility)
 - Recovery Runs (speed, anticipation, focus)
- How you score
 - Long shots: kicks and swats from own half
 - Quick transition: loose ball recoveries, carries in space, long pass tap-ins
 - Shots: from point, from wing, and from slot
- Physical
 - Lean and fast to get up and down the entire length of the field
 - Low center of gravity to get low to save shots



A poll of players, coaches and fans revealed that the “perfect size” of loose backs is somewhere around 5’6”-6’0” tall and 150-180lbs.

Soccer Goalkeeper



Football Slot Receiver

Forwards

- In a zone defense, 2 forwards cover 3 players on the ball. Similar to a penalty kill in hockey
- On offense, one or both forwards will get into the crease to try and disrupt the opposing backs' shot stopping. Similar to a pass rush in football
- Forwards are the first players up the field and tend to score more goals because of that. Practice your stick skills!



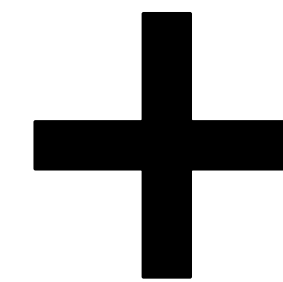
Half Forward

- Takes face-offs
- Defends against opposing crease back in a man to man defense
- Drops into the goal crease to help the backs in a zone defense
- Usually runs linking routes on set plays
- Key Skills
 - Face-off winning (reactions, technique, tenacity)
 - Crease Defense (strength, positioning, reactions)
 - Open Play Defense (agility, endurance, focus)
- How you score
 - Post-up 1v1s: backing down, shooting around defenders
 - Crease goals: rebounds, deflections, and tap-ins
 - Shots: from wing, from slot, and sometimes from deep
- Physical
 - Strong enough to win contested possession
 - Endurance to get up and down the field



A poll of players, coaches and fans revealed that the “perfect size” of half forwards is somewhere around 5’10”-6’2” tall and 215-245lbs.

Lacrosse Face-Off Midfielder



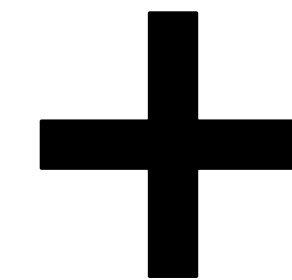
Hockey Center

Full Forward

- Gets open on face-offs
- Defends against opposing loose back in a man to man defense
- “Cherry picks” on defense, jumping onto the offense immediately when a teammate contests the ball
- Usually runs deep routes on set plays
- Key Skills
 - Route running (speed, deception, agility)
 - Carrying (strength, positioning, shot blocking)
 - Open Play Defense (agility, endurance, focus)
- How you score
 - Quick transition: loose ball recoveries, carries in space, long pass tap-ins
 - Crease goals: rebounds, deflections, and tap-ins
 - Shots: from wing, from slot, and sometimes from deep
- Physical
 - Tall enough to win high balls over opponents
 - Fast enough to create chances in transition



Soccer Striker

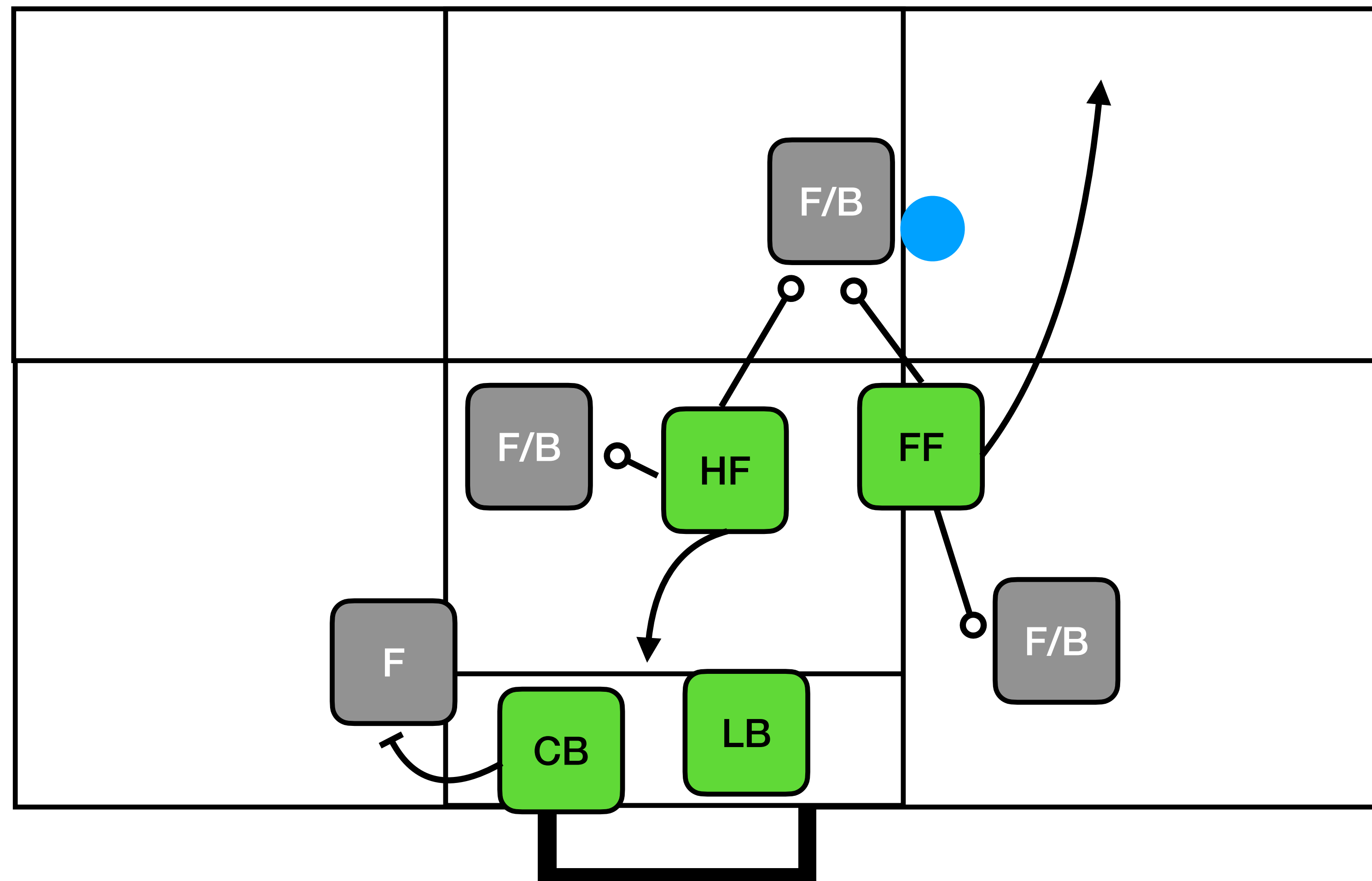


Football Tight End

A poll of players, coaches and fans revealed that the “perfect size” of full forwards is somewhere around 6’1”-6’5” tall and 185-215lbs.

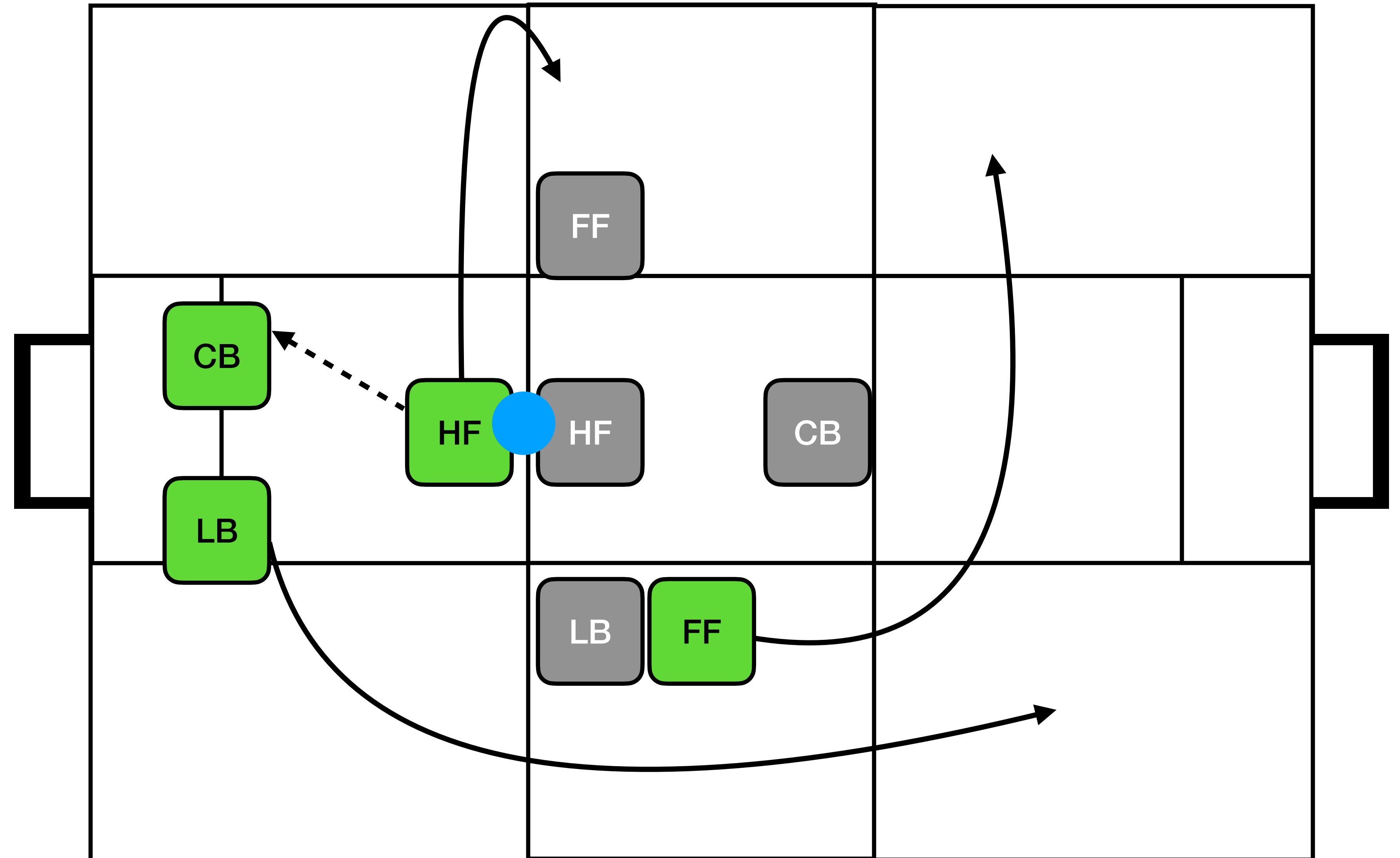
Zone Defense

- The Crease Back is primarily responsible for blocking opposing forwards from reaching the Loose Back
- The Forwards are both responsible for covering two players
 - The Half Forward may drop into the crease to help the backs too, becoming a second crease back
 - The Full Forward may jump up on offense before the ball is secured to quick start transition
- The Loose Back is kept loose, responsible only for the ball



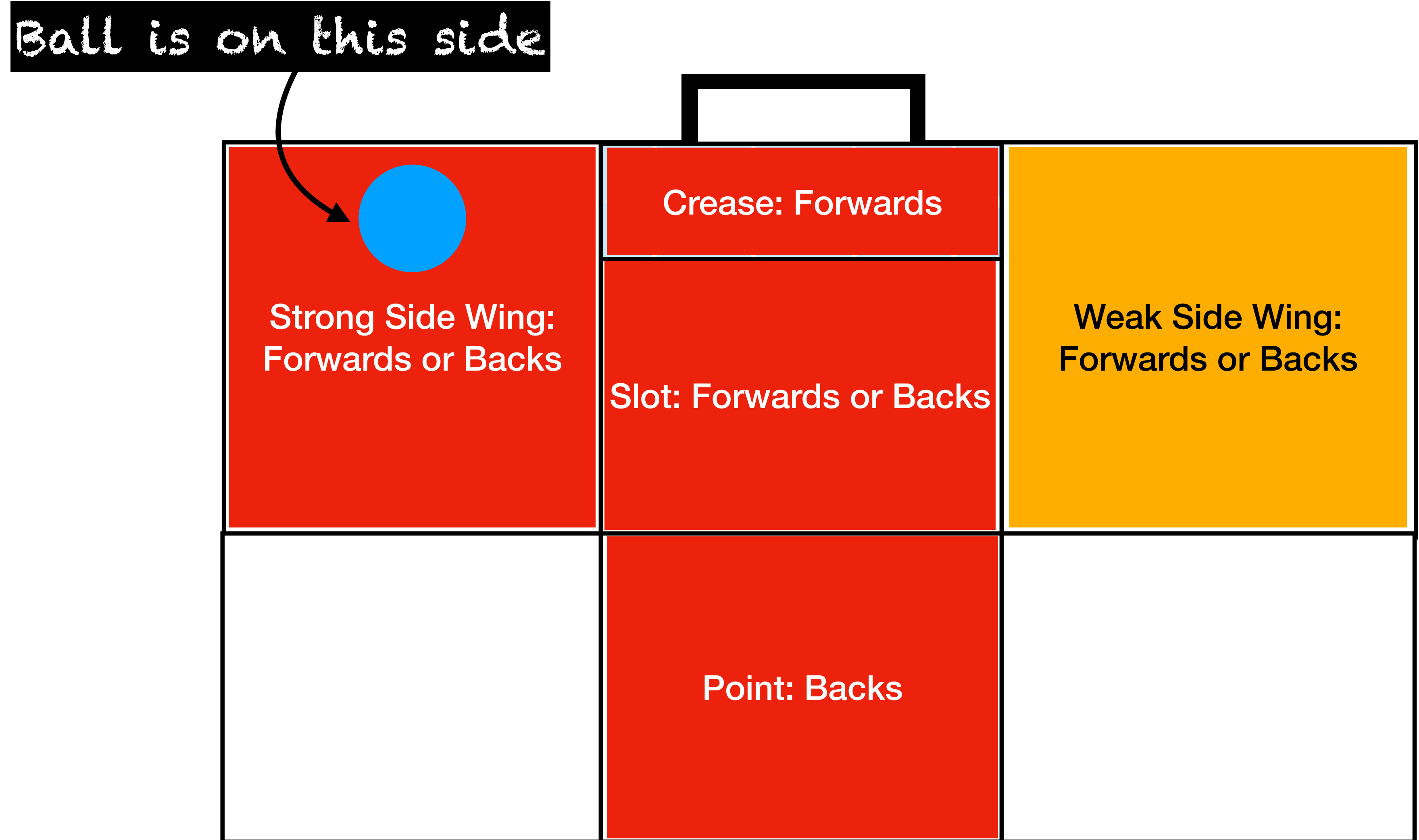
Faceoff Plays

- On a faceoff, your coach may give you routes to run, similar to gridiron football
 - If they do, you run your routes when your team wins the faceoff
 - After you run the play, you may get a shot off or advance the ball into a settled defense. If this happens, the play is over and you play offense freely
 - If your team loses the faceoff, you get into your defense
- You may not have a coach or your coach may not give you a set play. In this case, go by general rules:
 - One back (usually LB) gets upfield
 - The forward who took the faceoff (HF) links play in midfield
 - The forward who didn't (FF) gets into position where if they get the ball they can score



Switching Play

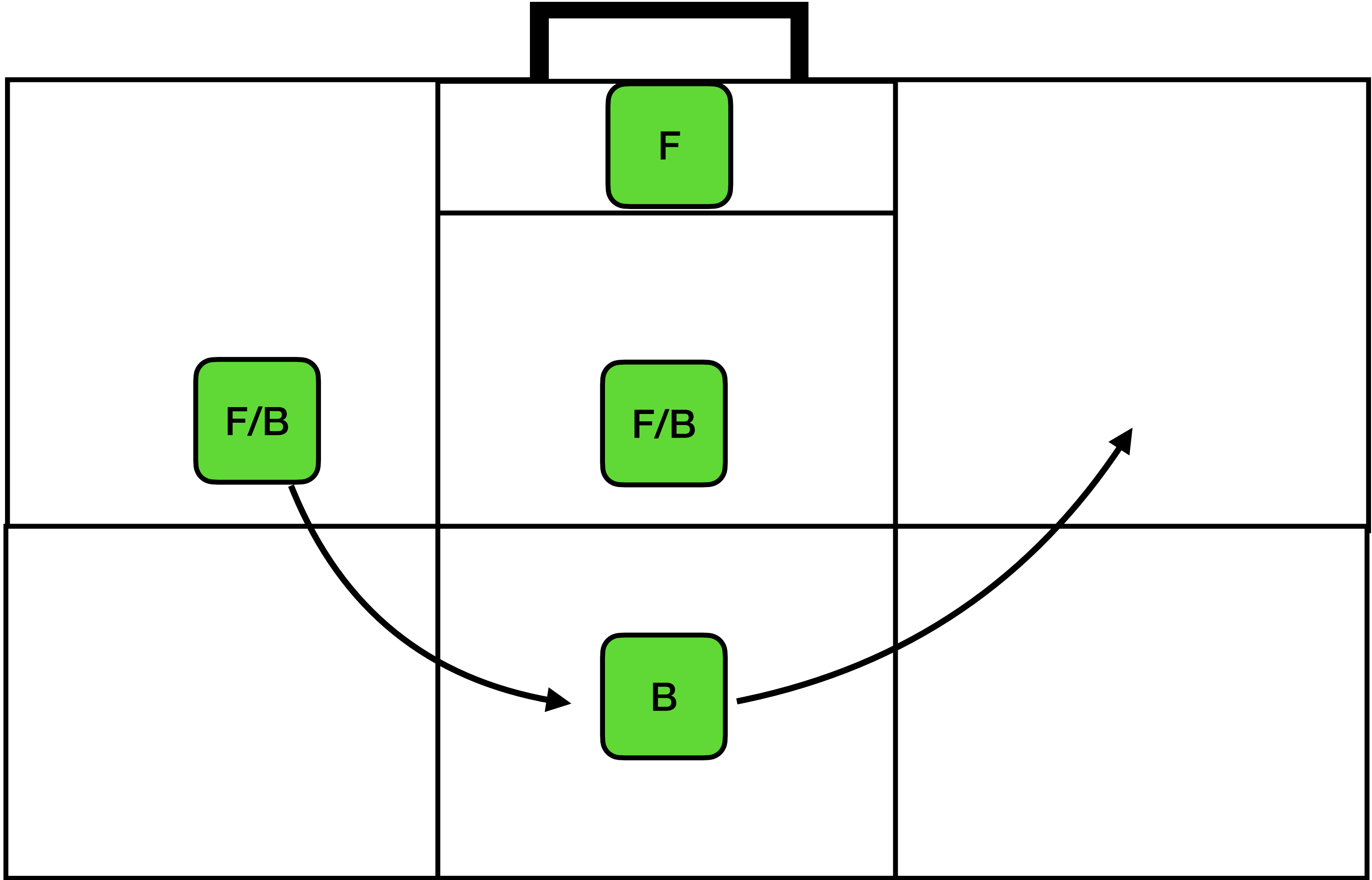
- On offense, you may want to get the ball from one side to the other. Because of the two line pass rule, players will need to shift positions to do this
- This requires teamwork and creativity. It is rarely something that a coach will focus on. Rather, you talk to your teammates (before or even during the play) to work out what to do



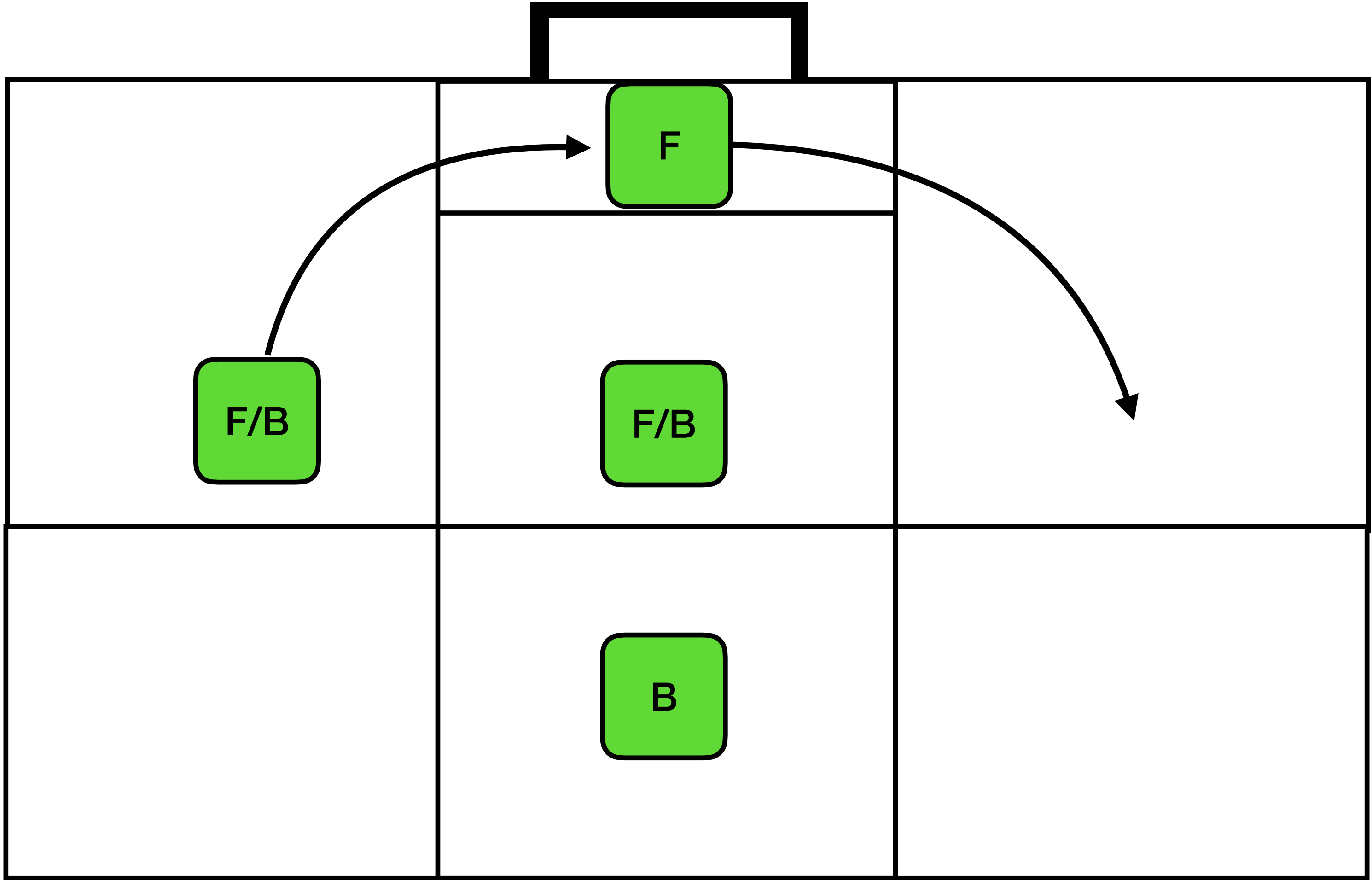
Simple Rotations

- These are things any player should understand, and should be easy to communicate quickly on the fly on the field
- These ideas only require one or two players to change positions

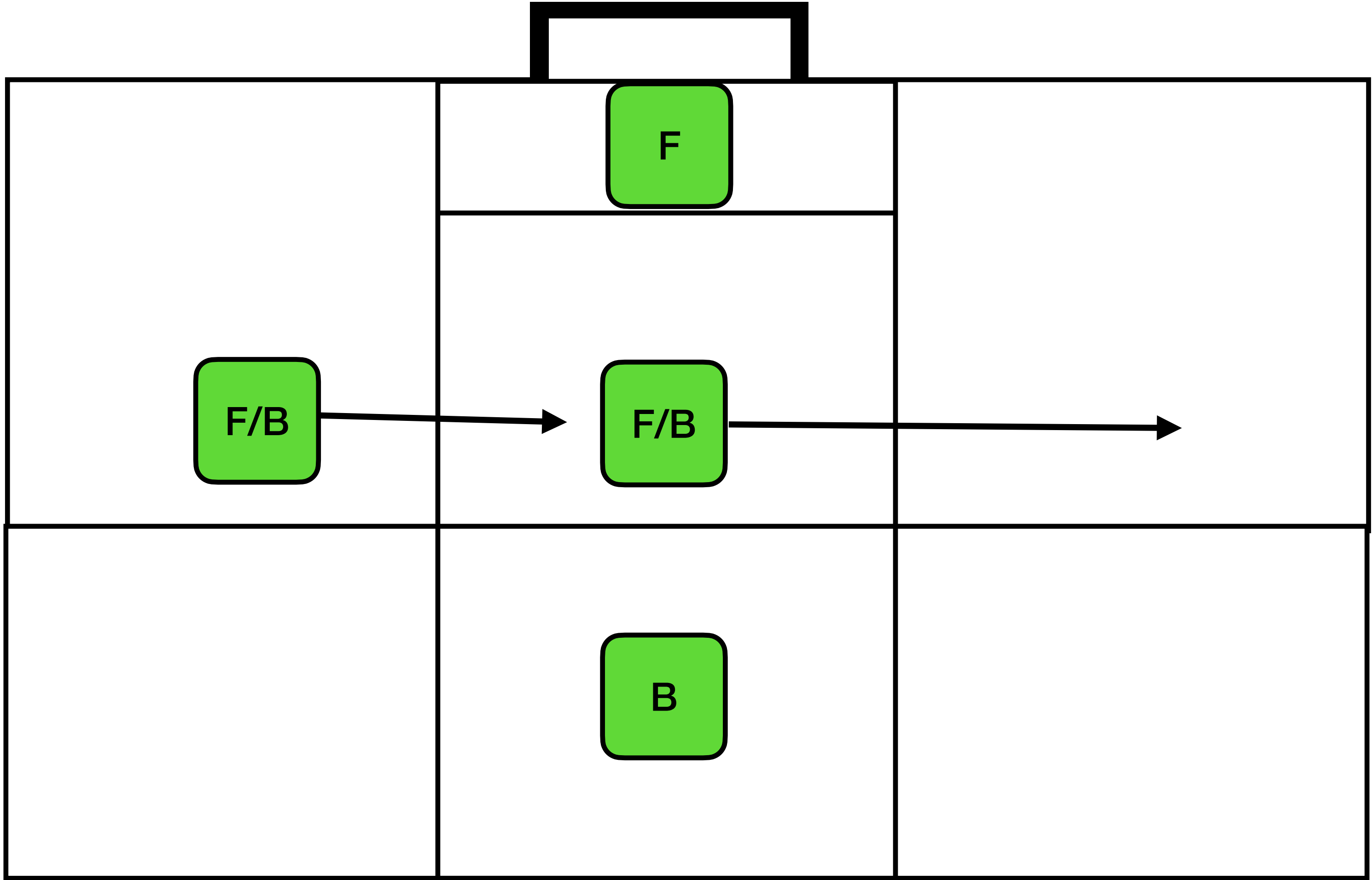
“Hinge”



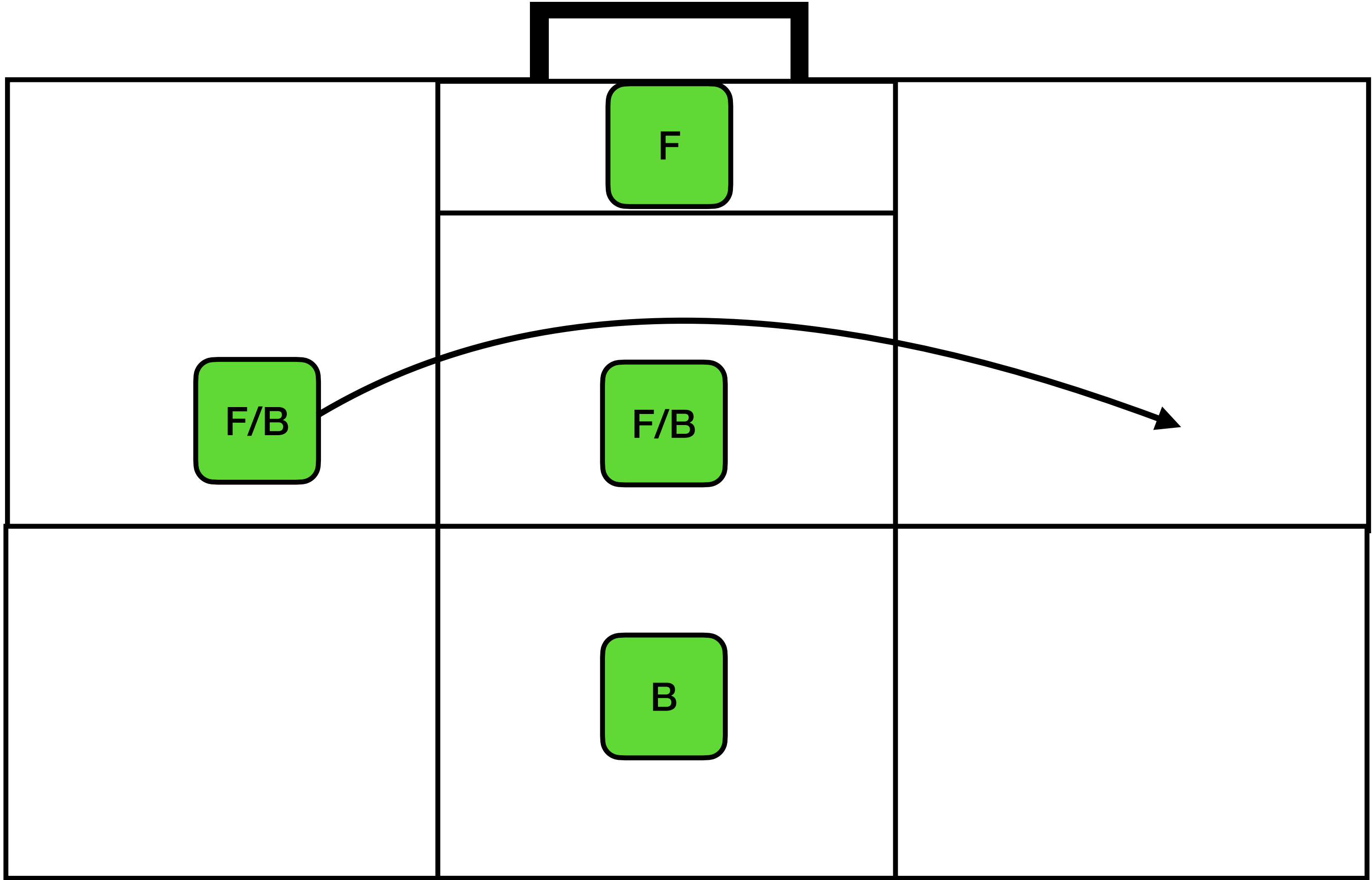
“Pop”



“Push”



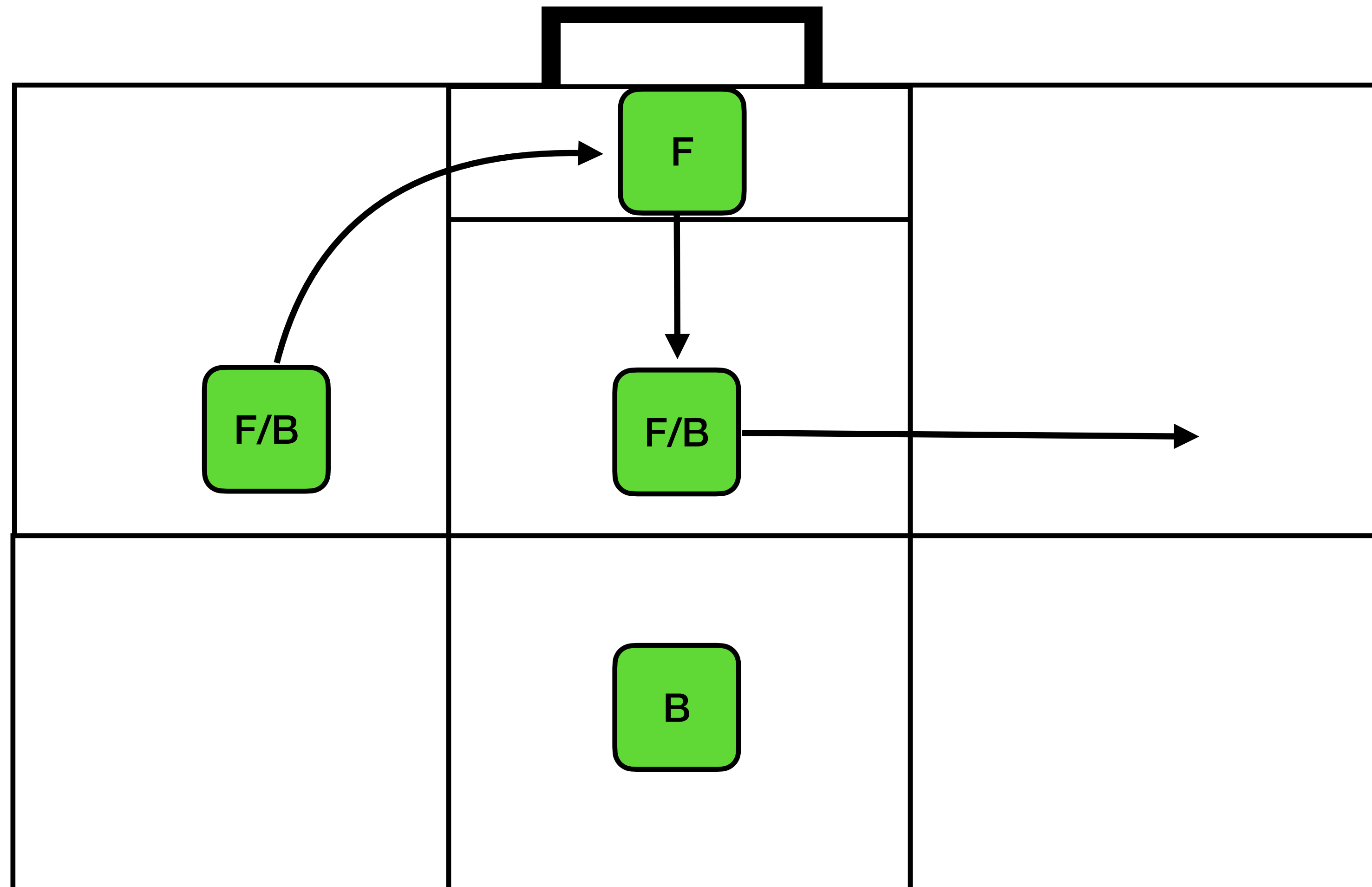
“Drag”



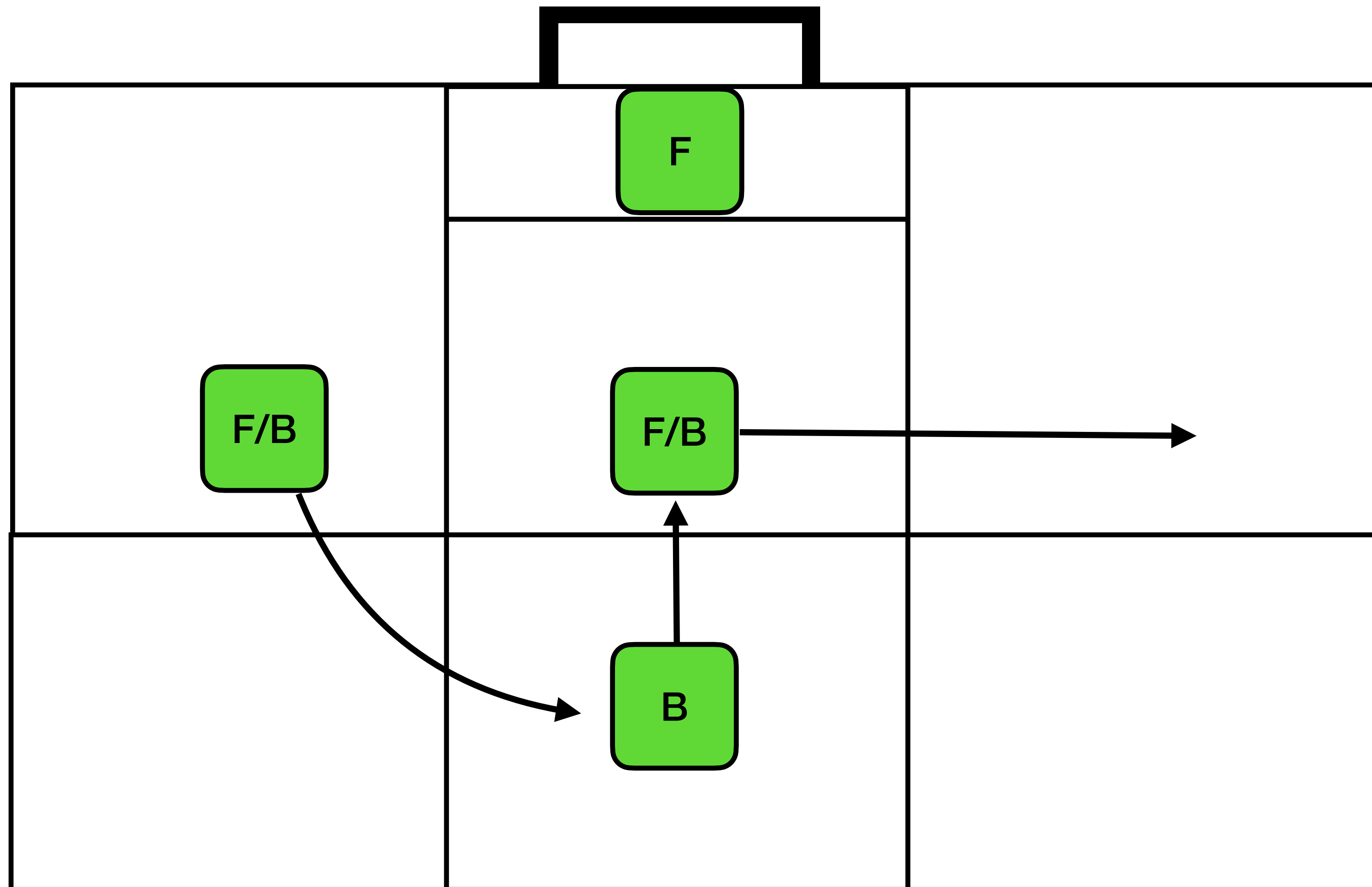
Complex Rotations

- These kinds of plays may take extensive practice, discussion, and “chemistry” (getting to know and understand your teammates) before they can work
- These ideas need three or even all four players to move

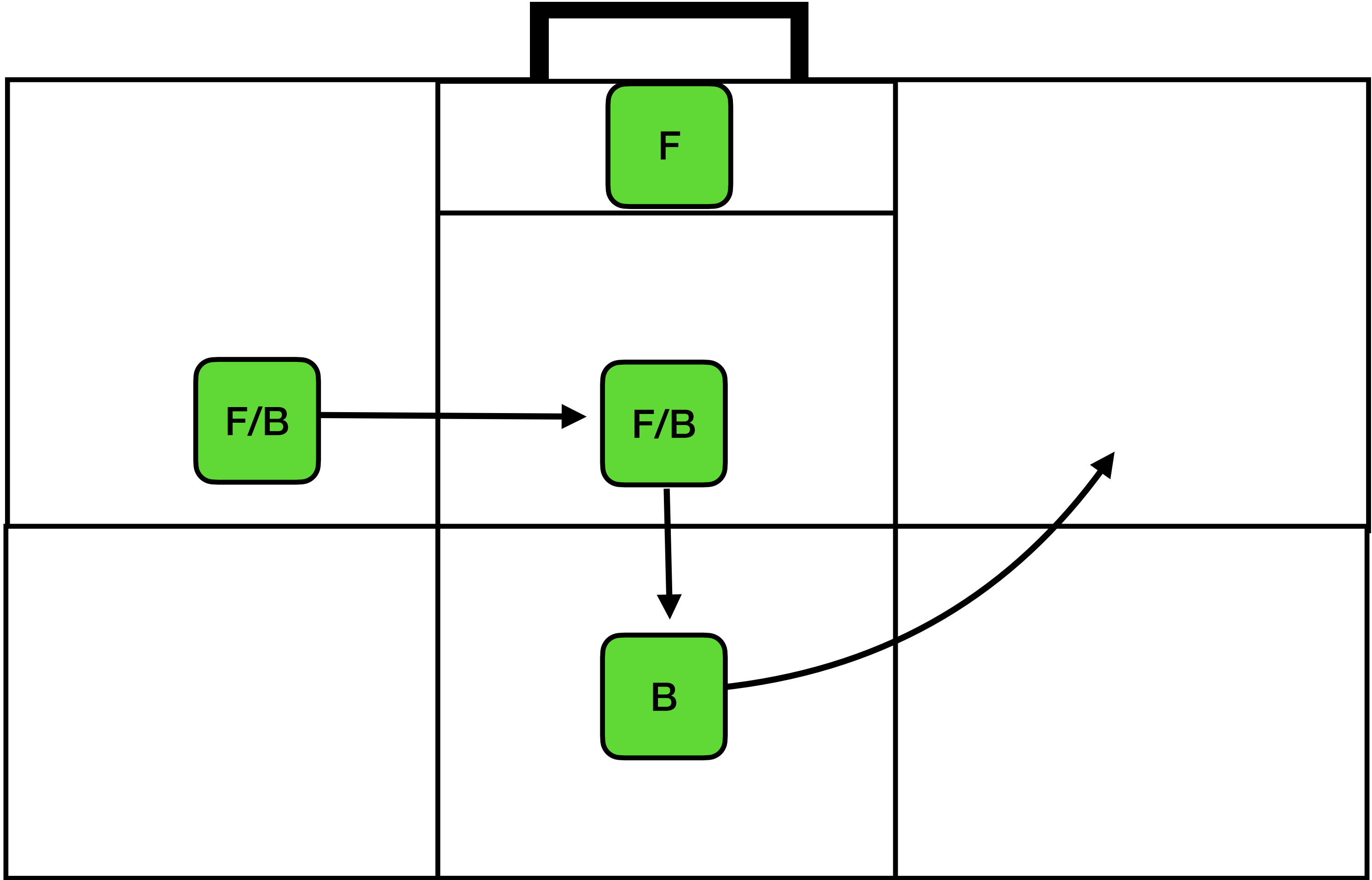
“Low Rotation”



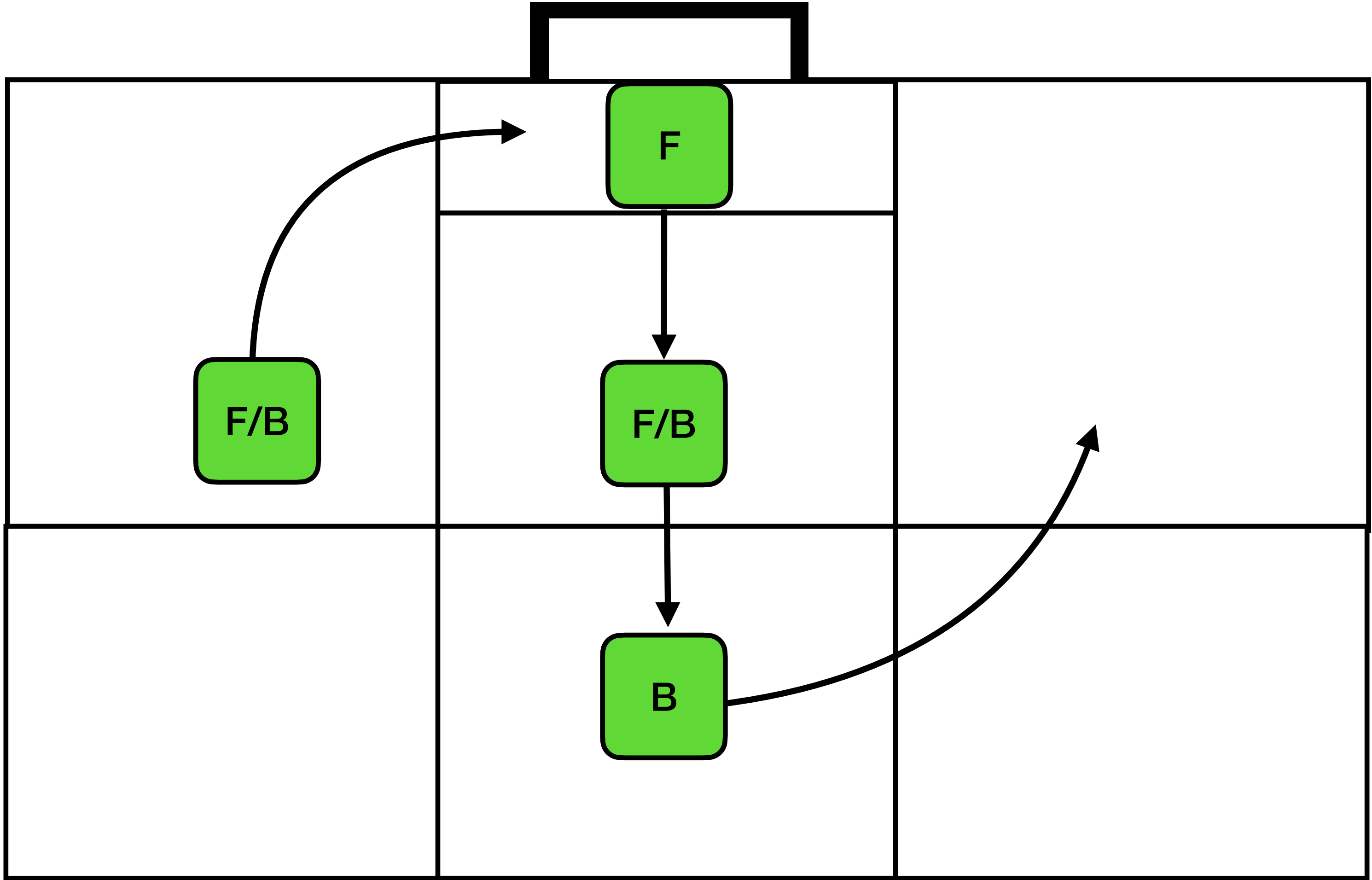
“High Rotation”



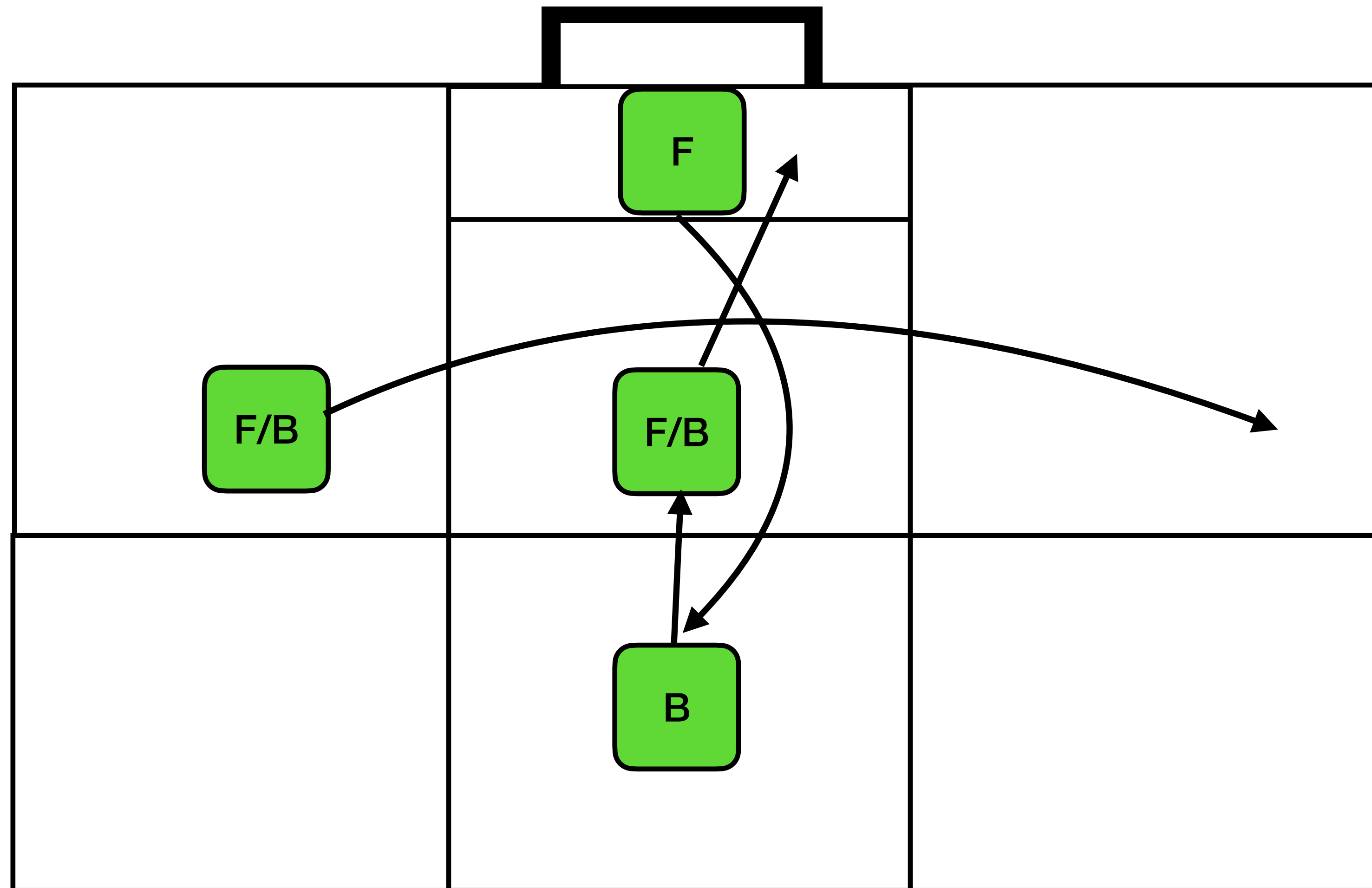
“Nudge”



“Invert”



“Weave”



Where do I go?

- If in doubt, get to the middle: the middle channel, the center square, the neutral zone. From here, you are a passing option for your teammates on offense and closing down space for opponents on defense
- As a back: stay with the play, but always be ready to get back to the goal
- As a forward: try to be defense-side of the ball (between ball and your own goal) on defense, and apply as much pressure as possible to the other team at all times
- On offense, generally try to spread out. The ball moves faster than players, so being open for a pass is more valuable than standing next to the ball carrier