



**RIFOA**

the **RED** book

**Procedures, Mechanics &  
Rules Interpretations**

**Version 1**

**August 2023**

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## **Introduction**

The “Red” Book is being introduced in the fall of 2023 as a multipurpose resource for RIFOA officials, no matter which stage of their career they are in. The manual has been titled The Red Book as a nostalgic tribute to the RIFOA’s adoption of the Rhode Island Red as its mascot. The primary purpose of the manual is to set forth the expectations for officials during varsity games to provide consistency from crew to crew. Red provides clarification and interpretations of mechanics, rules interpretations and game time procedures to adhere to throughout the season.

The interpretations provided in the book have been pulled from various publications and organizations around the country and adapted to fit Rhode Island Football. The interpretations have been extensively reviewed by Crew Chiefs, the Mechanics Committee, and RIFOA members with decades of experience. The mechanics presented in the document are consistent with NFHS requirements for play coverage with small variations already in place by the RIFOA, which are also in use by other large associations around the country. Additionally, the Rules Interpretations presented in The Red Book are clarifications relating to those situations which have so much grey area. It should be noted that these interpretations do not conflict with NFHS rules, they only offer more context for more clarification.

The manual will be used a multipurpose tool each year, for example a learning resource for the classroom and a reference material for patched officials. The applicants and probations will receive a copy of the most current manual at the start of each season. They will have the most current procedures and mechanics expectations in hand to reference. Intermediate and seasoned officials will also receive an electronic copy prior to the start of each season to use a multi-level guide, as well as understand those standards they will be held to promote crew consistency.

The Red Book will be a “Live” document that will be added to and updated for years to come. The mechanics committee will gladly accept recommendations and fully vet them for presentation to the RIFOA membership. The mechanics committee encourages everyone to review the manual cover to cover and provide any relevant feedback. Thank you in advance for utilizing The Red Book as a resource and have a great football season.

## 2023 Officers

President - Marc DiSalvo	Vice President - John Winter
Treasurer - Mark Loiselle	Secretary- Tara Pinsky
Past President - Jeff King	Board of Director – Rich Morrissette
Board of Director - Patrick Costello	Board of Director - Tom Comella
Board of Director - Bob Miller	Board of Director - Billy Goodwin
Board of Director - Cosimo D'Elia	

## Mechanics Committee

Marc DiSalvo	John Winter
Tara Pinsky	Bob Miller
Jeff Avallone	Advisor – Bill Phillips

## Meeting Dates & Location

Boys & Girls Club of Warwick  
42 Fredrick St. Warwick, RI 02888

**August 8, 2023**  
Summer Meeting (non-business)  
6:30pm  
Mettatauxet Yacht Club  
36 S River Dr. Narragansett, RI 02882  
Introduction, Expectations, Rule Books Introduction

**August 29, 2023**  
2023 Rules Changes  
6:30 PM Continuing Education  
7:30 PM General Meeting

**September 5, 2023**  
6:30 PM Continuing Education  
7:30 PM General Meeting

**September 19, 2023**  
6:30 PM Continuing Education  
7:30 PM General Meeting

**October 3, 2023**  
BOD Nominations  
6:30 PM Continuing Education  
7:30 PM General Meeting

**October 17, 2023**  
6:30 PM Continuing Education  
7:30 PM General Meeting

**November 7, 2023**  
Playoff Format Discussion  
7:30 PM General Meeting

**November 14, 2023**  
Elections, Year in Review  
7:30 PM General Meeting

**November 30, 2023**  
Annual Banquet  
Location TBD

# RIFOA Varsity Pre-Game Meeting

## Crew Notification and Confirmation

- The Referee shall contact each crewmember no later than 24-hours before game time.
  - The notification should include: game assignment, potential weather issues, game uniform; special conditions known prior to game time; and the meeting location.
  - All crew members shall confirm and advise of any issues.
- Officials must arrive to the site at least 60-minutes prior to game time.
- Officials and the game clock operator will attend and participate in the pre-game discussion.
- The pre-game conference should be completed so that the officials take the field at least 30-minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff.

## Suggested Discussion Topics

- **Initial Pre-Game Discussion:**
  - Recent rules changes with penalty enforcements and points of emphasis.
  - Responsibilities during pre-game conference with coach, including:
    - Introduction to official on sideline and Back Judge who has play clock; get back coach; medical staff present; game balls to be approved; designated ball-boy.
  - Responsibilities of officials after coach's conference, including:
    - Inspecting the field and verifying the chains; meeting with chain crew; setting pylons; and visually inspecting both teams for illegal equipment.
    - Timing for Sportsmanship Card and coin-toss mechanics
- **Free kicks:**
  - Free kicks including positioning, responsibilities, and anticipated outcomes:
    - A kick is still a kick until it is possessed, downed, is out of bounds or enters end zone.
    - Be familiar with keys during Free kicks; all officials have keys.
    - Kicks out of bounds untouched by R: (choices for R)
    - Blocking restrictions by K, legal possession by K.
    - Expect a short and/or Onside Kick:
  - Bean bag, not a flag, on kicks not going at least 10-yards.
  - Blocking restrictions on K prior to kick going 10-yards.
  - Kick-catching Interference situations prior to ball being grounded or touching R.
- **Running Plays:**
  - Referee has ball carrier while that player is inside the hashes.
    - Referee hands off coverage to wing at the hashes and cleans up behind play.
  - Line Judge to rule on obvious 1st downs and alert Referee
  - Responsibilities for A players in motion prior to the snap.
    - Wing with motion going away has player in motion until the snap.
  - Wings must get good forward progress spots by mirroring and creating soft spots.
  - Bean bagging fumbles beyond the line of scrimmage is mandatory.

- **Passing Plays/Pre-snap Responsibilities, Mechanics and Coverage:**
  - Identifying ineligible players by number and/or position.
  - Make a player legal by position when possible, (on or off the line.)
    - Unless the player's position on the line is deceptive to B.
    - Communicate questionable formations or motion early to coaches.
  - Approved signals to communicate players on and offline.
  - Responsibilities for A players in motion prior to the snap.
    - Wing with motion going away has player in motion until the snap.
  - At snap read relevant action to determine potential run or pass play: *Snap; Tackle; Back.*
  - Be prepared to rule on circumstances related to an illegal forward pass:
    - A receiver in the vicinity of the pass: within 5 yards from grounded pass.
    - The forward pass did/did not reach the original line of scrimmage:
      - A forward pass has ended when grounded.
    - The passer is, or has been, outside the tackle for intentional grounding.
      - Exception: This only applies to A player taking the initial snap.
  - The Neutral Zone Expanded and how it factors in.
    - Ineligible players down field 2-yards or more beyond the neutral zone.
  - All officials must emphasize good dead ball and backside officiating skills.
- **Scrimmage Kicks:**
  - When A is in a valid kick formation it provides protection to the snapper and kicker.
    - Referee relays the False-Start (signal #19) to Umpire, who returns it.
  - Low kicks touched by R at the line-of-scrimmage is ignored.
  - Kicks untouched by R recovered behind the neutral zone.
    - K and R may recover and advance.
  - Punts blocked, or partially blocked, by R: Tipped Ball (signal #11).
    - Potential exception to either roughing or running into the kicker.
    - No free shots or excessive contact permitted.
    - The Neutral Zone Expanded and how it factors in.
  - Fair catch situations-valid/invalid fair catch signals.
  - Kicks out-of-bounds, chop with Referee to confirm spot where out in flight.
    - Review chop mechanics.
  - Kick-catching interference.
  - Numbering exceptions on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd down as well as 4th down plays.
  - Post Scrimmage Kick (PSK) and enforcement - review conditions that must be met.
  - Review fouls and enforcement that may be tacked on after play is dead.
- **Forward Progress:**
  - Applies to almost every play: There are 4 ways the runner's advancement can end, which is marked by the foremost part of the ball:
    - Down by rule; forward progress is stopped; steps out of bounds; he loses possession either by handing, passing, Inadvertent Whistle, or kicking (voluntarily) or fumble.
    - Crash when close to 1st down, fumble recovery, and goal line plays.
- **Momentum Exception:**
  - Change of possession within R/B's 5-yard line when momentum carries the ball carrier into their own end zone. Bean bag is required every time.

- **Extra Point Try:** Untimed down. (7-2-5 exc 2)
  - Two (2) point conversion: Numbering exceptions apply.
    - Scrimmage play mechanics and signals apply.
    - Wings immediately to goal line at the snap, goal line extended.
  - Interception by B is immediately dead.
  - A fumble recovery by B is immediately dead unless a new force is added by B into their own end zone.
    - Play could result in the rare 1-point safety with B down in end zone.
  - PAT Kick: Numbering exceptions apply.
    - Crew to follow RIFOA mechanic with Umpire and Back Judge under goal post.
  - Proper kick formation provides protection for snapper, holder and kicker.
  - Holder's knee must be off the ground to shuttle the ball to another player.
    - Additional restrictions after a muffed or errant snap.
- **Review the following:**
  - Substitution rule, A players inside the 9's at some point after the ready.
  - Automatic 1st Down Enforcement: Only includes the 4 roughing's.
  - Declaring ball dead, starting and stopping clock.
  - Procedures during measurements.
  - Duties during time-outs and intermission between periods.
  - Penalizing personal and unsportsmanlike fouls.
  - Penalty administration and crew responsibilities.
  - Extending a period.
- **Overtime Procedures: (Discuss at Half Time)**
  - Three-minute intermission followed by coin toss with Head Coach and Captain.
  - Each overtime period consists of a series by each team.
  - Only one coin toss, regardless of how many overtime periods it takes to resolve the tie.



## Coaches Conference

- **Suggestions for Coaches Conference in Summary:**
  - Enter the field as a crew promptly 30-minutes prior to the scheduled game time.
    - Obtain an affirmative response from each coach that their team is legally and properly equipped in accordance with NFHS Rule.
    - Keep the coaches pregame professional and to the point, within 5-8 minutes.
  - Seek out the home coach, to gather any special site information, including site administrator; trainer/medical staff available; special events that will be conducted at half time; and relay that information to the visiting coach during that conference.
  - Provide a game card containing the names of the officiating crew to each coach, introduce the wing official on their sideline and the Back Judge responsible for counting off the final seconds of the play clock.
    - Identify each teams' captains; approve the balls they wish to check in; inquire about any specific plays and situations the officiating crew should be made of aware of; and ask that the coach to identify the "Get-Back Coach" responsible for keeping players and coaches out of the Restricted Area. Identify the ball boy, if any. Inquire about braces or casts to be checked for compliance with rules.
  - **Umpire** to rule on legality of any equipment, including the game balls, that may be in violation of NFHS rule.
  - Emphasize that good sportsmanship is to be followed by all team personnel (coaches, players and support staff.)
  - Advise each coach as to the time the Sportsmanship Card will be read, and when captains will be escorted onto the field for the coin toss.

## Individual Pre-Game Responsibilities

- **Crew:** Take the time to observe both teams during warm-ups to identify any players wearing equipment that is in violation of NFHS rule, including:
  - Player equipment: adornments: tinted face shields; bands on upper arms and/or calves; exposed back-pads; exposed bandanas with knot below the back of the helmet; lack of required knee pads/protection.
  - Player Tendencies: Observe each team's practice snaps to identify any tendencies by the Offense such as the Center or Interior linemen that may be in violation of NFHS rule.
    - Report any obvious issues to the Coaching Staff to avoid disruptions during the game.
- **Umpire:** Meet with the ball boy from each team and review ball changing procedures.
- **Linesman:** Check line-to-gain equipment, confirm that the chain midpoint is visibly marked, and meet and conduct pre-game with the chain crew, instructing/reminding them of their duties and responsibilities in accordance with this manual.
- Talk to the chain crew: introduce yourself and get names, especially the "box" guy.
  - Remind them they are impartial and an extension of the officiating crew.
  - Additionally, they have forfeited their rights as fans and shall refrain from making or acting in a **casual** manner.
  - **Clip Person:** Explain the clip is placed on back edge of the big line closest to back stake.
    - The back line to be clipped must be at least 1-yard from the stake.
  - **Box Person:** Advise the box person he will be directed by the linesman when to move.
    - Place the box on the line of scrimmage for all try points with box sideways.
    - Confirm the down with the Linesman each play.
    - The Linesman will spot the box on all 1st downs at the restraining line
  - **Chain Crew:** Discuss the expected set-up for the chains on every down, (2-yards off sideline on the back of the restricted area.)
    - Advise them not to move until they have been waved to do so.
    - On 1st downs, (new series) the Linesman will set the position of the down box (front point of the ball) by placing their foot at that spot.
      - Then the back stake is set and then the clip.
    - Remove the chains when a 1st-down (new series) begins inside the 10-yard line.
      - Lay the stakes down on the ground and away from the sideline.
  - **On Kick-Offs,** be positioned outside the restraining lines at R's end of the field.
    - 30-yards in advance of K's restraining line.
- **Line Judge:** Check line-to-gain equipment with the Linesman.
  - Confirm goal line pylons are out of bounds at the intersection of the sidelines and goal line extended; as well inside the corner of each intersection of sideline and end line.
  - Check that the padded yard markers are no closer than 5 yards to sideline.
  - Check field conditions and assume responsibility enforcing the pre-game warm up restricted area as provided in this manual.
- **Back Judge:** Be responsible for checking the play clock (40/25-second) and assume responsibility enforcing the pre-game warm up.
  - Be in possession of back-up equipment critical to the position, such as a stopwatch in the event one or both 40/25-second clock indicators become inoperable.

- **Clock Operator and General Operation:**
  - The clock operator shall attend the pregame conference with the crew to review the signals and then check the operation of the game clock.
  - The Referee shall also remind the clock operator of the critical times to set:
    - For pre-game, post time on the clock which when it expires will designate the reading of the league's Sportsmanship Card.
    - Upon completion of the Sportsmanship Card, 12:00 minutes on the game clock.
    - Confirm length of half before the end of the 2nd quarter:
      - To be confirmed upon speaking to the home coach and identifying any special half-time events.
      - No less than a 10:00 minute half time with a mandatory 3:00 minute warm-up; no more than a 20:00 minute half-time including the 3:00 warm-up period.
  - Upon completion of the warm-up period; place 12:00 minutes on the clock when the teams have taken the field in formation.
  - Remind clock operator to be aware of "inside 2-minutes" rules and to watch Referee for the signals.
  - Discuss how obvious errors will be handled, improper signal from crew:
    - (i.e., Referee starts clock after incomplete pass).
- **Game time operation of the Game clock:**
  - Review clock specific mechanics with the crew.
  - Reenforce the value in mirroring signals in areas with limited visibility.
  - Do not anticipate the starting or stopping of the clock.
    - Watch the officials, especially the covering Official.

## **Sportsmanship Card**

The RI Interscholastic League (RIIL) has adopted the reading of a sportsmanship card in all varsity sports, including football. The card is to be read to each team prior to the game by the officials as notice that unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. The crew officiating the contest is required to read the card verbatim prior to every game sanctioned by the RIIL.

- Mechanics of the Sportsmanship Card:
  - At each coach's pregame conference, stress the importance of sportsmanship.
    - Advise the coach that when the clock winds down to "0:00" the game officials will read the Sportsmanship Card to all players and coaches.
    - Ask the coach if he has a preference where the card is read: team sideline; end zone; or an alternate location.
  - As the score board clock winds down to "0:00," head toward the predetermined location to meet with the entire team.
    - The Referee, with Line Judge, will cover the team on the press box side.
    - The Umpire, with Back Judge, will cover the team opposite the press box.
  - This is an appropriate time to make the players aware of other points of emphasis and expectations, such as:
    - Players and coaches out of the Restricted Area.
    - How to communicate with officials when they have questions.
  - Upon reading the card verbatim, request that captains assemble with the officials

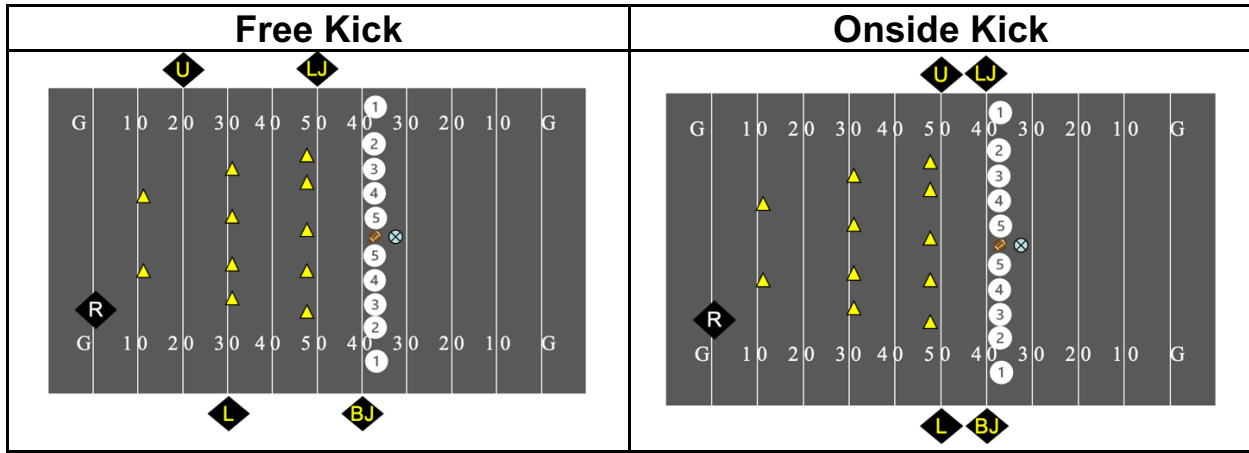
## **Sportsmanship Card (the White Card)**

The National Federation of State high School Associations (NFHS) and your state association require officials to ensure sportsmanship rules. High school athletics emphasizes positive values. All of us have worked hard to create a sense of teamwork, respect, responsibility, and perspective. We remind you that we expect good behavior and will quickly penalize misconduct. We encourage and appreciate your help. Let this competition reflect mutual respect among all participants, coaches, and officials. Coaches please certify that your players are legally equipped and uniformed according to NFHS rules. Good luck and have a great game!

## Coin Toss

- **Referee:**
  - Approximately five minutes before game time, line up the team captains on the sideline and signal the Umpire across the field.
  - Escort captain(s) to center of field with the Line Judge, who stops at the hashes.
- **Umpire:**
  - Approximately five minutes before game time, line up captains and signal Referee.
  - Escort captain(s) to center of field with the Back Judge, who stops at the hashes.
  - Introduce visiting captains to Referee.
  - Remain with the Referee to listen to instructions and record toss options.
- **Referee:**
  - Face the clock and have captains face each other with backs to sidelines.
  - In presence of Umpire, instruct visiting captain to choose "heads or tails" before toss
    - Inform captains if coin is not caught, it will be tossed again.
      - After the toss and determining winner, place hand on captain's shoulder and have captain choose one of following options: 1. Kick or receive. 2. Defend a goal. 3. Defer choice to second half.
      - If the winner defers, step toward press box and give Incomplete Pass signal #10.
        - Give the opposing captain the remaining options, Receive or Defend a Goal.
          - Defending a goal is rarely chosen, usually when there are notable playing conditions.
      - Return to the deferring captain for any remaining choice to complete.
      - Place captains in position with backs toward goal they will defend.
      - While facing in same direction as the first choosing captain, signal choices.
        - Make catching motion simulating the team that will be receiving.
        - If the first captain elected to defend a goal, point with both arms extended toward that goal line, then move to other captains and give appropriate signal for choice of other captain.
        - Dismiss captains and have them bring out their teams.
    - **Second-half choices:**
      - At the end of the 1st half, the **Wing Official** on the sideline of the team with the choice will obtain their decision and communicate it to the crew. Receive; kick; defend an end the field.
      - The **Wing Official** on the opposite side obtains the opposing team's response for the choice in the second half and communicates it to the crew and opposing team. One of the two remaining choices.
      - Following the mandatory 3-minute warm-up period after the halftime intermission expires, both teams assume their respective Free Kick formations.
  - **Linesman And Line Judge:**
    - Pregame and start of second half:
      - Linesman provides instruction to chain crew.
      - Linesman remains to keep team members who are not involved in the toss on their sideline.
      - Line Judge, whose team is opposite the press box, walks and remains at the hashes to keep team members who are not involved in toss.
  - **Back Judge:**
    - Observe team on Linesman's side while he completes instructions to chain crew.
      - Walks out and remains at the hashes to keep team members who are not involved in toss between Back Judge between and sideline.
  - **National Anthem:**
    - Stand on the 50-yard line, shoulder to shoulder, facing the American Flag.
    - Break together after the National Anthem and jog to position.

## Free Kick



## Kick Off Mechanics

### Responsibilities and Keys:

- **Crew:**
  - Clear restricted area of all personnel.
  - If wind blows ball off kicking tee, sound the whistle and reset.
  - If it occurs a second time, then a kicking team member must hold the football.
- **Referee:**
  - **Positioning:** On the hash mark of the goal line opposite press box side (unless kick moved by penalty.)
    - Count R's players (K's at least 4 on each side of the kicker.)
    - Check with other officials in position with hand up, then signal ready-for-play.
  - For a potential **Onside Kick**, move up no closer than 10-yard, from deepest receiver.
  - **Keys:** (deep receivers, middle of the field)
    - Deep Kicks: be ready to rule on touchback or player momentum.
    - Start clock then ball is touched (other than first touching by K.)
    - Pick up runner and follow until released to covering official
    - Out-of-bounds: determine if touched by R inbounds.
    - Observe actions behind play and clean up.
- **Umpire:**
  - **Positioning:** 40-yards in advance of kickers restraining line (20-yard line unless moved by rule), on the press box side.
    - Clear Restricted Area of coaches and players.
    - Count R's players, ensure coaches, players, substitutes are in proper location.
    - Hold hand in air to inform Referee 'ready'.
  - For a potential **Onside Kick**:
    - Position at R's restraining line.
    - Hand on bean bag to mark the spot of first touching by K.
    - Observe for additional action: illegal blocking by K; before ball going 10-yards.

- **Keys:** (3 interior K players (3-5) on press box side.)
  - On a kick, middle on near side, start the clock when kick is touched.
    - Other than first touching by K.
  - Pick up runner and follow until released to Line Judge.
- **Linesman:**
  - **Positioning:** 30-yards in advance of K's restraining line, opposite the press box.
    - Clear Restricted Area of team personnel and coaches.
    - Count R's players, hold hand in air to inform Referee 'ready' with 11-players.
  - For a potential **Onside Kick** situation:
    - Position on R's restraining line.
    - Hand on bean bag to mark spot of first touching by K.
    - Observe action: illegal blocking by K; ball going 10-yards.
  - **Keys:** (2 outer K players (1-2), opposite press box side)
    - Determine if kick goes out-of-bounds and flag if not touched by R.
    - Kicks opposite side, move cautiously with play.
    - Observe actions behind play and clean up.
    - Hustle to spot.
- **Line Judge:**
  - **Positioning:** on R's restraining line.
    - Clear Restricted Area of team personnel and coaches.
    - Count K's players.
    - Ensure coaches, players, substitutes in proper location.
  - For potential **Onside Kick:**
    - Position on K's restraining line.
    - Hold hand in air to inform Referee 'ready'.
    - Hand on bean bag for potential first touching by K before R's restraining line.
    - If out-of-bounds in air, look to Umpire and confirm if the ball was prior to, or in advance of 30-yard line (or 25-yards in advance of kick) and advise Referee.
      - If less than 25-yards in advance of kick, identify the out of bounds spot.
  - **Keys:** (2 outer K players (1-2), on press box side.)
    - Watch for Free kick line infractions.
    - Watch for illegal kicks (pop-up kick, kicked by other than player outside the back restraining line at the ready for play.)
    - Be alert for first touching by K prior to R's Free kick line and bean bag if necessary.
    - Watch for K initiating a block before ball has gone 10-yards or been touched by R.
  - Kicks to coverage side, move down sideline while watching for fouls and to area best to officiate depending on the kick.
    - Keep spacing with Umpire.
    - Determine if kick goes out of bounds and flag if untouched by R.
    - On long runs, pick up runner responsibility from Umpire and follow to goal line.
    - Kick to opposite side, move cautiously toward play being ready to rule on near sideline if play reverses.
    - Observe action of players in the vicinity of runner and clean up behind.
    - Help Back Judge with goal line on long runs.

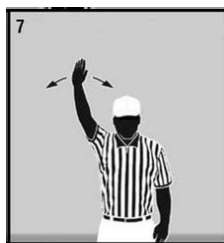
- **Back Judge:**
  - **Positioning:** stand at K's restraining line and hand kicking ball to kicker.
    - Clear Restricted Area of team personnel and coaches.
    - Count K players.
    - Ensure coaches, players, substitutes in proper location.
    - Hold hand in air to inform Referee 'ready' with 11-players.
  - For potential **Onside Kick** situation:
    - Hand on bean bag for potential first touching by K.
    - If out-of-bounds in air, look to Linesman and confirm if the ball was prior to, or in advance of 30-yard line and advise Referee.
  - Keys: (3 interior K players (3-5) and Kicker, opposite press box side)
    - Watch for Free kick line infractions.
      - Help Line Judge rule on first touching by K prior to R's Free kick line.
  - Watch for illegal kicks (pop-up kick, kicked by other than player outside the back restraining line at the ready for play.)
    - Watch initial blocks near R's Free kick line and blocks on kicker/holder.
    - Administrate fouls prior to kickoff.
    - Kick to opposite side, move cautiously toward play being ready to rule on near sideline if play reverses
    - Observe action in the vicinity of runner and watch for fouls away from ball.
    - Line Judge with goal line on long runs
  - Consideration for Offsides by the Kicking Team:
    - For kicks down field, allow K team, 1 yard beyond their restraining line before penalizing for offsides. (Blow and Throw).
    - For an Onside Kick, penalize K for being beyond the restraining line prior to the kick. (pane of glass)
      - Advantage/Disadvantage: Officials should not unnecessarily interrupt the flow of the game to penalize incidental personal contact which does not give the responsible player an advantage, nor place his opponent at a disadvantage.
- **After Try:**
  - Crew should be in position for the ready-for-play within 1-minute.
    - If ball falls off the tee, sound whistle and repeat (blows off 2nd time get a holder)
- **Back Judge:** Hustle to kicker and hand him the ball.
  - Remind kicking team to stay behind the 40-yard line and inside the 35-yard line (unless moved by rule), until ball is kicked; except:
    - Any player in place to hold the ball on the tee may be beyond the kicking line.
    - Only the potential kicker may be behind the back restraining line (35-yard line).
    - When a K player is behind the back restraining line, that player must be the individual to kick the ball. (6-1-3b).
      - Any other K player who kicks that ball with that formation is immediately penalized with encroachment.



## Free kicks Out of Bounds and Touchbacks

Free kicks out-of-bounds require the crew to work in unison to properly communicate the results to the Referee and both coaches, specifically:

- Was the ball touched by R before it went out-of-bounds:
  - R touching, or securing, a kick with any part of his body out-of-bounds when touching the ball is considered out of bounds untouched by R.
    - Flag for Free kick Out of Bounds Untouched by R.
  - If the ball is out untouched by R, it is a flag from the covering official marking the spot of where the ball went out.
  - Due to the four (4) choices available to R, it is important to get the exact yard line, R may accept any one of the following options:
    - Back up K 5-yards from where it was kicked, and re-kick.
    - Begin a new series from: 25-yards in advance of where the ball was kicked.
    - R take possession where the ball went of bounds plus 5-yards.
    - R take possession where the ball went out of bounds.
- If the ball was touched or muffed by R and went out-of-bounds, the ball will belong to R where it went out-of-bounds.
  - This is a bean bag if necessary; however, the official should go to the spot and signal Time out to designate the ball was out-of-bounds.
    - Unless 1st touching by K (bean bag).
  - There is no need to bean bag the spot of R's first touching.
    - The spot is not significant, the touching is.
- In both cases (touched or untouched by R) the inbounds spot of the ball for the series by R will be the hash of the yard line the ball went out on.
- **First Touching by K:**
  - First touching by K anywhere on the field is a significant spot to bean bag.
  - This bean bag may be the spot that R chooses to start their series.
  - Additionally, should K gain possession after the first touching, R may have the option to choose that as the spot to start a series.
- **Touchbacks:**
  - On Free kicks, the Referee is positioned at the goal line, on the hash mark opposite the press box (unless K's restraining line is moved by penalty).
  - A kick that in which any portion of the ball breaks the plane of the goal line before it is possessed is a touchback, whether that be:
    - A kick in flight; a grounded kick that is rolling; or a kick muffed by R.
  - The inbounds spot is the 20-yard line (unless moved by penalty), anywhere between the hashes as chosen by R/A.



## Player Out-of-Bounds

- When a player is blocked out-of-bounds by an opponent, he must return to the field at the first opportunity. (9-6-1).
  - If he does not return as required by rule and: intentionally touches the ball; influences the play; or otherwise participates, it is Illegal Participation.
- Prior to the change of possession, or when there is no change of possession, no player may intentionally go out of bounds during a down, (9-6-2) and:
  - Return to the field; intentionally touch the ball; influence the play; or otherwise participate. This is Illegal Participation.
  - Use hat on the sideline to signal player “intentionally” out-of-bounds.
  - If a player accidentally steps out of bounds, use discretion for a violation

## Responsibilities During Onside Kicks

- Score and time remaining generally dictate when an Onside Kick is most likely.
- When this dictates an obvious Onside Kick situation, it is recommended that the crew adjust the kickoff mechanics to “box in” the between the K’s Free kick Line and R’s Restraining Line, specifically:
  - **Referee** moves up no closer than 10-yards behind the deepest kick returner.
  - **Back Judge and Line Judge** opposite each other K’s Kick Line.
  - The **Linesman and the Umpire** up on R’s Restraining Line.
  - All four officials with hand on bean bag, to mark first touching by K before the ball has traveled the required 10-yards.
- First touching by K is a bean bag, not a flag, for a potential spot R elect as the start of the next series. Use accurate flag and/or bean bag placement, **drop bag, do not throw.**
  - Be aware of K players blocking before the ball has traveled 10-yards or been touched by R before their restraining line.
  - All crew members must be prepared to rule on a ball out-of-bounds touched, or untouched, by R and get the exact spot the ball went out.
  - That spot may provide R with enhanced choices if they accept a penalty for a ball out of bounds untouched by R.
- The crew is not to alert either team that they are adjusting for a potential Onside Kick.
- Things to remember about kicks:
  - A kick is a kick into it is possessed, is out-of-bounds, or is a touchback.
  - A muffed kick is still a kick.
  - A pop-up kick, (ball driven directly into the ground that immediately bounces 6’ in the air,) is illegal and is an immediate dead ball.
    - Blow and throw.
  - K cannot catch a kick in flight that has not hit the ground, or an R player first.
    - This is Kick-catching Interference. (Pass Interference signal #33).
  - K may recover a kick that has gone more than 10-yards but cannot advance it.

# Pre-Snap

## Pre-Snap Mechanics

- **Crew:** Hustle to position once the ball is spotted for the next down.
  - Back pedal to the position, dead ball officiating the line of scrimmage.
- **Referee:** for Goal Line plays, Passes, Punts, Reverse plays, a
  - **Positioning:** Off quarterback's passing arm, no closer than the tackles, 12-15 yards behind line of scrimmage.
    - Consider wider position: Ball in center, position at the hash.
  - Count offense with the Umpire, use crew signal #1:
    - Primary responsibility for A substitutes in and out of huddle.
    - 11-players; less than 11-players
    - If the 11th player enters the field after their team is set, hold signal until all are set.
    - More than 11-players should be 2 flags after if substituted player does not exit.
      - The substituted player has 3-seconds to begin to exit the field (signal #22).
  - Be alert for hurry-up offense: communicate every play, advise quarterback the ball is not ready-for-play until all officials are in position to officiate.
    - If the offense is snapping before officials are in position, advise the Head Coach they must wait, otherwise it is a procedure foul.
      - Snapping before the ready-for-play is a procedure penalty.
  - Designated the ball ready for play when back from charged/official's time out.
  - On 4th down punt situation, first confirm that there is a punt formation, then alert the umpire using (signal #19.)
    - Get eye contact with the Umpire.
- **Umpire:**
  - **Positioning:** 5 to 7-yards off ball so as to not interfere with movement of linebackers, vary position to not block view of B players or A to use you as interference.
  - Count A for 11-players with Referee, and signal:
  - 11-players; less than 11-players
    - If 11th player enters field after their team is set, hold signal until all are set.
  - More than 11-players should be 2 flags after if substituted player does not exit.
    - A substituted A player has 3-seconds must begin to exit the field.
    - Additionally, A must have five (5) players 50-79.
      - Unless there is an exception by rule. (Punt formations)
      - Hold Signal for 2 to 3-seconds.
      - Get eye contact with Referee.
  - Observe formation for potential ruling on blocking:
    - Quarterback in shotgun with linemen in 2-point stance:
      - Ability of linemen to block below waist immediately.
    - Defensive backs off the line at the snap:
      - Are they blocking below the waist or being blocked below the waist.
  - At the snap-read pass or run play:
    - Pass (offensive line retreating) step toward neutral zone expanded.
    - Run (offensive line driving forward) Hold and locate point of attack.

- **Linesman/Line Judge:**
  - **Positioning:** straddle the line of scrimmage
  - Count defense and signal across field. Use Crew Signal #1.
    - Be aware of substituted players retreating to the sideline.
    - More than 11 B players is not a penalty until the snap is imminent.
  - **Know line-to-gain prior to snap for 1st down.**
  - **Wide Receivers Regarding On/Off the Line:**
    - Use backfield foot to indicate line of scrimmage to receivers.
      - Then place feet parallel shoulder width, to move quickly.
    - Verbally communicate to the receiver how his position is interpreted.
    - Stand up straight to see players better.
    - If the receiver's position is on the line creates an illegal formation or is likely covering a potential receiver in error (if the play results in a pass beyond the line of scrimmage) continue to communicate to the player.
    - When a receiver's position on the line is questionable, make him legal if the formation is not deceptive to the opponent.
      - A tight end in "no-man's-land" is more deceptive to the defense than is a wide receiver who is only 1-yard off the line covering a potential receiver.
  - Enforce the Restricted Area rule consistently for both sidelines.
    - (9-8-3) Signal #15.
  - **Wings:** signal each other when closest A player(s) is off the line of scrimmage:
    - Punch back and hold for two seconds.
    - If player goes in motion, and now closest player is on, drop arm.
    - If the 2 closest players are off the line of scrimmage, punch them off with 2 fingers in a waving motion a 90-degree angle.
    - No signal given for nearest A player on the line-of-scrimmage.
  - Responsible when player-in-motion moves on side of center.
  - Pass coverage: Based upon formation, know receiver(s) keys.
- **Line Judge (Down Box # is Incorrect):**
  - Point to Down Box repeatedly to get Linesman's attention.
  - Use O2O's when equipped.
- **Back Judge:**
  - **Positioning:**
    - Always be deeper than deepest defensive player.
    - When facing clock, check to make sure it is appropriately running or stopped.
  - Count B players, signal both Linesman and Line Judge. Use crew signal #1.
  - Responsible for play clock.
  - Raise arm to indicate the last 10-seconds of the play clock. Use crew signal #5.
    - "Chop" the last 5-seconds.
  - If 12 or more on defense, be prepared to throw flag and kill play when snap is imminent.
  - Determine keys based on the offensive formation, and shade to the strong side based on number or receivers if necessary

## **Scrimmage Plays for Wings**

### **Wings:**

- Stay still at line of scrimmage as long as possible.
  - Accuracy increases with less movement.
  - Officiate a 15-yard route from the line of scrimmage.
- If key goes deep, pass off the key to Back Judge and move to a shallow route in zone.
- Catch/no catch-plant feet prior to ball arriving.
  - If it is a toe-tapper on sideline - straddle the sideline.
  - A receiver going to the ground immediately after a catch must complete the process of the catch and survive the ground.
- Have awareness of game situation.
- When 3rd or 4th and long-probability of deep routes increases
  - This is when to move off the line of scrimmage and downfield.
- Running plays - let the play get ahead. (Goal line mechanics are different.)
  - Officiate the blocking in front of the runner.

# Running Plays

## Running Play Responsibilities

- **Referee:**
  - **Positioning:** A's backfield 12 to 15-yards behind line of scrimmage on passing arm side.
  - Declare ball ready-for-play when returning from an official's or charged team time out.
    - Otherwise, the ball is ready when the ball is placed and the crew is in position.
  - Count A players and signal the Umpire using crew signal #1.
  - Check players set for one second prior to snap.
  - Watch for snap infractions, false starts, illegal shifts/motion within keys.
  - **Referee Keys:**
    - Key opposite side guard/tackle, looking through quarterback.
    - Responsible for ball carrier and action around him neutral zone
    - Move behind play toward side of the field where the play advances and cover the runner until he reaches neutral zone or if down near line of scrimmage.
    - Watch action behind ball and away from runner, action on quarterback, as well as backward or forward passes.
      - When ball is dead, move to the location and signal next down.
      - Help relay ball and assist Umpire with spot.
    - If first down, stop clock with signal.
    - Ensure crew is in position before signaling ball ready-for-play (silent wind)
- **Umpire:**
  - **Positioning:** 5 to 7-yards off ball as to not interfere with movement of linebackers, vary position to not block view of B players or A to use you as interference
  - Count A players and signal the Referee using crew signal #1.
  - Check for five (5) players on the line numbered 50-79.
  - Be ready to rule on snap infractions, false starts, disconcerting signals by defense and be aware of which B players are in the Free Blocking Zone at the snap
  - **Umpire Keys:**
    - Read run or pass from point of attack.
    - Watch line play for illegal action at point of attack and in free blocking zone.
    - Move accordingly depending on play working inside out (see Terms).
    - Be alert for fumbles beyond neutral zone and help determine possession.
    - After the play, spot ball.
- **Linesman:**
  - **Positioning:** Straddle the line of scrimmage
  - Count B players then signal Line Judge and Back Judge using crew signal #1.
  - Use extended arm signal to indicate closest "A" player is off the line of scrimmage use crew signal #2.
  - Check to see if all backs, flankers, split ends in legal positions and check eligibility.
  - If the initial motion is moving away, determine if the player motion is legal at the snap.
  - Help in determining false start, encroachment, interference with snap.
  - Be alert for illegal substitutes on sideline, to include that all A players have been inside the "9's" at some point prior to the snap, after the ready-for-play.

- **Linesman Keys:**
  - **Action towards:**
    - Observe actions of linemen in coverage area and blockers in front of ball carrier:
      - Pick up ball carrier, mark forward progress and stop clock if out of bounds.
      - Signal the start of the play clock (Signal #2) when the covering official.
      - Stop clock if ball carrier crosses line to gain.
  - **Action away:**
    - Move cautiously onto the field, be ready for reverse action:
      - Observe the action behind the play and help with forward progress spot.
- **Line Judge:**
  - **Positioning:** Straddle the line of scrimmage
  - Count B players and signal to Linesman and Back Judge using crew signal #1
  - Confirm the box has the proper down, then signal down to the Linesman.
    - Use extended arm crew signal #2 to indicate closest "A" player is off the line.
  - Check to see if all backs, flankers, split ends in legal positions and check eligibility.
  - If the initial motion is moving away, determine if player motion is legal at the snap.
  - Help in determining false start, encroachment, interference with snap.
  - Be alert for illegal substitutes on sideline, to include that all A players have been inside the "9's" at some point prior to the snap, after the ready-for-play.
  - **Line Judge Keys:**
    - **Action towards:**
      - Observe action of linemen near side and blockers in front of ball carrier.
      - Pick up responsibility of ball carrier, mark forward progress.
        - Stop clock if ball carrier crosses line-to-gain.
    - **Action away:**
      - Move cautiously onto the field; be ready for reverse action.
      - Observe action behind play.
      - Be ready to help with forward progress spot.
- **Back Judge:**
  - **Positioning:** Approximately 20-yards off ball and always deeper than deepest back.
  - Count B players and signal both the Linesman and Line Judge.
  - Responsible for play clock.
  - Raise arm to indicate the last 10-seconds of the play clock, use crew signal #5.
    - "Chop" the last 5-seconds.
  - **Back Judge Keys:**
    - Work inside out (see terms).
    - Move to maintain triangle coverage with crew on runs to side zones.
    - Trail play to sideline and move into dead ball area assisting covering official.

## Cleaning up Behind Play

- **Secondary responsibilities during plays:**
  - **Wings:** should never get in front of playing action.
- **Running play- inside hash:**
  - **Referee:** primary responsibility is the ball carrier.
  - **Wing:** will have activity around the play, while the runner is inside the hash.
  - **Umpire:** Will have interior lineman at point of attack.
- **Running play- outside hash:**
  - **Referee:** will hand off ball carrier to the wing and Referee will have activity around play.
  - **Wing:** will take the responsibility of runner.
  - **Umpire:** Play develops into run moving toward the side line, shift focus to the activity around the ball carrier.
- **Sideline plays:**
  - **Referee and Back Judge:**
    - Converge to help assist the wing to deal with dead ball officiating.

## Fumbles/Strips/Interceptions

- **Crew:**
  - Loose ball: covering officials drop bean bag on yard line where player possession was lost no need to toss.
    - No bean bag for interception, or strip that does not hit ground.
    - Additionally, there is no need to bean bag a fumble behind the line of scrimmage.
      - It will not identify a subsequent penalty enforcement spot.
  - When players pileup, officials must “dig” to identify possession.
    - First official to pile “digs” for the ball.
      - While looking for ball, be verbal as an impression of control.
  - Official who rules team possession yells team color, then closest official signals direction if there is a change of possession.
    - If A retains possession, covering official signals next down.
  - After confirming proper direction, stop game clock and rule change of possession.
- **Referee:**
  - Stop game clock (no whistle) after 2-seconds when is no possession signal from a covering official.



## **During a Hurry-Up Offense**

- **Crew:** The goal for every game is efficient, quick, and accurate ball spotting so A never has to wait for officials other than for time outs or 1st down measurements
- **Referee:**
  - Adjust position by not moving in as far when ball is dead.
  - Communicate to quarterback let him know ball status.
  - When a Hurry-Up offense is identified, emphatically explain to the quarterback he must wait for the Umpire to get in position before snapping the ball.
    - If the quarterback continues to snap the ball before the crew is in position to officiate, call an Official's Time Out and advise the Head Coach.
  - If snapper is over the ball, back-pedal quickly into position before marking ball ready.
    - When the ready-for-play mechanics call for a Referee's whistle and signal, returning from a team charged, or official's time out (other than a 1st down) the ready will be determined when the crew is in position officiate.
- **Umpire:**
  - The clock becomes more important than the exact spot, unless close to a 1st down.
  - Spot the ball and move into position as quickly as possible.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Adjust position by not moving in as far when ball is dead.
  - Both officials mirror each other and hold dead ball spot for Umpire.
    - **Umpire** may use either spot to set the ball.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Spot ball when obvious 1st down that is down field.

## Passing Plays

(see diagrams on the following pages)

- **Referee:**
  - Mark ball ready-for-play with whistle when returning from an official or team time out.
  - Count A players and signal the Umpire using crew signal #1.
  - Check players set for one-second prior to snap.
  - Watch for snap infractions, illegal shifts/motion and false starts.
  - **Referee Keys:**
    - Key opposite side guard/tackle and watch blocking.
    - Remain wider and deeper than the passer.
    - Follow quarterback until playing action stops around him.
    - Responsible for Roughing the Passer.
      - After release, verbally alert defenders and observe action around passer.
      - “One-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, it’s gone!”
      - There is no violation for Roughing the Passer if:
        - The pass is backwards or an illegal forward pass.
        - Other Personal Fouls may be enforced.
    - Determine if pass is forward or backward when possible.
      - Defer to Wing with view of pass going away for ruling.
    - Responsible for intentional grounding; however, can get assistance from covering officials on various components of rule for an exception or not.
    - Determine if passer crosses neutral zone; Umpire and Wings to assist.
    - Continue to observe action behind neutral zone before trailing play.
- **Umpire:**
  - Count A players and signal the Referee using crew signal #1.
  - Check for 5 players on the line numbered 50-79
  - Be ready to rule on snap infractions, false starts, disconcerting acts by defense and be aware of which B players are in the Free Blocking Zone at the snap.
  - **Umpire Keys:**
    - Watch line play for illegal action around point of attack and in Free Blocking Zone.
    - As offensive-line retreats, move to the Neutral Zone expanded.
      - Observe action of players in and immediately behind neutral zone.
      - Rule on ineligible interior lineman downfield.
    - Assist Referee in determining if forward pass released beyond the neutral zone.
    - Know if ball tipped at the line of scrimmage, signal use signal #11.
    - Assist on determining catch or no catch on short passes over middle.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Count B players, use crew signal #1
  - Check the down number on box and signal down.
  - Use extended arm signal to indicate closest “A” player is off the line use, crew signal #2.
  - Check to see if all backs, flankers, split ends in legal positions and check eligibility.
  - If the motion is away from you, determine if the player motion is legal at the snap.
  - Help in determining false start, encroachment, interference with snap.
  - Be alert for illegal substitutes on sideline.

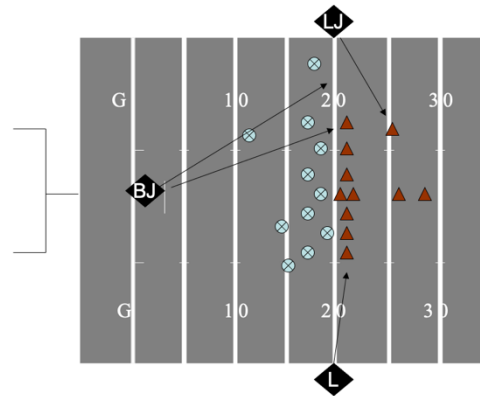
- **Linesman and Line Judge Keys:**
  - Watch initial action for defensive holding or illegal contact by B; look to quarterback:
    - Ball has been released away from the receiver, no violation.
    - Ball being released toward the receiver; consider defensive pass interference.
  - Looking to target that receiver but has not released the ball, consider a defensive holding penalty or illegal contact when A was knocked off route.
  - Be ready to rule on direction of quick forward pass.
    - Assist Referee on passes crossing line of scrimmage.
      - Passes that are going away to rule forward or backward.
    - Be ready to rule on pass complete/incomplete and interference.
    - Be alert for illegal passes.
    - Move down sideline as required to cover passes to near side
    - Be ready to adjust back for run.
    - Rule on touching or catching by ineligible.
      - Touching must be intentional, otherwise it is ignored.
  - **Observe Action Until Ball Is Dead:**
    - If first down is obtained, stop clock.
    - If inside defensive 5-yard line, be ready to rule on momentum exception.
    - If incomplete pass in area, sound whistle and signal.
    - If ball is intercepted and ball becomes dead, stop clock and signal first down.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Count B players and signal 11-players to the Wings, use crew signal #1.
  - Responsible for play clock.
  - Raise arm at the last 10-seconds of the play clock and chop the final 5-seconds, use crew signal #5.
  - **Back Judge Keys:**
    - Start with receiver key based on formation and strength.
    - Retreat to be in position behind deepest receiver.
    - Responsible for deep receivers.
    - Be ready to rule on complete/incomplete and pass interference.
    - Move to goal line or end line, if either is threatened.

## Formation Keys and Priorities

- **Strength** is always determined by the numbering of eligible receivers outside tackles.
- **Linesman/Line Judge Keys:**
  - Eligible receivers on Linesman/Line Judge's side that are not the Back Judge's key.
    - Back Judge key is always widest receiver on the strong side.
  - Grab and restrict, glance at quarterback:
    - If quarterback is not looking at receiver, no foul.
    - If quarterback is looking to target the receiver, it is Defensive Holding.

### Unbalanced Formation- to Line Judge's side

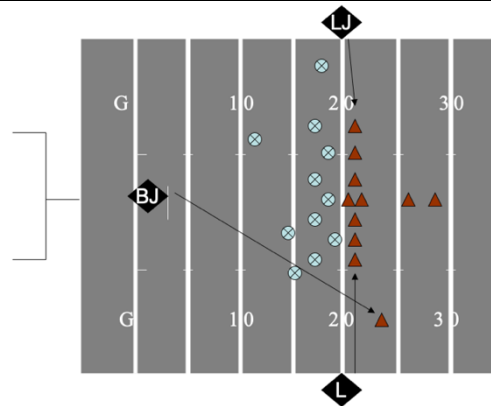
Strong side declared to Line Judge's side



- **Line Judge:** Next widest eligible receiver on near side (both formations.)
- **Linesman:** End on near side.
- **Back Judge:** Widest received on strong side.

### Unbalanced Formation - to Lineman's Side

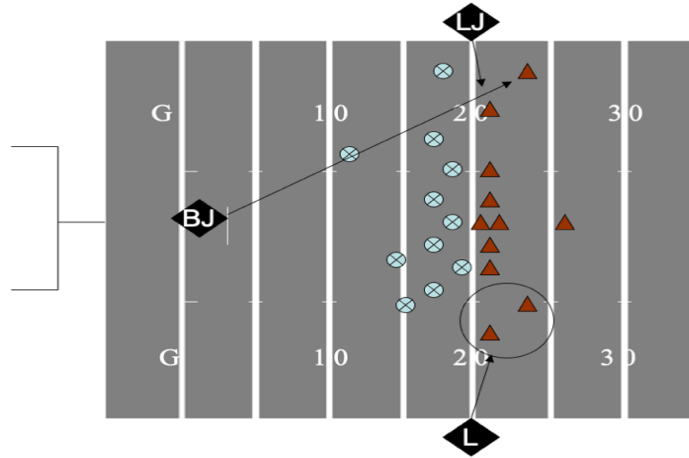
Strong side declared to Lineman's side



- Line Judge:** End, near side.
- Linesman:** Next widest eligible receiver on near side.
- Back Judge:** Widest eligible receiver on strong side.

### Twins Formation

Strength declared to Line Judge's side

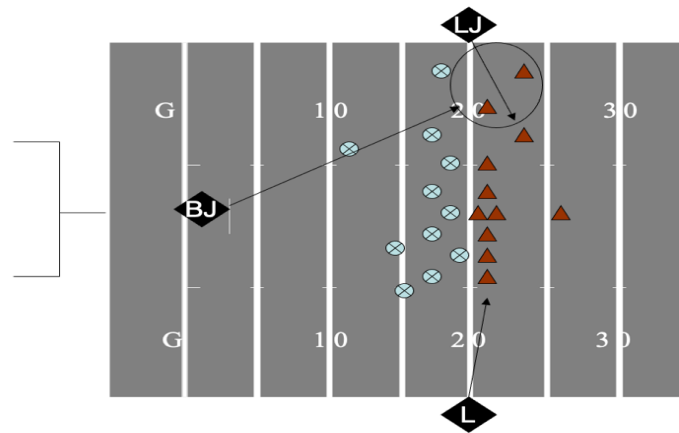


**Line Judge:** Next widest eligible receiver on near side.

**Linesman:** Eligible receivers on near side.

**Back Judge:** Widest eligible receiver on strong side (Line Judge side).

### Trips Formation



**Line Judge:** Inside receiver on near side.

**Linesman:** End near side.

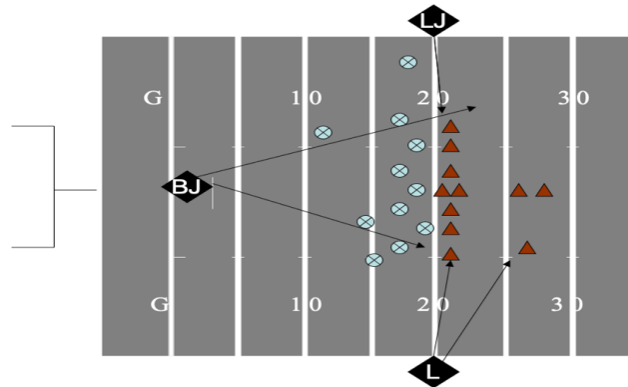
**Back Judge:** Two outside receivers on strong side.

(Note: reverse coverage for trips formations to Linesman side.)

### **Motion- Linesman Side**

Strong side initially declared to Linesman's side

- Motion: Once motion man crossed the snapper, strength and keys change.
- Switching to Zone: When key moves to another official's coverage, switch to zone.
- Find matchup, don't officiate air.



**Line Judge:** Motion to LJ changes strength to LJ's side, key is same. .

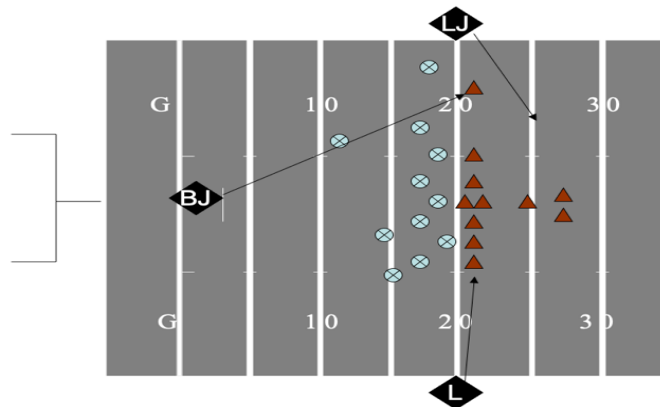
**Linesman:** Change to End on near side.

**Back Judge:** Change to widest eligible receiver on LJ's side

(Note: reverse coverage for trips formations to Linesman side.)

### **Motion- Line Judge Side**

Strong side initially declared to Line Judge's side



Motion to Line Judge's side does not change strength, it remains the same.

**Line Judge:** Motion to LJ changes strength to LJ's side remains same

**Linesman:** Change to End on near side.

**Back Judge:** Change to widest eligible receiver on LJ's side.

## Intentional Grounding Exceptions

It is legal for a passer to intentionally throw an incomplete pass to conserve yardage, provided: he has been outside the lateral limits of the free blocking zone with the ball and the ball reaches the neutral zone extended (7-5-2d exc 2.) The exception applies when the passer was the original player to receive the snap. (new in 2023: 7-5-2 exc 2c.)

- **Crew:** Be aware that when a pass is thrown there are responsibilities for each position.
  - Communicating observations through good signals/mechanics will avoid confusion.
  - Referee bean bag the spot of the pass to capture the potential enforcement spot.
  - After discussion, if the exception for Intentional Grounding does not apply, flag the foul at the spot of the preliminary bean bag marker.
- **Referee:** Ensure passer being provided the exception, was:
  - The passer was the original player to receive the snap.
  - The passer was at one-point outside the lateral edges of the free blocking zone:
  - Outside the tackles, or three strides in either direction.
  - The pass thrown to conserve yardage reached the line-of-scrimmage.
    - It is a pass until it is caught or touches the ground.
  - Bean bag the spot of the pass if any of the elements are in question.
- **Umpire:** Did the pass reach the line-of-scrimmage.
  - It is a pass until it is caught or touches the ground
  - If not, immediately report to the Referee.
- **Wings:** If thrown from within the free blocking zone
  - Was there a receiver in the area, (within 5-yards.)
  - Did the pass make the line-of-scrimmage, or the neutral zone extended.
    - If not, immediately report to the Referee.
- **Back Judge:** Assist on receiver in the area, and possibly pass making the line-of scrimmage, or line-of-scrimmage extended.
- **Additional Considerations:**
  - A backwards pass is never intentional grounding.
  - A spike to conserve time from under center, or the shotgun, is legal.
    - If the snap is muffed or fumbled, then spiked, it is intentional grounding.

**Table 7-5-2**

<p><b>Legal Forward Passes</b></p>	<p><b>Illegal Forward Passes</b></p>
<p>From in or behind the neutral zone</p>	<p>a. After team possession has changed during the down.</p>
	<p>b. A pass from beyond the neutral zone.</p>
	<p>c. A second and subsequent forward pass(es) thrown during a down</p>
	<p>d. A pass intentionally thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible offensive receiver, or thrown incomplete to save loss of yardage or to conserve time.</p> <p><b>Exception 1:</b> It is legal for a player positioned directly behind the snapper to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball forward to the ground immediately after receiving the snap that has neither been muffed nor touched the ground.</p> <p><b>Exception 2:</b> It is legal for a player to conserve yardage by intentionally throwing an incomplete forward pass if the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The passer has possessed the ball beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone as established at the snap.</li> <li>b. The pass reaches the neutral zone, including the extension beyond the sideline; and</li> <li>c. The passer is the only player to possess the ball after the snap ends.</li> </ul>



## **Backwards Passes**

- A backwards pass is a pitched or overhand pass in which the initial direction is either parallel with or angled away from the passer's goal line.
- If the pass is not "forward, it is a backwards pass."
  - When a grounded backwards pass is identified, it is loose ball treated as a fumble.
  - When a grounded backwards pass occurs, the covering official shuffles back to rule on recovery of the ball, as well as inbounds/out-of-bounds status.
- A grounded backwards pass is out-of-bounds when any part of the ball is out of bounds, or before possessed, contacts any player, official or equipment touching out-of-bounds.
- On quick passes, the far official (ball going away) has the best view for initial direction.
- When an official identifies a grounded pass in which its initial direction is in doubt, no whistle represents the pass has been ruled backwards.
  - Do not punch back on a pass that is or appears to be backwards.
  - When a whistle sounds in that situation, the ball has either been ruled a forward pass, or this is an inadvertent whistle.
- Wing officials must conference to ensure they are in agreement of a forward pass.
- A backwards pass is never intentional grounding, even if it is to conserve time.
  - Additionally, there will be no violation for Roughing the Passer on a backwards pass; however, there may still be a Personal Foul.

## Scrimmage Kicks

- **Recognizing a Scrimmage Kick Formation: (2-14-2)**
  - Without a proper scrimmage kick formation, neither the snapper, kicker nor holder are afforded protection during the down.
    - In a punt formation, the player in position to receive the snap must be 10-yards or more behind the snapper, and in position to directly receive the snap.
    - When identifying a proper scrimmage kick formation:
      - Referee should signal the false start (signal #19) to alert the crew that the Center/Snapper has protection.
        - Especially when it is identified on a play other than 4th down.
        - Signal #19 is used to alert the crew there is a punt formation with protection for certain players, not to signal that it is a 4th down play.
      - **Umpire** must return the signal to the Referee.
  - **During a PAT or Field Goal:**
    - The holder must be 7-yards behind snapper, in the position to receive the snap.
    - Another player (kicker) must be 3-yards or less directly behind the holder in position to attempt a place kick.
- **Referee:**
  - **Positioning:**
    - 3 to 5-yards outside the tight end.
    - 2 to 3-yards behind the kicker on the kicking leg side of kicker.
    - Be able to see ball and all backs.
  - Watch for fouls behind the neutral zone and roughing/running into the kicker.
  - Be alert for blocked kicks and recover.
  - After ball crosses the neutral zone, observe line play and move down field slowly.
  - Stay with punter until playing action around him stops or until he participates.
    - Do not allow a free shot on punter.
  - Initiate Reverse Mechanics:
    - Be ready to pick up runner on long run and continue to goal line.
  - If kicked out of bounds in flight, assist the covering official with spot.
  - If no foul, signal for Linesman and line-to-gain equipment into position for next play.
  - Keep playing action in front while proceeding downfield.
    - Paying attention to personal fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls.
- **Umpire:**
  - **Positioning:**
    - Step toward neutral zone expanded.
    - Watching for possible roughing of snapper.
    - Then shift to blocking action.
  - Assist Referee with short or blocked kicks
  - Once a kick crosses neutral zone, pivot and observe blocks downfield and players away from ball.

- **Linesman:** Release down field on a clean kick beyond the neutral zone expanded.
  - **Positioning:**
    - Hold line-of-scrimmage until ball crosses the neutral zone.
    - Then move slowly down field
    - Keep spacing with the Back Judge
  - **Grounded Kicks Out of Bounds Near Sideline:**
    - Mark spot and observe action.
    - Assist Referee with short, or blocked, kicks and note spot of recovery.
  - **On Short Kicks to Near Side:**
    - Bean bag spot of first touching and end of kick.
    - Be ready for fair catch on short kicked to near side.
    - Blow whistle only after kick is secured.
  - **Routine Kick:**
    - Move downfield cautiously observe action in front of ball carrier.
    - Move with runner to near sideline and follow until goal line.
  - Only move line-to-gain equipment when sure no foul and signaled by Referee.
- **Line Judge:** Release down field on a clean snap to the player in position to kick.
  - On grounded kicks out of bounds:
    - Mark spot.
    - Observe action.
    - On return to Linesman side:
      - Move slowly behind the play.
      - Observe all action.
  - **If K is First to Touch:**
    - Mark spot of first touching with bean bag.
  - **If Fair Catch Is Signaled on Short Kicks to Near Side:**
    - Sound whistle after kick is complete (know when kick ends).
    - Mark spot and hold spot and communicate results to Referee.
- **Back Judge:**
  - **Positioning:**
    - 10 to 12-yards wider than, and 2 to 3-yards behind, the deepest receiver on Linesman side of field.
  - **Kicks out-of-bounds**, chop with Referee to confirm spot where out in flight.
    - Referee lines up punt out-of-bounds in the air with fixed point beyond sideline.
    - Designated official starts down field beyond the potential out-of-bounds spot.
    - Then returns up field holding arm in the air looking for a chop from Referee.
    - Referee signals a chop to the designated official, marking the sideline spot.
    - The Line Judge is the designated official on the press box side; and the Back Judge is the designated official on the chain side.
  - Be ready to rule on momentum inside the 5-yard line. (see Momentum Exception)
  - Observe initial action around receiver.
  - Drop bean bag to mark the end of kick.
  - Maintain responsibility of the ball carrier.
    - On returns up the middle and to near side.
    - Until released to other official.
  - If K first to touch:
    - Mark spot of first touching with bean bag.
  - If fair catch is signaled on short kicks to near side.
    - Sound whistle after kick is complete (know when kick ends) and mark spot.
    - Hold spot and communicate results to Referee.

## **Recovered Kick ‘Behind’ the Neutral Zone**

- Either team may catch, or recover, the ball and advance.
  - If a team K player recovers the ball, he may run, pass or even kick the ball again.
    - (6-2-2 and 6-2-3).
- The continuity of downs is not broken, even if R touched ball behind neutral zone.
- The down counts and team K must make it to the line to gain in order to retain the ball.
- If it is touched by R beyond the expanded neutral zone the ball will belong to the team in possession at the end of the down. (5-1-3f; 5-1-4)

## **Numbering Exceptions: Scrimmage Kick Formations (7-2-5)**

- There are only two numbering exceptions allowed by NFHS football rules:
  - During all other scrimmage formations, numbering and position exclusively determines receiver eligibility.
    - Team A, must have five players numbered 50-79 on the line to be a legal formation, and these players are ineligible by number.
    - There is no provision for a team to declare an eligible receiver
- A team is in a scrimmage kick formation when:
  - A player is at least 10-yards behind snapper in position to receive a snap.
  - A player is in position, knee on the ground, 7-yards or more behind snapper and another player is 3-yards or less behind that player, and in a position to place kick.
- While in a scrimmage kick formation, teams may utilize a numbering exception that would allow less than five players numbered 50-79 on the line, but teams are required to:
  - Have a minimum of five players on the line of scrimmage.
  - If it is 1st, 2nd, or 3rd down and the snapper’s number is outside 50-79:
    - He must be positioned between the Ends.
    - Is ineligible for a forward pass.
  - If 4th down, or during a kick try, when A sets or shifts into a scrimmage kick formation:
    - Any player numbered 0-49 or 80-99 may take the position of player 50-79; but a player under this exception must:
      - Take an initial position on his line between the ends.
      - Is ineligible for a forward pass.
- **Referee:** When a scrimmage kick formation is identified, alert umpire using (signal 19.)
  - Especially when the formation is unexpected: 1st, 2nd 3rd downs; 4th and short.
  - Do not signal the umpire simply because it is a 4th down punt situation.
  - Advise B to “stay off the kicker and snapper” in obvious kick formations.
- **Umpire:** When 5 players 50-79 on A’s line of scrimmage cannot be located, identify if A is in a scrimmage kick formation.
  - If on 1st, 2nd or 3rd down and the snapper is in under the exception:
    - He must be between ends.
    - Remains ineligible for a forward pass.
  - Return the Referee’s signal for a scrimmage kick formation.
  - Advise B to “stay off the kicker and snapper” when the kick formation is obvious.
- **Linesman/Line Judge:**
  - When A is in scrimmage kick formation, identify any potential A players under the available numbering exception that are ineligible.

## **Momentum Exception**

- (8-5-2a Exc) provides clarity for when a defender intercepts a pass, catches a kick or recovers a fumble inside his 5-yard line and momentum carries him into his end zone.
  - Without this exception such a play could be judged as a safety or touchback, since B/R is responsible for carrying the ball into his own end zone.
  - The rule stipulates the ball either becomes dead in the defensive teams' possession in the end zone or is fumbled out of bounds from the end zone.
    - Without going back into the field of play.
    - In each of these cases, the defensive team will next put the ball in play at the spot where possession was obtained (bean bag.)
  - It is important to note the result of the play is a safety if the defensive team player obtains possession of the ball outside the 5-yard line and his "momentum" carries him into the end zone and the ball becomes dead there.

## **Scoring Plays**

### **Goal Line Plays-Inside 10-yards**

- **Referee:**
  - Same coverage as routine scrimmage plays.
  - Do not rule on touchdown from behind the runner unless obvious.
  - Give signal if touchdown has been signaled by covering official with no foul on play.
    - There is no need to rush the signal.
- **Umpire:**
  - Position near goal line 5 to 7-yards of line of scrimmage same as scrimmage play.
  - Watch runner for moving ball forward after it was declared dead near goal line.
  - Communicate to covering official whether ball crossed the goal line in coverage area.
    - Never signal touchdown from as the Umpire.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Position the same as a scrimmage play 2-yards off the sideline.
  - On snap between 10-yard and 5-yard line, release downfield stay ahead of runner, no further than the goal line.
  - On a snap inside 5-yard line, release to goal line and work back to the ball.
  - Only signal touchdown if you see that the ball breaks the plane of the goal line.
    - Crash on forward progress ending close to the goal line.
  - On play to near side, officiate from goal line extended 2-yards off the pylon.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Responsible for the entire end line.

## **Goal Line Mechanics – Going In:**

- **Crew:** Use goal line mechanics for all plays which are snapped inside the 10-yard line.
- **Referee-Positioning:**
  - 12 to 15-yards behind the line-of-scrimmage and at least as wide as the tight end.
  - Starting position is on the passing arm side of the quarterback to be able to rule on pass/fumble/plays by the quarterback.
  - Plays resulting in touchdown/score:
    - After touchdown, watch players move toward sideline.
    - Signal touchdown to press box and side lines.
    - After touchdown ask Captain or Head Coach for location to spot ball for try.
- **Umpire-Positioning:**
  - Position 7-yards off the line of the scrimmage inside the Tight Ends, irrespective of Referee's position.
    - Do not position on the goal line. (Vary position laterally.)
  - Plays resulting in touchdown/score:
    - Use hand on chest mechanic when you see the ball cross the goal line.
    - The touchdown call is the Wing's decision.
    - Never signal touchdown.
    - Do not spot ball until A advises of the spot.
    - Illegal forward pass – quarterback's entire body is over line of scrimmage
    - Ineligibles downfield on a forward pass that crosses line of scrimmage.
      - Ineligible downfield (neutral zone expanded) at time quarterback releases pass.
      - When in doubt, it is legal.
- **Linesman/Line Judge:** 2-yards off the sideline, (line-of-scrimmage extended.)
  - Communicate with Back Judge:
    - Sideline pass plays: Wings has feet and Back Judge has hands.
    - End Line pass plays: Wings has hands and Back Judge has feet.
  - Pre-snap-all players from the snapper to sideline.
  - Rule on forward/backward passes being thrown away from side
    - (Do not punch back backward passes.)
  - Forward progress.
  - Catches and incompleteness.
  - Pass interference – make it be there and be obvious.
  - Illegal touching.
  - Must be at goal line extended before the ball arrives.
  - From plus 10-yard line and plus 5-yard line.
  - Release slowly downfield at the snap.
  - Staying ahead of the runner all the way to the goal line.
  - Stay wide (goal line extended to rule on plays at the pylon.)
    - The touchdown signal is only given by the official who sees the ball in possession of the runner break the goal line.
    - Do not mirror signals.
  - **From 5-yard line plus and goal Line:**
    - Hustle to goal line, reading the play as you move to the pylon.
    - Be 2-yards outside pylon before ball arrives at goal line.
    - When down short of goal line, cover the play and mark forward progress.
      - If runner dives at side pylon, be wide enough (2-yards plus) to rule.
      - Touchdown: remain at pylon and pivot to watch runner in end zone.

- **Close Goal Line and Goal Line Extended:**
  - Only the ball must break the plane of the goal line or goal line extended.
    - When the ball only crosses goal line extended, it must be in possession of an inbounds runner.
  - Officiate near side goal line plays 5-yards out of bounds from the pylon.
  - Pinch in hard and fast to sell call (touchdown or short.)
  - Do not signal touchdown without seeing the ball.
    - Delay signaling and run in to dig for ball.
    - Never mirror a touchdown signal.
- **Back Judge:** Responsible for entire end line.
  - Stay on the end line during live ball.
  - Hustle down end line toward potential dead ball spot.
    - Maintaining a 5-yard cushion with receiver.
  - Straddle end line on tight catch/no catch.
  - Observe A players near sideline for stepping on the end line.
  - Back Judge signals incomplete pass on end line only, not Wings.
- **Linesman/Line Judge/Back Judge:** End Zone Corner.
  - Eye contact with wing prior to touch down signal:
    - See an incomplete pass, signal immediately.
    - Pass: Wait several seconds before signaling touchdown.
    - Signal touch down only when sure.
    - Stop at pylon/goal line extended to signal touchdown.
    - Pivot 90 degrees to watch/follow runner and other players after touchdown.
      - Dead ball, officiate after the play.

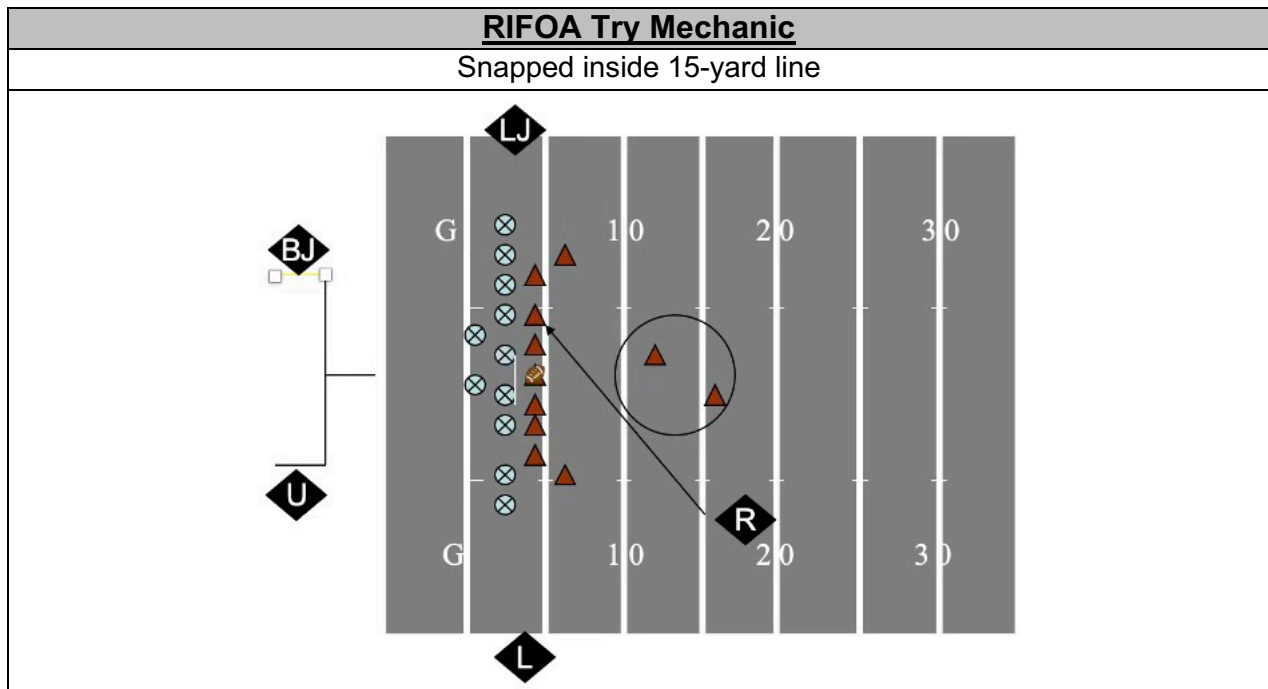
## **Goal Line Mechanics – Going Out**

- **Crew:** Use goal line mechanics for all plays which are snapped inside the 10-yard line.
  - **Referee-Positioning:**
    - 12 to 15-yards behind the line-of-scrimmage and at least as wide as the tight end.
      - Responsible for entire end line, straddle if necessary.
    - Starting position is on the passing arm side of the quarterback to be able to rule on pass/fumble/plays by the quarterback.
      - Be prepared to rule on player, ball carrier, or loose ball out of bounds.
    - Plays resulting in touchdown or safety.
      - After touchdown, watch players move toward sideline.
      - Signal touchdown or safety to press box and side lines.
      - On a touchdown, secure B's ball for try.
      - After a safety, position using free kick mechanics.
        - K has the option to change the ball.
  - **Umpire-Positioning:**
    - Position 5 to 7-yards off the line of the scrimmage inside the Tight Ends, irrespective of Referee's position.
      - Vary position laterally.
    - Plays resulting in touchdown or safety:
      - Focus on forward progress between the ends.
      - Be prepared to offer observations on ball completely beyond the goal line.
  - **Linesman/Line Judge:** Pre snap, line-of-scrimmage extended.
    - Pre-snap, all players from the snapper to near sideline.
    - Get to goal line extended at the snap.
    - Rule on forward progress and ball completely beyond goal line.
      - Ball must be driven completely out of end zone into field of play.
    - Assume all other scrimmage play mechanics when necessary.
  - **Back Judge:**
    - **Positioning:** Approximately 20-yards off ball and always deeper than deepest back.



## Field Goal and Try Attempts

- **Positioning-Snap Inside the 15-Yard Line:**
  - **Referee:** 2 to 3-yards to the rear and 3 to 5-yards to the side facing the holder.
    - Has whistle when ball is kicked on a PAT.
  - **Umpire:** under uprights with Back Judge.
    - Back Judge has whistle for scrimmage kick (field goal attempt) entering end zone.
  - **Linesman:** line of scrimmage.
  - **Line Judge:** line of scrimmage extended.
  - **Back Judge:** under uprights with Umpire.
    - Communicate with Umpire, and step from under uprights with signal.

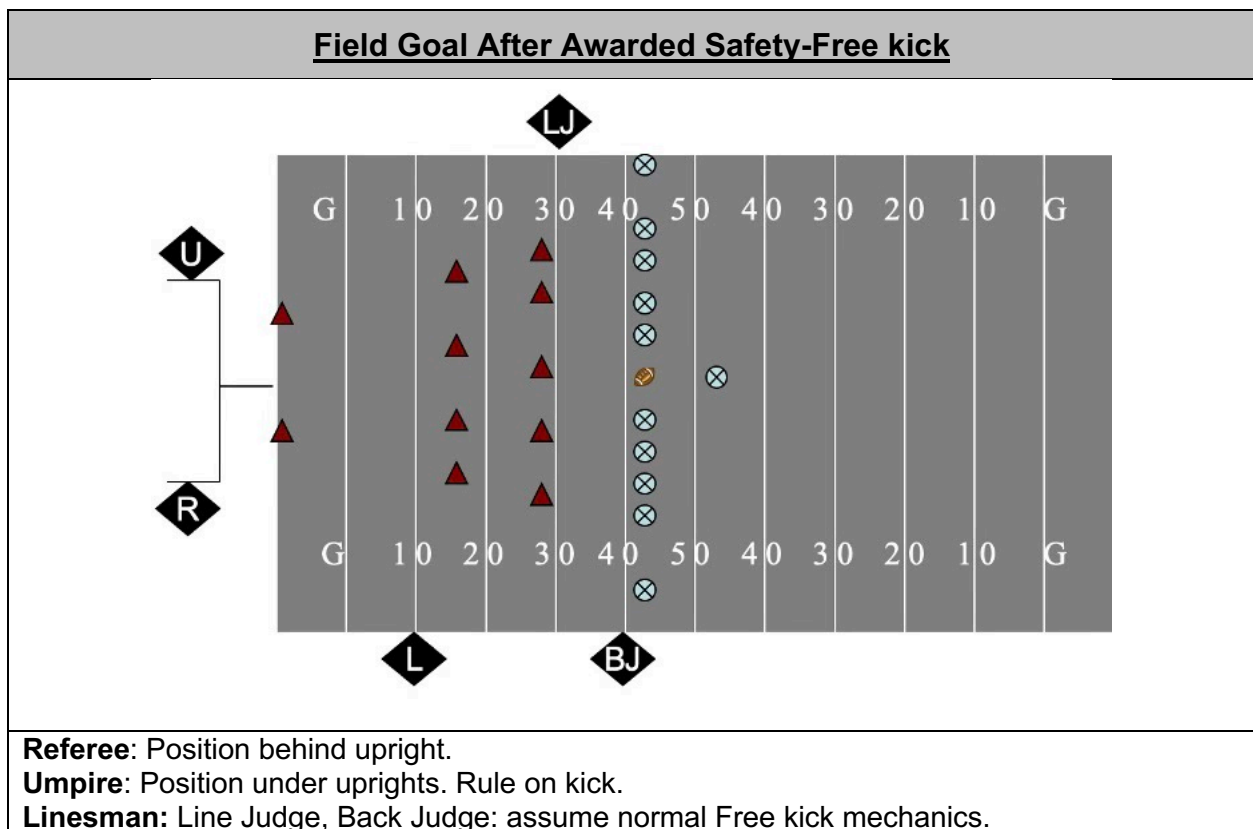


- **Positioning-Snap Beyond the 15-Yard Line:**
  - **Referee:**
    - Position 2 to 3-yards to the rear and 3 to 5-yards to the side facing the holder.
  - **Umpire:** 7-yards back from line of scrimmage.
    - Consider shading tackle opposite Referee.
    - Observe line for Holding, Blocking Below the Waist, and Roughing the Snapper.
  - **Linesman/Line Judge:** Line of scrimmage extended.
  - **Back Judge:** Position under uprights be prepared to adjust to post in play.
    - Whistle, communicate with Umpire, and step from under uprights with signal.

### **Responsibilities:**

- **Referee:**
  - Observe Kicker, Holder, and opposite side tackle.
  - Be ready for fumble or fake field goal/try.
  - Assist Line Judge/Linesman with sideline if run develops.
    - Back Judge will whistle when ball enters the end zone.

- **Umpire:**
  - Attention to keys from under the uprights.
  - Rule on upright (Back Judge rules on above or below crossbar).
  - Communicate with Back Judge; score or no score.
  - **Field Goal Attempt:** Sound whistle when a grounded ball breaks the goal line or when a ball in flight crosses cross bar or when unsuccessful.
    - If the field goal does not cross the goal line plane, the ball remains alive.
- **Linesman:** If run or pass move to the officiate the sideline and goal line.
- **Line Judge:** If run or pass move to the officiate the sideline and goal line.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Rule on upright and cross bar and adjust with the direction of the kick.
  - **Try:** Sound whistle when ball passes cross bar or when unsuccessful.
    - Signal with Umpire; score or no-score.
    - Field Goal: Whistle when ball enters End Zone.
  - **Field Goal Attempt:** Sound whistle when a grounded ball breaks the goal line or when a ball in flight crosses cross bar or when unsuccessful.
    - If the field goal does not break the goal line plane, the ball remains alive.



## **Requesting a New Ball During a Series:**

- Any member of the crew may grant a team's request to change the ball during a series, provided the reasoning is valid.
- The rule identifies two specific instances that constitute “during a series”, at any other time it is permissible to change to another approved ball.
  - During a series includes 2nd, 3rd and 4th downs; as well as on PAT.
  - During that time, it is at the official's discretion to change the ball.
- Officials must be cautious of frivolous requests by a team to replace the ball.
  - When a request is granted, the crew should inspect and ensure ball meets standards.
- In 2022 the NFHS expanded the request to include all officials and in situations other than when the field is wet (1-3-3).

# Official's Equipment and Game Mechanics

## Bean Bag Mechanics

- The bean bag is primarily used to mark specific yard lines on the field that may be used as a future reference point relating to penalty enforcement; end of the run; end of the kick; First Touching; dead ball spot; as a reference point, or any combination of those designations. It is not used for Interception unless the momentum exception applies.
- **Crew:**
  - Drop the bean bag on the exact yard line, rather than tossing to the exact spot.
  - Do not overuse the bean bag for runner out of bounds, save for those plays when player must be followed to rule on additional activity down field or in bench area.
  - Bean bags for a fumble signify the end of the run and provide a reference point for penalties during the play enforced from the end of the run.
    - There is no need to bean bag fumbles by A occurring behind the line of scrimmage; however, the bean bag does alert the crew that the ball is loose.
  - Additionally, there is no need to bean bag an interception or strip that is not fumbled.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Two (2) bean bags of contrasting colors required.
  - Bean bag 1st touching of a punt by kicking team only.
  - Bean bag the End of the Kick (PSK), except touchback and **fair catch**.
- **Linesman:**
  - On 1st down drop bean bag on sideline when A is ready to snap, and the box is late.
  - Do not overuse the bean bag when runner goes out of bounds.
- **Wings:** Limited use of bean bag for out-of-bounds spot on the sideline.
  - Exceptions: Following player into opponent's bench; runner steps out and continues down field; dead ball activity that needs official's attention.
- **Back Judge and Umpire:** Kick off (hand on bean bag) – “think Onside Kick”.
- **Back Judge, Umpire, Linesman and Line Judge:** Hand on bean bag for Onside Kick.

## Situations Involving a Bean Bag:

- **Fumbles:** Fumbles are marked with a bean bag to designate the end of the run for subsequent penalty enforcement.
  - There is no need to bean bag a fumble, or loose ball, by A behind the line-of-scrimmage, as the enforcement spot; it will be the previous spot.
- **First Touching:** by K used during both on free kicks and scrimmage kicks, when K is not entitled to possession.
  - R may choose that spot to snap the ball under certain circumstances by rule.
- **On a Free kick:** when K touches the ball before it crosses team R's restraining line and before it is touched by any R player, the spot must be marked with the beanbag.
- **For a Scrimmage Kick:** The spot must be marked if team K touches the ball in the field of play beyond the line before team R touches the ball.
  - The end of the kick on punts is significant for penalty enforcement relating to Post Scrimmage Kicks (PSK), specifically for fouls by R during the kick.
  - Once the kick is secured, and bean bagged, it is no longer a kick.
  - R may elect to put the ball in play at this spot.

- **End of Scrimmage Kick:** when a Scrimmage Kick ends between the goal lines, the covering official must mark the spot with a bean bag.
  - in case, there is a post-scrimmage kick (PSK) enforcement it is needed on a foul.
  - The Back Judge should have 2 different colored bean bags, one for marking end of kick and second for “first touching.”
- **Dead Ball Spots:** Mark the out of bounds spot as the end of the run, is marked when the official is forced to follow the player(s) into the team box to rule on any subsequent action.
- **Momentum Exception:** This exception relates to a change of possession within B’s/R’s 5-yard line, after securing a kick or interception, when a player’s momentum carries him into his own end zone, including: forward and backwards passes by B; fumble recoveries by B; and catches of kicks by R.
  - A bean bag shall designate the spot of the interception/recovery/catch.
  - A touchback or safety shall not be awarded, and the ball be placed at the bean bag spot, unless otherwise specified by rule.
- **Officials Timeout:**
  - The bean bag is used as a tool on the field to mark the place of ball during an injury timeout or other disruption in the flow of the game, or the point of the line-of-scrimmage in a hurry up if the box is late.
- **Inadvertent Whistle:** When an official inadvertently blows the whistle, causing the ball to become dead.
  - The covering official must bean bag the spot of the ball in player possession when the whistle was blown.
  - The team in possession may accept the dead ball spot at the bean bag.
    - This would be the result of the play and the down counts, or:
      - Replay the down from the previous spot.
      - See additional details under the Inadvertent Whistle Section.

## **Flags and Penalties:**

- Proper mechanics will help with penalty enforcement when the thrown properly.
  - Two ways to throw the flag; into the air or carefully to a spot.
  - Avoid aggressive tossing to the ground, nor looking angry when tossing it, throwing it at the fouling player or coach, holding the flag and waving it instead of throwing.
  - **Spot Foul:** When this is the enforcement spot, if it is off target, once the play is dead, immediately relocate the flag by picking it up and moving it definitively.
  - Live Ball Fouls by A, other than fouls which occur at the snap.
- **Non-Spot Foul:**
  - Simultaneous with the snap fouls: flag definitively in the air.
  - Live ball fouls by B: (other than after a change of possession).
  - Dead ball fouls prior to the snap, should be to the side of the offending team.
  - Dead ball fouls after the play is over, may be thrown in the air to alert the crew and both sidelines, such as:
    - Sideline infractions, unsportsmanlike conduct, late hits, etc.

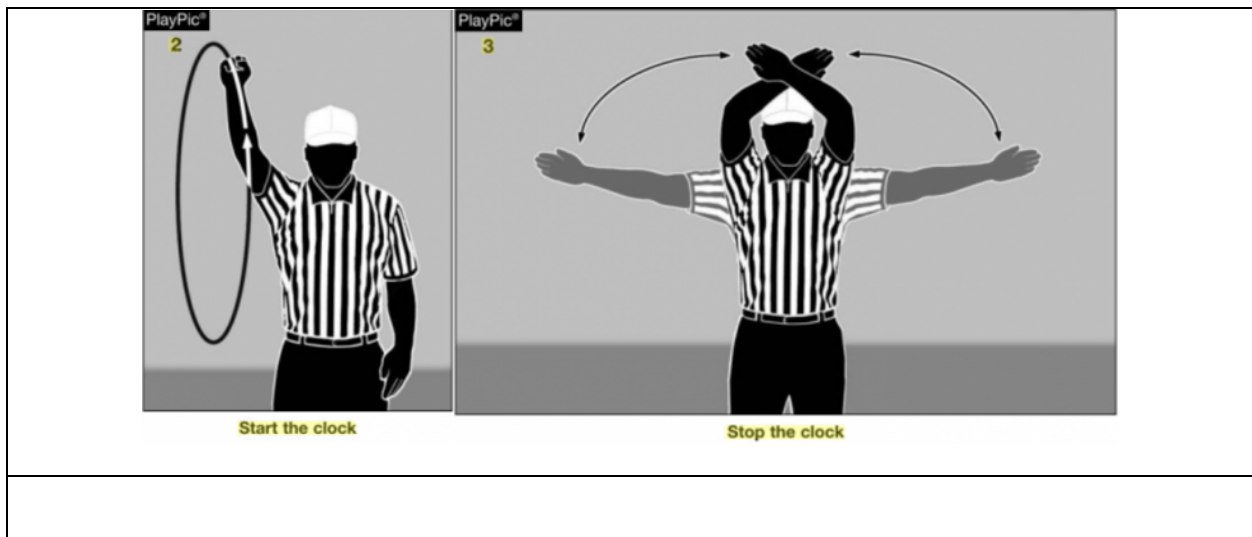
## **Whistle Mechanics:**

Sound near whistle when ball is dead by Rule. One strong short blast by covering official. There should be a whistle on every play; however, find ball first.

- **Repeated blasts of whistle (3 short blasts) to indicate:**
  - Foul away from the play.
  - Time out.
  - Head Coach requests information.
  - Stop play for something unusual; fighting, dog on field.
  - Injury Time Out.
  - Official's Time out.
- **Whistle:** Either on a lanyard or finger.
  - Referee, Umpire and Wings: could have it in their mouths prior to the snap.
    - Blow for a dead ball foul and team time outs.
  - Remove the whistle when the snap goes off.
  - Whistle only confirms the ball/play is dead, it rarely causes the ball to be dead.
  - At the end of a play, when any official sees a flag thrown, quick chirps on whistle to get Referee's attention.
- **Referee:**
  - Indicate "ready-for-play" from at charged or officials time out.
  - Timeout (charged or official or player injured).
  - Rarely used to confirm that the ball is dead after a play (silent wind).
- **Umpire:**
  - Dead ball foul that prevents the snap.
  - Timeout (charged or official or player injured).
  - May blow if an incomplete pass or runner down in his coverage area.
- **Wings:**
  - Timeouts (charged or official or player injured).
  - Dead ball fouls that prevent the snap.
  - Ball becomes dead with players in their area.
    - Incomplete passes.
    - Runner down or out of bounds.
    - Loose ball out of bounds.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Timeouts (charged or official or player injured).
  - End of a quarter.
  - Touchback
  - Ball is dead in coverage area.
  - Touchdowns when in coverage area.
- **Inadvertent Whistle:** If any crew member has an inadvertent whistle, drop the bean bag to mark the spot where the ball was at the time of the whistle.
  - The spot may be used as a reference point for end of the run.

## First Down Mechanics

- **Crew:**
  - If close regarding first down measure.
  - On synthetic and well-marked grass fields, when a 1st down is obvious, there is no need to conduct a measurement at the coach's request.
    - Conduct a measurement if forward progress made, or is short of, the line-to-gain.
- **Line Judge:**
  - Primary responsibility to decide if it is a 1st down.
  - If 1st down, stop game clock and signal with arm by pointing to B's goal line.
  - If close, stop game clock and look. If not, start game clock .
  - Do not have to measure because we stopped game clock.
  - Line Judge has best look from across field and is usually downfield.
  - Signal Referee to take a look for second opinion, if needed.
- **Linesman:** Get in a good position to judge if the spot made the line to gain or not.
- **Linesman/Line Judge (Close to 1st down):**
  - Crash in assertively until you meet resistance.
    - When close to 1st down, fumble recovery, goal line play.
  - Spot the ball at covering official's foot.
    - Presents the optic that the spot is specific.
  - Umpire will "dig for ball" and "hand it". Do not throw the ball to Linesman/Line Judge.
- **Linesman: If 1st down**
  - Hustle to sideline
  - Mark yard line with foot where back stake and down box will be set.



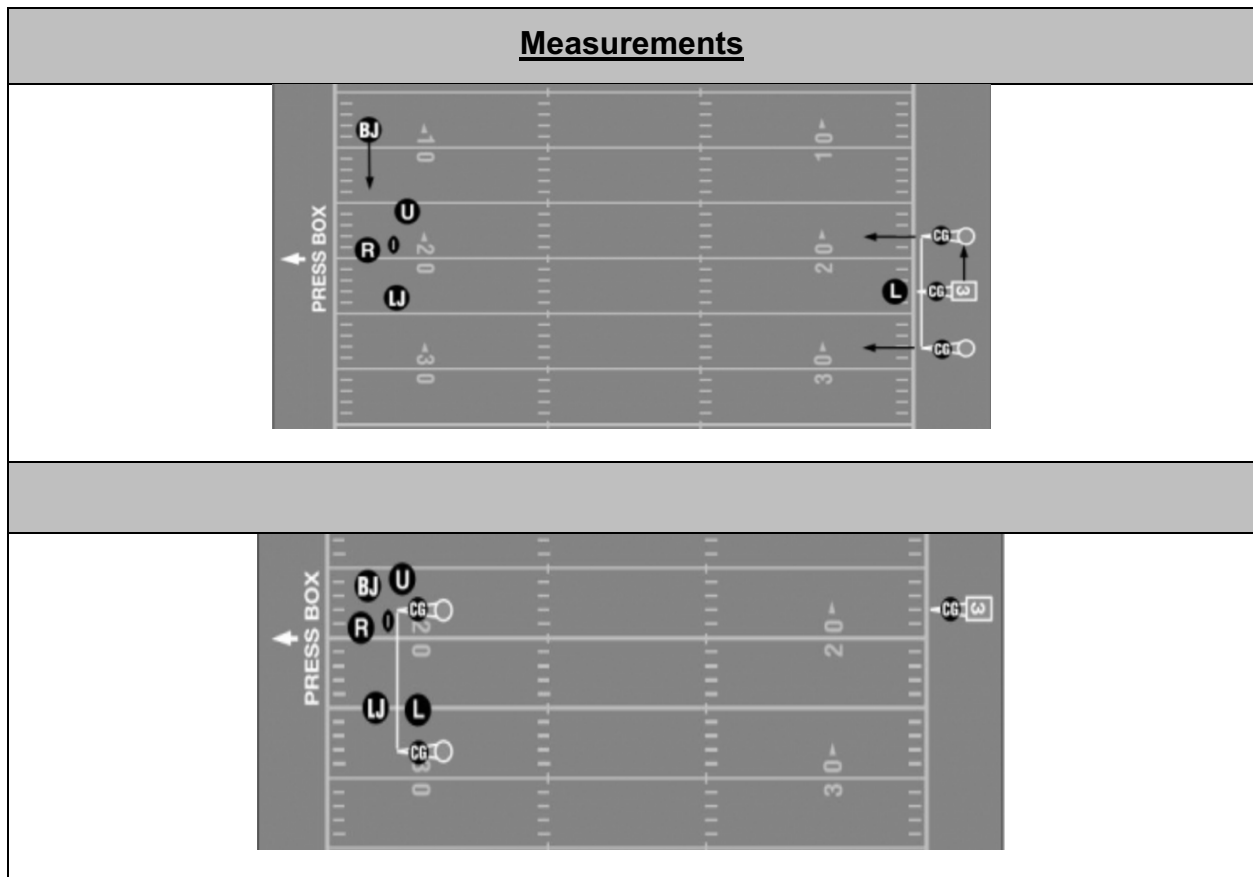
## Judging Forward Progress

- Judging forward progress is a controversial part of the game, especially when that spot is the difference between a 1st down, or turnover on downs.
- Additionally, judging when the pile is making forward progress, or has stopped will result in controversy when that play is not ruled in a consistent manner.
  - Allowing the stalled pile to play on will either result in a strip or breakaway, which will always draw an argument from one sideline or the other.
- **Runner's Forward Progress**
  - Is applied on almost every play; there are four (4) ways the runner's advancement can end, is marked by the foremost part of the ball when the ball carrier:
    - Is down by rule.
    - Forward progress is stopped.
    - Steps out of bounds.
    - Loses possession either by handing, passing, or kicking the ball (voluntarily) or by fumble (involuntarily).

Runner's Forward Progress		
Runner's Direction	Direction Contact Pushes Runner	Forward Progress
Forward	Forward	Ball's Most Forward Point
	Backward/Laterally	Point of contact
Backward	Forward	Ball's Most Forward Point
	Backward/Laterally	Where voluntary movement is stopped
Forward, Airborne and Out of Bounds	Forward	Where the ball crosses the plane of the sideline
	Backward/Laterally	Point of contact



## First Downs and Measurements:



- **Determining the Line to Gain:**
  - **Covering officials:** To make decisions on obvious plays resulting in a 1st down.
  - **Line Judge:** to make decisions on first downs beyond the line to gain with box in view.
  - **Referee:**
    - To make final decision on forward progress when close to line-to-gain.
    - There is no need to grant a measurement when the result of the play is “obvious”
    - Signal Officials Time Out and waive signal to Linesman for a measurement.
    - Rule on whether the ball is short or made the line to gain.
    - To judge on 1st down or short of line-to-gain:
      - If short, grasp the chain link at the foremost part of the ball
      - Set ball in the proper location on the field.
- **Measuring Mechanics for Line to Gain:**
  - **Line Judge:** Foot on yard line clipped for reference, 90 degrees with ball.
  - **Linesman:** Walk chains crew out, place clip on the back of the line at the Line Judge’s foot and hold when Umpire tightens chain.
  - **Back Judge:** On one knee, holding ball to prevent accidental movement.
    - Be in line with the ball, and head towards the front stake.
  - **Umpire:** Accept forward stake from chain crew member,
    - When Linesman is ready pull chain taut, place down.

## **Third and Fourth Down Mechanics**

- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Know line to gain.
  - If line to gain is obtained, use Time Out Signal
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - If line to gain is 5 yards or less (Similar to Goal Line Mechanic)
  - Imperative to be stationary on line to gain prior to ball arriving.

## **End of the Quarter: Extending with Untimed Down (3-3-3)**

- **Crew:** Ensure the clock runs down properly during the down and is at 0:00.
  - The foul must have occurred during a down in which time expired.
  - All should have eyes on clock at every opportunity at end of period.
- **Referee:** Conference with crew to discuss reason for the untimed down:
  - Confirm if the situations will result, any one of the following:
    - A penalty committed by either team has been accepted.
    - Unless the accepted penalty is listed in 3-3-4b (see below).
    - It is the provision to Replay-the-Down that triggers an untimed down, not which team committed the foul.
    - There was a double foul during the down.
    - An Inadvertent Whistle sounded during the play.
    - A touchdown was scored.
  - A try will not be attempted when the 4th quarter ends, unless it affects the outcome of the game, or playoff standings.
  - If any of the above provisions occur during an untimed down, repeat the procedure.
  - This is treated as if it occurred during the last timed down of the quarter.
    - Penalties listed in 3-4-3b which would not force an untimed down:
      - A accepts a foul by B on try and accepts the results of the play.
        - This is a scoring play, enforcement will be the succeeding spot.
    - When penalty is accepted by either team for:
      - Unsportsmanlike Conduct fouls.
      - Non-player fouls.
      - Any fouls that have a loss of down.
      - Fouls that enforcement outlines a safety will result.
      - Fouls that enforcement is on the subsequent kick off.
  - When the ball is being marked ready-for-play for an untimed down due to penalty or try to after a touchdown, use signal 1\* (inset) to start the play clock.

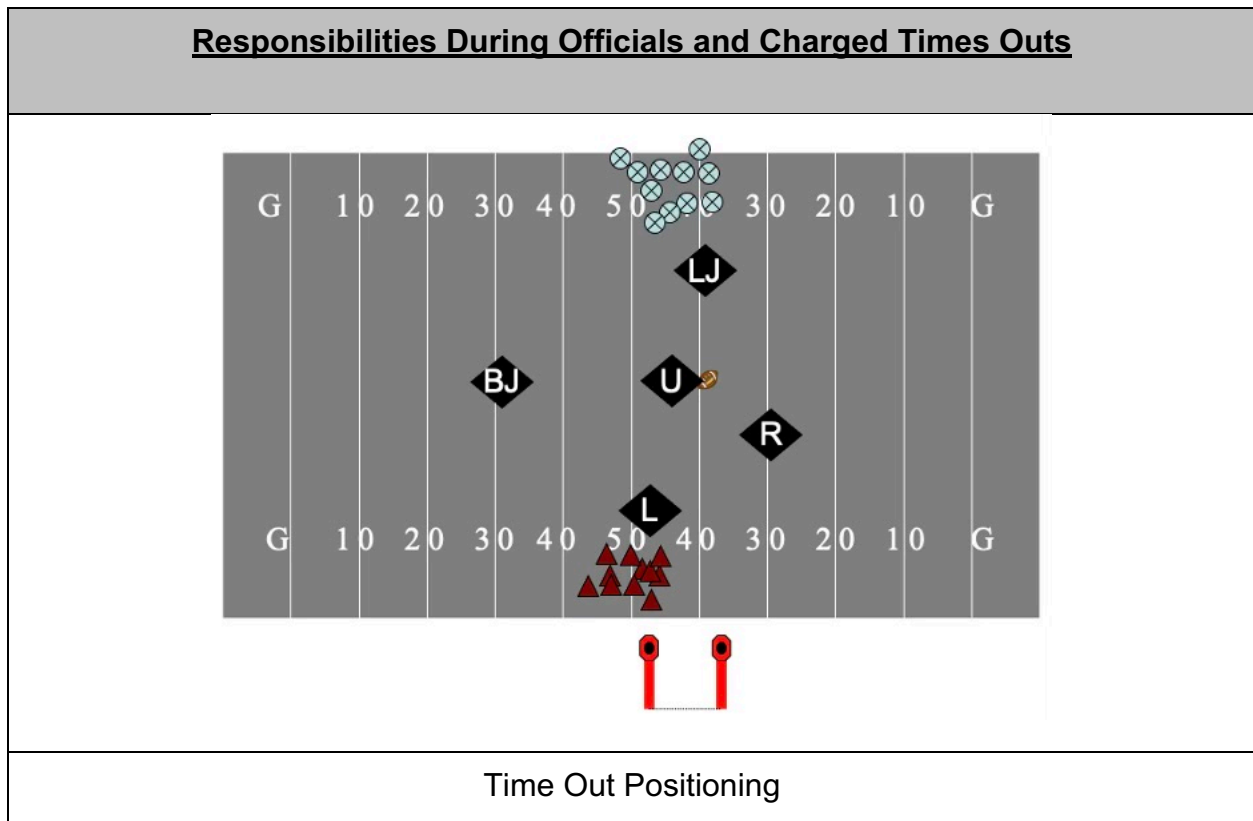
## **Change of Quarter: 1st and 3rd:**

- **Crew:** Record down, distance and yard line. Light jog to succeeding spot
- **Referee:** Ensure no penalties; communicate verbally with Back Judge -- no extension of the period, and signal end of the quarter deliberately to press box.
  - Signal the end of the period using signal 14.
    - This applies to the end of each quarter, including the 4th quarter.
  - Verbally confirm down, distance, and location of football with Umpire.
  - Walk ball with Umpire and confirm spot with box.
- **Umpire:** Record location of chains, walk off distance to the yard line.
  - Move to opposite side and confirm with Referee and Back Judge.
  - Set ball at location of box, (allow box to set first.)
    - If the box location conflicts with the recorded location consult crew immediately.
- **Linesman:** Record clip yard line; grab clip, reverse both chain rods, move downfield, place clip, and ask chain crew to pull stakes tight.
  - Make sure clip is on the back side of the back of the yard line.
  - Ensure team on side is back when ball is marked ready-for-play
- **Line Judge:** Record location of chains, move downfield, monitor team, and verify the new location of chains.
  - Confirm that box is correct for Umpire to spot the ball.
  - Ensure team on side is back when ball is marked ready-for-play
- **Back Judge:** Verbally check with Referee hustle to succeeding spot.
  - Wait for Umpire to spot ball with the box.

## **Responsibilities on Penalty Enforcement**

- **Crew:**
  - Bring up any questions regarding penalty enforcement immediately.
  - Do not let the play continue, do not let the ball become live.
  - Referee must listen to input from any crew member having relative information.
- **Referee:**
  - Ensure all relative information about the penalty has been relayed.
  - If the enforcement involves an obvious choice, proceed without asking the coach.
  - When penalty requires a decision, give preliminary signal to coach:
    - Find open space immediately and give preliminary signal, do not walk around.
    - Only one preliminary signal to press box.
    - Otherwise, signal preliminary and final signal to the press box only.
- **Umpire:**
  - Has penalty enforcement responsibilities.
  - Turn to calling official after whistle is sounded.
  - Ensure all the information has been relayed to the Referee.
  - Be sure of the enforcement and direction before proceeding.
- **Covering Official:**
  - When only one flag is down: Stop the game clock, give preliminary signal.
    - This still requires that the calling official report specifics into the Referee.
    - Non calling officials have critical responsibilities.
      - Cover flag on a spot foul to avoid it being accident/intentionally moved.
      - Cover the end of the run when appropriate.
      - To provide the Referee and coach with a visual of the end of the run.
      - Will be the succeeding spot if the penalty is declined.
  - Give ball to Umpire.
- **Referee/Umpire/Linesman:**
  - 5-yard walk off close to 1st down; ask Linesman to check tape on the chain.
    - Have standard signal with Linesman indicating within/outside 5-yard to go.
    - Linesman/Umpire: Both walk off penalty.
    - Linesman with then be at the proper yard line to set the chains and/or box.
- **Line Judge:** Hold enforcement spot to avoid confusion if incorrectly marched off.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Help with half distance; automatic 1st down; loss of down information.
  - Prior to a kickoff: Place ball on ground; signal foul to press box and walk off yardage.

## Charged Time Out Responsibilities



### **Positioning:**

- **Referee:** notifies wings to inform respective teams that time out is over.
- **Umpire:**
  - Maintain position over the ball.
  - Observe Team A until R is ready to start play
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Position between the ball and sideline
    - **Inside the #'s (between hash marks):** One Coach talks to no more than 11-players at team huddle. Other coaches or personnel can bring water.
    - **Outside the #'s (near sideline):** May have more than one coach and more than 11-players. Players can use LAN phones and/or headsets.
    - Always inform Head Coach how many time outs he has remaining.
      - Additionally, how many time outs his opponent has remaining.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Time 60-seconds, notify R at 45-seconds and again at 60-seconds.

## Responsibilities:

- **Crew:** All crew members have responsibilities during team charged time outs, starting with the recording of each Time Out, which includes:
  - The time displayed on the game clock the time out was taken.
  - The game quarter in which the Time Out was taken.
  - The player number of the team or coach calling the time out.
  - Make sure all recorded Time Outs are marked under the appropriate team.
- **Referee:**
  - Record the details of the time out on an official's game card.
  - Keep eye contact with the Back Judge for signal that there is 15-seconds remaining.
    - Part of pregame discussion with Back Judge and crew.
  - Alert both teams and wing officials when 15-seconds remaining in the time out.
    - Part of pregame discussion with both Wing officials.
  - Continue to alert the coaches the time out is over, and that ball will be marked ready.
  - If offense does not return after 60-seconds, mark the ball ready-for-play.
    - With 25-seconds on the play clock.
  - If the defense does not return after 60-seconds, mark the ball ready, but do not let the offense snap the ball.
    - With 25-seconds on the play clock.
    - Penalize for Delay of Game if they do not return in time.
- **Umpire:**
  - Record the details of the time out on an official's game card.
  - Stand over the ball until the ready-for-play, or the Referee's signal.
- **Wings:**
  - Record the details of the Time Out on official's game card.
  - Stay in the vicinity of team when the conference has been taken outside the hashes.
  - On the Referees signal, advise the time out is over and to bring the team back.
  - Continue to alert the team and coach that the time out is over, until the huddle breaks.
- **Back Judge:**
  - Record the details of the time out on official's game card.
  - Time the start of the time out, and signal to the Referee with 15-seconds remaining.

## Team Charged Time Outs

- Each team is entitled to 3 charged time-outs (1-minute each) during each half.
  - These time outs may be used consecutively.
  - Unused time outs from the 1st half, cannot be carried over to the 2nd half.
  - Unused 2nd half time outs cannot be carried over to overtime.
- **Time-outs:**
  - Occur once the ball is dead, and after any injury time out or coach conference.
  - Requested by any player, the Head Coach, his designee.
  - With a pending penalty, a time out shall not be granted until complete.
- **Successive Time Outs:** May be charged during the same dead ball period if:
  - An official time out may follow a charged time out if it's for the continuance of a Coach-Referee conference or Safety is involved.
- **Recording Charged Time Outs:** Recording the Game Time; Quarter; and Player # calling the time out must be tracked by all crew members.
  - When the remaining number of time outs for either team are in dispute, the crew must conference to compare and reconcile the time outs already used by each team.
  - Wings and Back Judge have additional responsibilities during the time outs to ensure the game flows smoothly.
- **Overtime Timeouts:**
  - Each team is provided one time out in each overtime period.
    - An overtime period is when each team has had an offensive series.
  - Unused time outs may not be carried over from regulation or previous overtime periods.

## Injury Time Outs-Official Time Out

- Injury time outs must be handled consistently by rule, with no perception of favoritism to a team's opponent
  - Relaxed injury time out procedures create a perception that the other is getting some form of advantage, so the process must be handled consistently by rule.
  - Signal an official's time out use signal #3 then with hands on shoulders or chest, when a player is representing an injury, which:
    - Allows the injured player to get off field safely, his team to get a replacement, medical personnel to be aware a player may need attention.
    - By rule that player must remain out for one play (may not be bought back with a team charged time out.)
    - Any concerns that an injury time out was called too quickly, articulate that the player exhibited signs of injury, it is a safety issue.
- For prolonged injury time outs, the staff is not allowed on the field to “coach” players; however, they are allowed provide water to the players.
  - Eliminate any concerns of advantage/disadvantage by having an official monitor the communication.
  - Teams may meet with players by pulling the huddle to the sideline and coaching them from in front of the team box
    - Officials should anticipate the end of the injury time out and begin to bring the teams back when this is imminent.
  - Additionally, if the injury time out is likely to be prolonged, consider sending both teams to their sidelines for water, especially when the playing conditions dictate.

# Game and Play Clock Management

## Inside/Outside of 2-Minutes in Half

- **Crew:** Imperative that all crew members have eyes on the clock after every play.
  - This mechanic becomes more critical inside 2-minutes in the half.
    - Strong signals for crew (to mirror), press box, and sidelines.
    - Officials with view of clock, alert crew when inside 2-minutes.
      - Penalties allow for additional decisions by the offended team.
      - Proceed without asking if the choice is obvious.
  - Ensure clock is stopped after the following situations:
    - Out of Bounds; Incomplete passes; Time Out's, etc; mirrors signal each play.
- **These Signals Automatically stop Game clock:** (Discuss with Clock Operator)
  - Touch Down; Touch Back; Safety and Incomplete pass.

## End of the 1st Half

- **Referee:**
  - Wait for both teams to leave the field and signal the clock operator to wind clock.
  - Half time will be no less than 10-minutes, no longer than 20-minutes:
  - 17-minutes, with a 3-minute mandatory warm up period.
  - Communicated with the clock operator prior to the start of the game.
  - If the score is close, review overtime procedures.
- **Crew:**
  - Exit the field together as a group to a pre-determined meeting spot for discussion.
  - Have a crew discussion, breaking down penalties and situations during the game.
  - Go over anything that needs to be focused on during the 2nd half.
  - Be back from intermission before the final minute of half time:
  - Ensure both teams are back on the field for the mandatory warm-up period.
    - Head Coach is responsible for having players back for the 3-minute warmup.
  - Be prepared to rule on Head Coach responsibility to have team on the field for the mandatory warm-up period.
- **Referee/Umpire:**
  - Discuss any action or behavior that needs to be addressed in the 2nd half or brought to the attention of team coaches.
  - Be in kick off positions at the final seconds of the warmup period.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Discuss sideline enforcement and any potential concerns with the Restricted Area.
  - Review sideline violations for the 1st half.
  - Discuss any significant issues on sidelines during 1st half.
- **Linesman:**
  - Be in kick off position at the final seconds of the warmup period.
- **Line Judge/Back Judge:**
  - Be at the respective restraining lines in the final seconds of the warmup period.



## Play Clock 40/25 Second Clock

- It is important for a crew to keep a consistent play clock throughout the game, that allows for pace of play, and does not present advantage/disadvantage to either team.
- When teams are moving without delay from huddle to the ball and getting plays off, the play clock goes unnoticed.
- However, when a team is intentionally taking time to get snaps off, whether that be the leading team burning time off the clock, or a team taking too much time to call a play, advantage/disadvantage comes into play.
- Address potential advantage/disadvantage optics using good mechanics:
  - **Back Judge** use a strong mechanic showing 10-seconds remaining (arm straight up and hold); and chop at the last 5-seconds.
  - **Referee** use clear verbal alerts to the offense to call the play or get the play off and announce 10-seconds to the quarterback.
  - **Wings** remind offense and coaches that the play clock is only 25-seconds when returning from an official's time out (other than the exceptions.)

## Stopping, Starting and Winding the Game clock

- **Stopping Clock**
  - Stop clock (signal #3) when:
    - The down ends following a foul.
    - An official's time-out is taken.
    - A charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.
    - The period ends.
    - The ball carrier is out of bounds.
    - A forward pass is incomplete. (Legal or illegal)
    - A score or touchback occurs.
    - A fair catch is made or awarded.
    - An obvious first down has occurred.
- **Official's Time-out** – requires clock be stopped when ball becomes dead:
  - For measurement of possible first down.
  - Before first down is declared.
  - Following change of team possession.
  - For player who appears injured, or in need of equipment repair.
  - To dry or change ball.
  - A water break for unusual heat or humidity which may create a health risk to -players.
  - When Coach-Referee conference concerning misapplication of a rule results in referee altering ruling.
  - After a foul to administer the penalty.
  - For unusual delays in getting ball ready-for-play.
  - A TV/radio time-out.
  - One minute between periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety.

- **Other reasons:**
  - As provided by rule.
  - Team attempts to illegally consume time (Delay of Game).
    - A Delay of Game penalty alone does not require that the clock start on the snap.
    - There must be an intent to “consume time” for that provision.
  - Covering official determines the ball reaches line-to-gain.
- **Starting Clock (signal #2)**
  - **Referee** – To start clock, (signal #2-wind) using two turns of arm.
  - **On ready-for-play signal**, if clock was stopped by rule on the previous play:
    - Official’s time-out other than a new series:
      - For B; or a new series following a legal kick.
    - For dead ball after foul if:
      - There was no charged time-out during dead-ball interval.
      - The down is not extension of period or try.
      - There was no abuse of timing rule, or a delay-of-game penalty.
      - Action that caused down to end did not also cause clock to stop.
    - Because of an inadvertent whistle.
  - **On snap** – if clock stopped other than listed above.
    - When clock starts on snap, no visible signal to start clock is given.
  - **On Free Kick** – when ball is touched other than first touching by K, -covering official signals clock to start using two turns of arm.
  - If signal to stop clock is erroneously given, restart immediately upon -discovering error.
- **Winding Clock:**
  - If the ball becomes dead inbounds between the 9’s and the sideline.
    - Covering official shall use normal coverage.
    - After determining ball is dead, give the start-clock signal using two turns of arm.
  - If ball becomes dead near sideline and first down is gained:
    - Covering official shall use normal coverage.
    - After determining ball is dead, stop the clock with the time-out signal.

### **Starting, Stopping Clock Signals**

- Forward progress stopped inbounds between the 9’s and the sideline:
  - Covering official(s) use the starting signal.
    - Let the crew and clock operator know to keep the clock running.
  - This includes a runner being driven back, or latterly out of bounds; therefore, forward progress stopped in bounds.
  - Strong signal for crew, clock operator, and coaches.
- Runner downed out of bounds and/or close to sideline:
  - Covering official(s) use the time out signal.
    - Let crew and clock operator know to stop the clock.
- Progress stopped Inbounds between the 9’s and the sideline after making the line-to gain:
  - Covering official(s) first signal start clock (x2); then signal time out (x2).
  - Alerting crew that progress was stopped in bounds after the line-to-gain.
    - This also communicates important information to the sidelines and coaches.
  - The Referee will be aware to signal a “Silent Wind” to the clock operator once the ball is marked ready-for-play.

## **Inadvertent Whistle Mechanics-No Penalty**

- The ball becomes dead immediately; drop a bean bag where the ball was located.
- Take note of the status of the ball, there are 3 categories
  - Ball in player possession.
  - Ball loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass or illegal kick
  - During a snap, legal forward or legal kick.
- The team in possession, runner in possession of ball has 1 of 2 options:
  - Take the ball where it was blown dead.
  - Replay the down at the previous spot.
- The team in possession on a loose ball (fumble or passing) has 1 of 2 options:
  - Take the ball where the player lost possession.
    - If the team in possession chooses not to have the down replayed:
      - They will keep the ball where the player possession was lost.
        - Not where the whistle was blown.
      - The down will count.
    - Replay the down at the previous spot.
- During a kick or legal forward pass:
  - There is no option for either team:
    - The ball is returned to the previous spot and down is replayed.
  - A Try is treated as any other scrimmage down.
- An Inadvertent Whistle on a play that ends the period, will result in an untimed down if the down is to be replayed.
  - The clock is stopped on an Inadvertent Whistle and will resume on the Ready.

## **Inadvertent Whistle with a Penalty**

- When there is a penalty during the down in which an Inadvertent Whistle sounds:
- There is no choice for the team who possessed the ball, if the penalty is accepted.
  - The key to correctly officiating an inadvertent whistle is understanding the order of events as they occurred during play, specifically:
    - Any penalty during the down, prior to an inadvertent whistle.
      - Familiarity with the “Clean Hands” principle is important.
    - Live ball by A, or by B, or by A and B before the whistle.
    - Were the fouls, or any combination of, after a change of possession.
      - Is the “Clean Hands” principle a factor; did B foul before gaining possession.
    - Which team was in “possession” of the ball at the time of the whistle.
      - This will establish who will have choices.
      - Did they gain possession through “Clean Hands”.

## **Inadvertent Whistle Summarized: (4-2-3)**

- When there is an inadvertent whistle, it ends the down, and is administered under one of the four following scenarios:
  - If whistle sounded while the ball was in flight: legal forward pass; snap; or legal kick:
    - And any penalties were declined: Replay the down.
    - The team last in possession has the choice to replay the down or put the ball in play where possession was loose (during the down in which a penalty was declined), if there is a fumble, backwards pass, illegal kick, or illegal forward, when the whistle sounded.
  - The team last in possession has the choice to replay the down or put the ball in play where possession (during the down in which a penalty was declined), if the ball was in player possession when the whistle sounded.
  - When a live ball foul occurs prior to the whistle, and the penalty is accepted, it will take precedence over the Inadvertent Whistle.
  - The penalty shall be administered from the basic spot.

## **When Game Clock Does Not Operate**

- **Crew:**
  - When the game clock is malfunctioning or inoperable the clock operator (if assigned) will take a position on the press box sideline, and:
    - Keep the official time using a count-down watch.
      - The Line Judge will keep the back-up clock for official time.
    - Follow the Line judge along the field while keeping time with.
    - Advise the Line Judge of critical times in each period, including:
      - Approaching the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters.
      - The official time during any team charged time out.
      - Approaching the “4-minute” mark in the 2nd and 4th quarters.
      - Approaching 2-minute mark in the 2nd and 4th quarters.
    - The Line Judge will alert the crew to the critical times in each period.
    - The crew will make efforts to provide timing updates to each team.
      - Advantage/Disadvantage.
- **Line Judge:**
  - Primary responsibility for game clock with no assigned clock operator.
    - Has the backup game clock when the clock operator is on the sideline.
  - Have the official time on the field
  - If, O2Os, keep informing the crew of the time when permits
  - Give a 4-minute warning at the end of each half to the Referee

## **Soft Spot: Wings Mirroring**

- Plays ending between the hash marks and the 9's, Umpire should consider retrieving ball.
  - Far wing should mirror the covering wing's forward progress spot using crew signal #3.
  - If the spots differ, crash in to discuss with wing.
- When going outside the hash to retrieve ball, pick up the forward progress from the opposite wing when the line to gain is not a consideration a soft spot.
  - No need to turn and face the covering official for the spot.

## **Ball Handling Mechanics**

- Ball handling is generally a task assigned to the crew to get the game ball back to the next spot to keep the game moving.
  - The crew should move briskly without drawing attention to the process by mishandling the ball, overshooting a crew member, or chasing the awkwardly bouncing ball around on the ground.
  - Use clean underhanded toss to crew and get ball spotted as efficiently as possible.
- **Referee:**
  - Help relay ball on plays that have little gain or line of scrimmage s of yards.
  - If the ball is not set within 15-seconds, Referee will bump play clock to 25-seconds.
    - One hand over head, palm up, pump x2 to Back Judge (signal #17).
  - Assist with long, incomplete passes, by taking the previous spot for the Umpire.
- **Umpire:**
  - Wings will mirror the spot or put the ball down.
  - When ball is between the hash and the 9's, move to secure it, hustle back to the hash mark looking for Soft Spot from opposite wing officials.
    - Remain at the hash if ball is outside 9's, allow crew to shuttle it back to spot.
  - After an incomplete pass, ball back previous spot, using the down box as reference.
    - Assist crew in relaying long incomplete passes back to the previous spot.
  - Move in position to officiate after spotting ball.
  - Always have an inconspicuous towel during inclement weather or field conditions.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Use downfield foot to spot ball and crew signal #3, mirror partner when they are covering official.
    - This creates "Soft Spot" for Umpire to use when spotting the ball.
  - On close 1st downs, spot the ball downfield foot of the covering official and let Referee rule on line-to-gain.
  - After touchdown, shuttle kicking team ball to Back Judge.
- **Back Judge:**
  - If dead ball spot is outside hash marks, secure ball before measuring for a 1st down.
  - Help relay ball on plays that gain 10-yards or more.
  - On deep incomplete passes, hustle and relay ball back to the previous spot.
    - Be prepared to reset play clock to 25-seconds, if the ball is not spotted within 15-seconds.

## **Dead Ball Officiating**

One overlooked principle for new officials is the concept of dead ball officiating. When it comes to game management, one of the most important principles is monitoring what happens during that dead ball period.

- **Officiating between downs:**
  - Officials move to the end of the play where opponents are: in bounds at end of run; or out of bounds with a player into an opponent's sideline.
  - Watch and listen to opponent's interactions, gauge the level of contention.
  - Continue to monitor conversations and actions as it relates to game intensity.
- **Crew Must Always be Monitoring:**
  - Opponents converging and interacting after a big play.
  - Team sidelines, especially when ball carrier is down near an opponent's team box.
  - Interactions between opponents walking back to their huddles.
  - Comments made between opponents as they return to their respective huddles.
- **Addressing Situations Immediately:**
  - Crews should use address recognized issues early in the game:
  - Use strong verbal communication to offender that their actions will not be tolerated.
  - When verbal commands are ignored, penalize individuals violating sportsmanship rules.
  - In all cases, advise the coaches to handle issues with their players.

## **Forward Progress Mechanics**

- **Referee** marks forward progress behind line of scrimmage on a loss of yardage.
- **Linesman/Line Judge:**
  - Marks forward progress most of the time.
  - Put downfield foot in front of backfield foot to mark forward progress.
  - Square off, do not angle in.
- **Cross field mechanics-runner driven back:**
  - Look across the field for help and an accurate forward progress spot the use crew signal#3.
  - Back side wing must move into field near hash mark so partner can see you.
- **Player hit/driven back:**
  - Between the 9's and the sideline.
  - Move in, but not past players.
- **Linesman/Line Judge/Back Judge:**
  - Trapped pass – catch or no catch.
  - Do not move in to mark forward progress until you know it is a catch.
  - If you square off and move in, you are indicating catch.
  - Swivel head to see if other officials have signaled an incomplete pass.
- **Linesman/Line Judge/Back Judge:**
  - After you sound whistle for forward progress
  - Swivel head and watch for dead ball action.
- **Back Judge:** marks forward progress down field.
  - Pile moving forward or progress stopped:
    - When pile movement is in doubt, sound whistle.

## **Play Clock Procedures (Signal #17)**

- The following set of instructions is for the play clock operators to assist with the rules on the play clock that now involves a 40/25 second possibility for a delay of game.
- Note to the Back Judge or Play Clock Operator: Starting the 40-second play clock “immediately” is to be interpreted as starting the 40-seconds within three 3-seconds of the covering official signals the end of the down using the time out (signal #3), dead ball (signal #7) or incomplete pass (signal #10.)
  - These are the only three signals expected at the end of a down prior to the 40-second play clock starting.
- The following addresses the play situations that require the 40-second option:
  - The Team A (offense) runner is stopped inbounds short of a first down.
    - The game clock continues to run and the 40-second play clock is started immediately except at the end of a 4th down.
  - The Team A (offense) runner is stopped in bounds beyond the line-to-gain 1st down.
    - The game clock is stopped for the first down and the 40-second play clock is started within 3-seconds.
    - The referee will then restart the game clock (silent wind) as quickly as the ball is placed on the ground and the crew is in position to officiate (ready-for-play.)
  - The Team A (offense) runner, fumble, or backward pass goes out of bounds.
    - The game clock is stopped, and the 40-second clock is started within 3-seconds.
    - The game clock will not start again until the next legal snap.
  - A Team A (offense) legal forward pass is incomplete.
    - The game clock is stopped, and the play clock is started within 3-seconds.
    - The game clock will not start again until the next legal snap.
- **Play Clock Mechanics:**
  - There is no signal/whistle from the referee during the 40-seconds except to restart the game clock following a first down inbounds with a “silent wind.”
  - It is important to note that none of the situations listed above involve an administrative stop/interruption in play.
    - All of those possibilities are addressed below.
  - Administrative stoppages/interruptions:
    - It is always possible for the situations that are listed below to occur during the game that are administrative issues/interruptions to the normal flow of play.
    - This list does not necessarily include every possibility.
  - **Note to Back Judge and Play Clock Operator:**
    - Every situation listed below – with two exceptions – will result in a 25-second play clock that is not started immediately at any time.
    - Wait until the situation has been addressed and the Referee will then utilize ready-for-play (signal #1), with the whistle, or the wind (signal #2) to restart both clocks.

- **Game Situations:**
  - Any offensive foul.
    - Defensive foul results in 40-second play clock.)
  - Play is stopped for an injured player or to address an equipment issue:
    - 40-seconds if a defensive player.
  - Any down that involves a score.
  - Either team is granted a time-out.
  - Any down that includes a legal kick followed by a new series.
  - A measurement for a first down.
  - Team possession changes during or after a down.
  - The beginning of any period.
  - An inadvertent whistle.
  - An untimed down.
  - Weather conditions, lights going out.
- **General Statements**
  - Always set the play clock back to 40-seconds during a down in progress.
    - There will be time to change to 25-seconds if necessary.
    - The common ready-for-play whistle/signal is not used for a 40-second play clock.
      - The Back Judge will be responsible for the play clock if no visible play clock.
    - The game clock operator must always be ready for the Referee to wind/start the game clock when it is stopped.
      - The game clock will always start on a legal snap if it is not already started/running prior to the legal snap.
    - Make certain to run the 25-second play clock after the ready-for-play prior to an extra point try, prior to a kickoff and prior to the kick following a safety.
    - The Back Judge must be prepared to reset the play clock to 25-seconds on the Referee's signal when the crew is unable to spot a loose grounded ball within 15-seconds of it becoming dead.



# **Penalties and Enforcements**

## **Face Mask**

- Distinction needs to be made between “incidental grasping” 5 yard penalty and “twisting, turning, or pulling” 15 yard penalty.
  - Simply touching the face mask is not a foul.
- It is a foul for any player to grasp an opponent’s face mask, the chin strap or any edge of helmet opening, mouthpiece and attaching strap are all considered part of the face mask (9-4-3h).

## **Illegal Hands**

- Hands to the head or neck area constitute an illegal blocking technique (2-3-3). The runner is exempted from this prohibition (9-2-1a). If a player's hands initially go to the chest or shoulder area, and then slide or deflect to the head, it can be penalized as illegal use of hands. If a blow is delivered directly to the head area, it should be treated as a personal foul.

## **Hurdling**

- Is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is still on his feet (or foot) and is a foul (2-22, 9-4-3d)
- On field goal attempts and kick tries, defensive linemen may hurdle offensive linemen in an effort to block the kick if the offensive linemen has at least one hand touching the ground when the defensive lineman leaves his feet.

## **Horse-Collar Tackles**

- Grabbing a runner by the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, or nameplate and pull him down (9-4-3k.)
  - A horse-collar tackle foul includes pulling the runner down either to the side or rear.
  - When a runner is falling forward, or when the tackle does not bring the runner down to the ground, a foul should not be called.
- The rule does not require the tackle to be immediate, so if the back or side of the collar is grabbed and the runner takes several steps before he is pulled down, it is a foul.
  - The foul does, however, require the runner to be pulled down by the grip on the top of the jersey; therefore, if a defender grabs the collar and releases or tackles him around the waist after using a grip on the collar to slow him down, it is not a foul.
    - Also, if a secondary defender assists in the tackle, it is not a foul.
  - The high grip alone must be used to pull down the runner for a foul to occur.
- If the ball carrier fumbles before being taken to the ground in this manner and B recovers, the infraction is penalized as a horse collar tackle.
  - Flag the spot which will be the enforcement spot if the penalty is accepted.

## **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

- Early unsportsmanlike activity should be dealt with immediately:
  - Using preventative officiating measures, such as verbal warnings and deescalating communication for borderline violations when appropriate, which includes:
    - Addressing players engaging in questionable conduct directly.
    - Calling out the player's number advising them to stop.
    - Alert them that any similar activity will be addressed immediately.
    - Advise Head Coach of the warning.
  - Get together with the crew, and:
    - Discuss the situation so all are aware of who has been warned.
    - Noting the verbal warning for future reference during the game.
    - Full disclosure to coach and player about the implications of repeated activity.
    - Good communication and on field presence by covering officials can deter activity.
- When verbal communication is not effective, penalizing infractions by rule.
  - Discuss as a crew to ensure all are aware of who has been penalized and record.
  - Communicate the details to both coaches and outline implications of repeated activity.
- When opposing players continue to engage verbally, the game should be halted, team captains brought together, and clear expectations shall be set.
- A 2nd Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty on any player or coach results in disqualification from the game; both violations must meet the definition of Unsportsmanlike Conduct.
  - Communicate the disqualification to both coaches.
  - Ensure the player/non-player exits the complex.
  - Referee: Contact the RI Football Commissioner after the game and follow up with an official disqualification report.

## **Assisting the Runner: (9-1)**

- A teammate may not pull, push, or lift the runner to assist in forward progress. (9-1.)
  - Additionally, under 9-2-2 a runner may not grasp a teammate.
  - Illegal use of the Hands; 10-yard penalty
- For the action to be a penalty, the assist by the teammate must be responsible for the runner's forward progress.
  - Contact to, or bumping, the runner alone without adding momentum is not a foul.
  - Ramming the pile, without directly contacting the runner, is not a foul.
- When a runner is in need of this assistance, consider that the forward progress has stopped, and the play was over prior to any attempt to assist.
- Enforcement: Helping the Runner; 5-yard penalty.

## **Unnecessary Roughness**

- Personal fouls are major fouls which involve some form of contact between players, unlike Unsportsmanlike fouls which are always non-contact fouls.
  - Which includes fighting (9-4-3j) which is a personal foul that carries a disqualification:
    - No player shall strike an opponent, with his fist, locked hands, forearm or elbow, nor kick or knee him.
- Opposing players engaging in aggressive pushing and shoving, short of fighting, after the play would be categorized as a personal foul.
  - Takedowns specifically, (see below.)
- If opposing players are also engaged verbally, with aggressive or disparaging language, an unsportsmanlike foul for both players may also be appropriate:
  - Discuss as a crew to ensure all are aware of who has been penalized and record.
  - Communicate the details to both coaches and outline implications of repeated activity.
- Communicate the details to both coaches and outline the implications of repeated activity.
  - Takedown holds are always a foul.
  - A calling official should see the complete act.
    - Use preventative officiating if the entire act was not observed.
    - Have a conversation with the player and coach if needed.
  - If this technique takes a player out of any potential action later in the play.
    - Additionally, the act itself creates ill will and escalates to additional behavior more consistent with fighting.

## **Roughing the Passer: (9-4-4)**

- Roughing the passer is a major foul the rules treat very seriously.
- The intent of the rule to protect passer from avoidable contact by defense after ball is thrown.
- The responsibility for avoiding contact is with the defense.
- By definition (2-32-11), the passer is the player who throws a legal forward pass.
  - He is the passer from the time the ball is released until the pass ends, or until he moves to participate in the play
  - The key phrase in the rule is "after it is clear that the ball has been thrown."
    - "One-one thousand, two-one thousand, it's gone!"
- The rule does not specify any time or distance requirement, which makes the determination a judgment call.
  - Such judgment should be based on whether the defender knew (or should have known) that the ball had been released when the rusher arrived at a point at which he could not avoid contact.
- A player who is blocked into the passer is not exempt from a foul.
- Illegal personal contact fouls against the passer (helmet contact, face mask, etc.) committed before it is clear that ball has been thrown, are roughing fouls (9-4-4D), except incidental face mask fouls.
  - These fouls will be personal fouls with no automatic first down.
- Although this is a loose ball play, the penalty is the succeeding spot foul:
  - If the pass is incomplete, it is 15-yards from the previous spot.
  - If the pass is complete, the 15-yards will be enforced from the end of the run.
  - Additionally, this is an automatic 1st down:

## **Offensive Holding in General**

Holding by teams expecting a penalty for the infraction against their player, no matter where it occurs on the field.

- It is often said that “Holding can be called on every play.”
  - While this statement is close to accurate, there are philosophies that officials need to engage to determine advantage/disadvantage.
- Other than the techniques themselves which includes:
  - tackling & grabbing
  - pulling an opponent to the ground
  - twisting or hooking
- Holding philosophies break down into three main principles:
  - Was the hold at Point of Attack?
  - Refers specifically to the direction the play and the area immediately surrounding that play
  - Did the hold cause Restriction of Movement?
    - Is identifiable when a defender attempts to release from his opponent's legal technique, but his step or stride is noticeably restricted, usually identified by a shoulder dip, core turn, or miss-step.
    - Restriction of movement When an opponent forces the defender straight back, that is generally identified as the defender being “overpowered”, and legal.
  - Was it Impactful to the Play?
    - Impact to the play indicates that the hold in question resulted in the offending team gaining an advantage, most likely restricted a defender from making a play on the runner or opened up a lane for the runner to gain yardage.
    - Controlling a defender holding, until there is restriction of movement.
    - Offensive Line- “if they lose their feet, they are going to cheat.”
- Takedown holds are always a foul.
  - A calling official should see the complete act.
    - Use preventative officiating if the entire act was not observed.
    - Have a conversation with the player and coach if needed.
  - This technique takes a player out of any potential action later in the play.
    - Additionally, the act itself creates ill will and escalates to additional behavior more consistent with fighting.

### **Clap/No Clap Cadence: (7.1.7c)**

- Clap/No Clap is a cadence used by the quarterback, generally to substitute the more commonly used, verbal cadence.
  - As is with a verbal cadence, the quarterback avoids being predictable by altering that cadence to stay away from identifiable patterns.
    - Clap/No Clap: Clap or No Clap without “exaggerated movements” intended to draw the defense offsides will not be penalized a false start.
    - Unless the exaggerated moves successfully draw the defense offsides (similar to disconcerting acts for defensive players).
  - Special attention to actions including any quick, jerky, abrupt movement that simulates action at the snap.
- Redding Study Guide (2022 edition p 8):
  - False starts by quarterbacks are commonly the result of exaggerating legal movement
  - Bobbing the head is a normal consequence of barking out cadence, but a brusque pull back of his hand would make it appear he is taking the snap.
    - The same applies when the clapping of the hands is exaggerated.

### **Illegal Kicking or Batting: (9-7)**

- No player shall intentionally kick a ball other than as a scrimmage or free kick (9-7-1).
- By definition, batting is the intentional act slapping or striking the ball with hand or arm.
- A teammate of the runner may not bat a ball forward (9-7-4).
- Any player may bat a fumble in flight, in any direction (9-7-2).
  - Batting of a low scrimmage kick behind the neutral zone expanded is ignored.
- A forward pass may be batted in any direction by an eligible receiver:
  - However, it is illegal to bat a backwards pass forward (9-7-3).
- In two situations, K may bat a ball toward their own goal line (exceptions):
  - A grounded kick beyond the neutral zone.
  - A scrimmage kick in flight, beyond the neutral zone, with no R in position to catch it.
- Enforcement: Illegal Kicking or Batting; 10-yards from the spot; signal #31.

## **Managing the Sideline and Sideline Violations: (9-8-3)**

- Managing the team sidelines starts in the pregame and continues throughout the game with preventative officiating using good crew communication.
- Preventative officiating is the most important philosophy for controlling sidelines:
  - Crew Pregame:
    - Discuss approach for sideline management in the pregame.
    - All officials need to understand the boundaries and rules related to sidelines.
    - Both sidelines must be managed using the same restrictions and allowances.
    - There should be no perception by either team that the opposing sideline is not being held to the same standards.
- Coaches Conference:
  - Advise the coach that sideline management will be a point of emphasis.
  - Explain the boundaries of Restricted Area, and when it is enforced.
  - Alert the coach that any aggressive, demeaning, or unsportsmanlike behavior toward opponents or officials from the sidelines will be addressed immediately.
- Sideline Violations:
  - Wing officials use appropriate verbal communication to educate players and coaches on the expectations of the Restricted Area.
  - Use overt get-back motions to coaches and non-players that show up on film.
- The Restricted Area and Sideline Violations:
  - Is the area 2-yards deep from each team's sideline, between the 25-yards lines.
    - A maximum of 3 team coaches may be in the Restricted Area between downs.
    - Substituted players may cross through the area, but not occupy it at any time.
    - No player, non-player or coach may be in that area when the ball is alive.
  - Sideline violations are progressive throughout the game:
    - Warning w/flag (no distance penalty.)
    - Flag for second violation, 5-yard penalty.
    - Flag for third violation, 15-yard penalty.
    - Flag for fourth violation, 15-yard penalty/UNS on the Head Coach.
  - Use good communication with the sideline early in the 1st quarter:
    - Explain the sideline expectations throughout the game.
    - Consider a verbal warning early in the 1st quarter for a minor violation.
    - Once the team or coaching staff has been given an opportunity to address any issues, a flag for a sideline is appropriate, (no distance penalty).
    - The next sideline infraction under this rule is 5-yards, as a dead ball foul.
      - Any verbal, no-distance warning, or 5-yard penalty non-player fouls.
      - Additional violations are 15-yards for each occurrence, also dead ball fouls.
        - The first of the 15-yard infractions is an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty on the Head Coach.
    - Referee and Wing: Discuss the repercussions of an additional sideline violation directly with the coach.
      - Any subsequent sideline violation will be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Unsportsmanlike penalty on the Head Coach, and result in his disqualification.
      - These infractions should be visible on film.

- Communicating with the Coaching Staff:
  - Any direct communication between the Referee and Head Coach should also be attended by the Wing on that team's sideline, or the Back Judge.
  - Keep all communication professional, and always with attention directed to the field.
    - Never answer a question from a coach without knowledge of the rule.
    - Use proper phrasing and key elements of the rules and interpretations.
  - Immediately notify the Referee if coach is representing a misapplication of the rules.
    - If the coach is requesting an explanation on a judgement call, advise that an answer will be obtained as soon as possible.
      - Wing/Back Judge listen in on this conference with the Referee.

### **Unfair Acts: (9-9 Pen)**

- Any act by a player or non-player not specifically addressed in the rules that hinders play, including:
  - The following situations allow the Referee to award a penalty considered to be equitable, including awarding of a score:
    - An individual(s) not addressed in the rules who interferes with a player or the ball during a down. (Sideline personal or others)
    - No player/team shall commit fouls resulting in half-the-distance to the goal repeatedly.
    - Any act that could be interpreted as a travesty to the game.
  - The following situations are 15-yards from the Basic Spot.
    - No runner/player shall hide the ball under their jersey.
    - Use of a kicking tee that is not of pliable material and does not elevate the ball more than 2" off the ground.
  - Examples of situations that Unfair Acts enforced as Unsportsmanlike Conduct:
    - Team runs a play without taking a knee from Victory Formation (9-9-5).
    - Excessive crowd noise from the band or stadium music (9-9-1.)
    - Team runs a play designed to confuse the opponent into believing the snap is not imminent, such as a problem with equipment or player in the game.

### **Penalties During/After the Kick-PSK:**

#### **Post Scrimmage Kick (PSK) Fouls:**

- This enforcement allows R to retain possession after forcing their opponent to punt, even if R commits certain violations before they have gained possession (2-16-2h).
- PSK only applies when certain conditions are met:
  - The penalty is by R. which occurs beyond the neutral zone expanded.
    - Other than Illegal Substitution which occurs at the snap.
  - The penalty occurs between the snap and scrimmage kick.
    - This does not include a try.
  - The Receivers will be next to put the ball in play.
- Penalties for fouls by Team K (other than kick-catch interference) on any scrimmage kick may be enforced at the previous spot with the down repeated, or at the succeeding spot when Team K will not be next to put the ball in play (10-4-2 Exc).
  - This will be a choice for R prior to enforcement.

## **Preliminary Signals**

- Preliminary signals are used in two aspects of penalty administration:
  - By the covering official to the referee (with one flag only).
    - It is critical that an official using any preliminary signals have a good working knowledge of the NFHS signals as defined.
  - To the sidelines when a choice of options is anticipated.
- When two officials have flags, avoid preliminary signals, report directly to the Referee.
  - Additionally, if conflicting observations need to be discussed, it should happen behind the offensive line, away from A and B players.

## **Reporting Penalties to Referee**

- **Referee** should tell crew members how he wants the fouls reported.
  - By the offending team color, by offense or defense.
  - The offending player's number.
  - Indicate the status of ball at the time of the foul (loose ball, dead ball, etc.).
  - The result of the play (incomplete pass, scoring kick was good, etc.).
  - Remind Wings to relay the specific information to the coaches of both teams:
    - The nature of the infraction and any special enforcement (line of scrimmage s of down, quarter extended for an untimed down, etc.).
- **Mechanics:**
  - Official that threw the flag, when the play is dead, keep dead ball officiating especially if the play is on near sideline or in area.
    - Immediately stop the clock.
    - Give quick loud tweets to get the attention of the Referee.
    - Report the foul to the Referee.
- **Linesman:**
  - Advise chains to hold.

## **Previous Spot**

- When a penalty has previous-spot enforcement, it not only means the yard line from which the ball was last snapped or Free kicked; the penalty must be enforced with consideration to the lateral position of the ball as well.
- To help with previous spot placement, Umpires should wear 2 down indicators.
  - One for the spot for the previous snap, the second to track the downs (optional).



## **2023 New Penalty Enforcement Chart**

The NFHS Rules Committee has finally eliminated the 20-yard offensive holding foul on running plays. Many coaches, fans and officials felt it was unfair to enforce the holding penalty from well-behind the line of scrimmage when the holding occurred in the backfield.

A number of scenarios had to be addressed by the committee including fouls by the defense. For college officials, I think you will find these changes consistent with the enforcement rules at the NCAA level. Several fouls are exempt from these new enforcements including illegal batting, illegal kicking, illegal participation (9-6-4a and g), and illegal forward passes are still enforced as a spot foul. There is no change to fouls by the offense in the end zone resulting in a safety.

<b>Foul By</b>	<b>End of Play</b>	<b>Spot of Foul</b>	<b>Basic Spot</b>	<b>Reference</b>
A	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2d
A	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2f
A	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2e
A	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Foul Behind End of Run or Related Run - Spot of Foul	10-4-4d
A	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Foul Advance or End of Run or Related Run- Succeeding Spot	10-4-5e
B	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2d
B	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-5f
B	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Succeeding Spot	10-4-2d
B	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Succeeding Spot	10-4-5f

# Fight Mechanics

## Prevention

Tempers are rising; players are getting personal and hyped up.

It is important to penalize the first late hit, when warranted.

- **Referee:** If necessary, stop game to talk to the huddle and coaches.
- **Umpire:** Has an important role in the middle.
  - Communicate with B on a regular basis, gauge the temperament of the players.
  - Make presence known through strong communication on plays down in coverage area.
  - Address any potential issues immediately upon detection.
- **Crew:**
  - Allow no talking between opposing teams; stop it immediately.
  - “Pinch into field” further, presence being know is vital.
  - Talk with players on the “edge” of a late hit, but not late enough to call.
  - Two opponents “chest up” or shove each other.
    - Get between the opponents and stop it!
    - Then assess penalties, if warranted.
    - If players are not swinging, get between them.
    - Do not verbalize the words, “punch” or “kick”. This is good dead ball officiating.
    - Positive statements can help to defuse it.
  - Be assertive without being aggressive.
    - Do not push or tackle players to the ground.
    - Grab a player’s face mask or pull them off pile.
    - Sound whistle loudly.
    - Stay calm and collected, at all times.

## Actual Fight

- **Crew:**
  - If players are swinging, stand back and record player numbers.
  - Keep other players away from fight.
  - Do not attempt to break up fights.
  - After order is restored:
    - Huddle away from everyone.
    - Discuss, and then assess penalties and disqualifications.
    - Give all officials an opportunity to speak and be heard.
  - After game record facts.
    - Complete required disqualification report.
    - Follow RIIIL/RIFOA Disqualification Policy, as best you can.
    - Contact the League Commissioner.
- **Referee:**
  - Go to sideline with Linesman or Line Judge present and inform each Head Coach of the penalties and disqualifications for both teams.
  - Signal dead ball and personal foul since there was contact while fighting.
  - Signal (#47) disqualified for each player from each team.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:**
  - Primary responsibility for sideline and keeping non-players from leaving their bench.

# Rules, Philosophies and Interpretations

## Blocking/Holding

- Takedowns at Point of Attack (POA) and/or in open field must be called are always a foul (it incites ill will.)
  - An obvious stretch of a jersey that occurs anywhere must be called.
  - Key words to consider are:
    - Was there restriction?
    - Did the blocker turn the defender?
    - Was there an unnatural movement by the defender?
    - And most importantly, consider advantage/disadvantage at the POA.
    - Once the blocker's "feet are beat" his actions become suspect while engaged.
- If there is offensive or defensive holding but the action occurs clearly away from the POA and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, holding should not be called since the officials are concentrating on the POA.
- Rarely should you call a hold on a double team block unless there is a takedown or the defender breaks the double team and is pulled back.
- For **blocks in the back**, initial approach angle, contact and reason for contact must be seen in order to call a foul. Force of the block could be slight and still be a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner.
  - Player who is blocked is "face down" – it is usually a foul.
  - Note: On kick plays memorize the RT color, and then watch for a RT player chasing a KT player – he becomes suspect. A hand in the back is not necessarily a foul.
- Officials must be 100% sure that a foul occurred in the end zone before ruling safety, if accepted.
- If a player is illegally blocked or held "into" making a tackle, no foul should be called unless the action is a 15 YD foul or there is an element of time between the foul and the tackle.
- A large number of holding fouls begin at or near the LINE OF SCRIMMAGE on pass plays. Know where the hold started so the foul can be enforced correctly.

## Catch

- If in doubt, the pass is incomplete vs. the ball caught and then fumbled. The act of making a catch is a process that includes maintaining firm control of the ball throughout the entire act. The receiver must have the opportunity to perform a second act (i.e. dive to pylon, possess and turn up field) in order to rule catch.
- If a player has control of the ball but, in the act of making the catch, comes to the ground and line of scrimmage es control, it is incomplete. The catch must survive the contact with the ground.
- If he is upright and immediately hit, he must maintain control of the ball or it is an incomplete pass.

### **Kicks**

- Punt - It is roughing the kicker if there is significant and/or substantial contact to the plant leg, whether or not the leg is on the ground. All other contact shall be judged based on the severity of contact and the potential for injury.
- Punt or kickoff - A receiver moving into position or in position to make a catch must not be contacted or diverted until he has had an opportunity to complete the catch. Contact is not necessary for kick-catching interference as the receiver must be given an “unhindered opportunity” to make the catch.
- Holder: The ball remains live if his/her knee is on the ground to hold for the kick. It also remains live if he raises off his/her knee to advance, hand, kick, or pass. If the holder has to rise to catch or recover an errant snap, he can return to a knee immediately.

### **Line of Scrimmage**

- Officials will work to keep offensive linemen legal and will call only when it is obvious. If the offensive lineman is lined up with his head clearly behind the snapper’s waistline, a foul must be called without a warning. Wings -- If lineman is in the “gray area” warn him by stating to him, “
- you need to move up, you are close”. Ask the R for help since he is closer to them. Procedure: Once a Wing has warned the team once, the next time it is a foul – no more warnings. Be sure and tell the HC that his/her lineman (state player’s number) has been told to “move up”. Wings communicate with each other.
- Don’t be technical on an A receiver in determining if he is off the line of scrimmage.
- When calling an ineligible downfield you must see the player more than 2-yards downfield at the time the ball is released. If you do not know the exact location of the downfield player when the ball is released, do not call it.
- A quick or abrupt movement by any A Player is a false start, regardless of the down. If, the movement simulates the start of the play, rule false start. All shifts must be done with a smooth and rhythmic movement.

### **Line to Gain**

- Ball is placed on yard line after a change of possession, or a run/pass resulting in a first down. Otherwise, the ball is placed on the forward progress spot.

### **Passing**

- Referee states “Ball’s Away” slowly. If the passer is hit afterwards, it is roughing the passer. If there is a vicious hit such as targeting or spearing before the R states “Ball’s Away”, this statement does not apply.
- When the ball is controlled in the passer’s hand and his/her arm is moving forward when he is tackled, rule incomplete pass, if ball becomes loose.

### **Pass Interference – Defensive and Offensive - (No Foul)**

Actions that do not constitute PI are:

- When there are tangled feet and both players are looking back at the ball or neither player is looking back at the ball.
- When either player is making a legitimate play on the ball and there is shoulder to shoulder contact with players coming from different angles.
- When contact is so close to the touching of the pass we refer to it as “bang-bang” play.
- When a defender places a hand on a receiver’s body, but does not initiate a turn, twist, pull, or push.
- When contact is made by an eligible player of A or B after the ball has been touched/tipped by any player.

### **Pass Interference - Defensive (DPI) - Foul**

Actions that constitute DPI are:

- Early Not Playing the Ball Contact by a defender provided the contact results in some form of restriction or physical contact. This includes tangled feet if the defender is not playing the ball.
- Play through the Back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
- Grab and restrict a receiver’s arm(s) or body in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
- Extending an arm across the body (Arm Bar) of a receiver thus restricting his/her ability to catch a pass, regardless of the fact of whether or not the defender is looking for the ball.
- Cut Off or riding the receiver out of the path to the ball by making contact with him without playing the ball.
- Hook and restrict a receiver in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that causes the receiver’s body to turn prior to the ball arriving.

### **Pass Interference - Offensive (OPI) - Foul**

Actions that constitute Offensive Pass Interference are:

- Creating Separation by initiating contact with a defender such as shoving or pushing off in an attempt to catch a pass. This includes tangled feet if the player is not playing the ball.
- Driving thru a defender who has established a position on the field.
- Pick Play: A receiver blocking a defender downfield to prevent him from making a play on a ball thrown to another receiver in the same area.

## **Personal Foul**

- Contact with a helmet in an attempt to punish is a foul and may result in a DQ.
- A player chasing the runner that is legally blocked with open hands by an opponent out of his visual field is not a defenseless player if he is within 10 -15-YARDS of the runner.
- Forceful contact with an arm, shoulder or helmet on an opponent above the shoulders is a personal foul for targeting and may result in a DQ. Examples include: QB in passing posture or sliding; kicker in the act of making a kick; receiver in the act of making a catch; and player with no helmet.
- When a pass is thrown clearly over the receiver's outstretched arms and he relaxes, he becomes a defenseless player. Any "free shot" must be called.
- If a runner's helmet comes off, the ball is dead. If the runner is hit and fumbles simultaneously with line of scrimmage loses his helmet, the ball is dead.
- A 5YD face mask foul, if it is a grasp and let go, it can be called. Most of the face mask fouls are 15YD penalties.
- If action is deemed to be "fighting", then the player must be DQ.
- If legal contact occurs before the runner has a foot down OOB it will be considered a legal hit and not a late hit OOB.

## **Victory Formation**

- When the team leading in score informs officials, but is leading by one score or less, do not change covering mechanics; advise A's lineman they must protect themselves.
  - Team B down by one score or less has the opportunity to make an attempt at regaining possession, as long it is legal by rule.
- When the team leading in score is ahead by more than one score, consider announcing A's intentions to avoid injuries.
- **Crew:**
  - Ask leading team Head Coach if the team will take a knee.
    - Only when time remaining in the game is not a factor.
  - Wing informs the opposing team Head Coach.
  - Inform all players loudly. Communication is important!
  - Officials pinch in slightly.
  - Referee is the one who blows the whistle.
- **Referee and Umpire:**
  - Inform A and B that A will take a knee—nothing rough.
  - Quarterback has protection once their team indicates they will take a knee.
- **Referee:**
  - Emphatically tell quarterback they must take a knee ASAP – no fakes.
  - The Referee has the only whistle on this play.
  - If they fake and do not take a knee, it is an Unfair Act (9-9-5).
    - Unfair Acts-9-9-5: Neither team shall commit an act which, in the opinion of the Referee, makes a travesty of the game Unsportsmanlike Conduct (signal #27).

# Overtime Procedures

## After Regulation

After the regulation time has expired and any untimed downs required by rule have been played, Captains and Coaches will be advised to meet in the center of the field after a 3-minute intermission:

- After the intermission, there will be a coin toss at midfield, there is only one coin toss no matter how many overtime periods are played.
  - Only 1 time out per team per overtime period (both teams having an offensive series), any unused timeout does not carry over into the next over time period.
- The Referee will explain the overtime procedures to all Captains and Coaches and conduct an overtime coin toss.
  - The winner may choose offense or defense or select the end of the field to defend.
  - The line of scrimmage er of the toss selects from the remaining option.
    - The coin toss winner cannot defer making a choice.
  - Each team will be awarded a time out to use during the overtime period.
    - The overtime period consists of a series on offense by both teams.
- If there is a second overtime period, there will be a 2-minute intermission and the teams will alternate the first choice.
  - Choices: Offense, Defense, or end of the field.
  - This will continue until a winner is determined.
- **End of Series:**
  - Once Team A scores, fails to score during the series, or line of scrimmage es possession.
  - Whenever B gains possession by interception, fumble recovery, strip, or scores.
- **Series by B:**
  - Once A has completed their series, B has the right to a full series.
  - If the score remains tied after each team has had their series, play continues with an additional overtime period.
  - If the team on defense scores, the game is over; there is no try or need to proceed.
    - However, the likelihood of this is extremely remote, as the ball is dead as soon as the defense gains possession.
    - (Examples: a series of penalties or other yardage line of scrimmage losses followed by a Team A ball carrier tackled in his own end zone for a safety, or Team B recovering a fumble in Team A's end zone).
- **Additional Overtime:**
  - When the score remains tied after both teams have had a series, the line of scrimmage er of the overtime coin toss will have the choice during the second overtime period.
  - Each team will be provided an additional time out to use during the second series.
    - An unused time out does not carry over to the next overtime period.

## **Overtime: Penalty Enforcement**

- **Basic Rule:**
  - Succeeding Spot (SS) fouls which occur:
    - During the last play of the game.
    - During the last play of an overtime period.
    - Dead ball fouls which occur after the last play of a game or overtime period.
      - These can be carried over to overtime, unless a touchdown is scored on that play, in which case the penalty can only be enforced on the try.
- Fouls that carry over from regulation to the first play of overtime (or from one overtime period to the following overtime period):
  - Succeeding Spot fouls during last timed down of a game or last play of an overtime period, if a touchdown was not scored.
  - Dead ball fouls, after last play of a game or last play of an overtime period, if touchdown was not scored during play.
- Succeed Spotting fouls on a Try, if the Try follows a Touchdown on last play of a regulation/Overtime Period:
  - Unsportsmanlike fouls during or the try on A or B.
  - Non player fouls or non-player unsportsmanlike fouls during the try on A or B.
  - Dead Ball Foul after the try on either A or B.
  - Fouls on B during the try, if A accepts the result of the play and chooses penalty enforced from the Succeeding Spot. (These include: Fouls by B or R on a successful try or field goal; dead ball foul after last play of the game or before overtime; unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls during or after the Try on A or B; non-player, unsportsmanlike, and dead ball fouls are penalized at succeeding spot.)
- Fouls that do NOT carry over from Regulation to the First Play of Overtime (or from one Overtime Period to the following Overtime period)
  - A foul by an opponent of scoring team on last play of regulation/overtime period during a down in which a touchdown was scored.
    - Scoring team can only accept this penalty on try.
  - A UNS or non-player fouls by either team on the last play of regulation/overtime period on a down which a touchdown is scored.
    - Offended team can only accept this penalty on the try.
  - If a touchdown is scored on the last play of regulation/overtime period and there is a foul after scoring down, but prior to the initial ready for the try, for which the basic spot is the succeeding spot, the offended team can only accept this penalty on the try.



## **The Nevers for an Umpire:**

The Umpire has a strategic place on the field which often makes him most vulnerable as he focuses on his keys, and the play develops around him. It is important for the Umpire to remember that his location on the field and focus during the play restrict him from ruling a certain action. The “Three Nevers” of an Umpire are:

### **Never Rule on Defense being Offsides:**

- During a scrimmage play, an Umpire’s keys are on the line-of-scrimmage, which includes movement (false starts by rule) by those players before the ball is snapped.
- When defense obviously jumps before the snap, an Umpire’s “no flag” is a good indicator to the crew that the offense did not jump, move first, or cause B to jump.
- Additionally, the Umpire does not have the proper perception when B jumps, but may or may not have crossed the neutral zone.

### **Never Signal Touchdown on a Goal Line Play:**

- The Umpire is not responsible for ruling touchdown on a goal line play, even those plays that are in coverage area.
- Alternatively, the Umpire should relay an accepted signal to the wings that the ball had crossed the goal line.
- The wing officials and other crew members must then determine if the ball crossed the goal line before the runner was down by rule.

### **Never Rule on Pass Interference, no Matter how Obvious:**

- The rules and philosophies of pass interference rely very heavily on much of the action leading up violation commonly penalized for pass interference.
- An Umpire’s attention and responsibility is on the action at the line-of-scrimmage at the time of the pass, therefore, being able to rule on the entirety of the play would be unlikely.

# The High School Kicking Game

## Friday's NIGHTMARE

### Kick Off

- **Kicking Team Encroaches:**
  - Sound whistle
  - Throw the flag,
  - Make sure the clock doesn't start and
  - Go out on the field blowing whistle to stop action.
  - This is a dead ball foul and must be penalized:
    - If accepted, from the kickoff yard line.
    - If not accepted, kick off correctly from the original kickoff yard line.
- **K encroaches, after penalty enforcement, K kicks the ball out of bounds.**
  - Once K has encroached and the penalty enforced the lines shift and 25 yards beyond K's Free kick line is now R's 40-yard line not their 35-yard line.
  - **Be alert.**
  - Don't let the referee mess this one up; all officials are responsible for penalty enforcement.
  - Remember this is a crew and you will sink or swim as a crew.
- **R encroaches:**
  - This is similar to K encroaches.
  - In both encroachments, this play the kick may have already been executed and there will be crowd noise so it will be difficult to shut these plays down.
  - Just keep trying and be sure to know the status of the clock prior to the kick.
- **The kicker approaches the ball but misses it:**
  - Stop all the action,
  - after you quit laughing
  - have both teams set up again
- **K's kick goes beyond the 50-yard line in the air, and is blown back to K's 47-yard line**
  - Be alert for K recovering the kick.
  - It will be their ball since the ball has been beyond the plane of R's Free kick line and has touched the ground.
  - If K tries to catch the kick it will be kick-catching interference.
  - If R catches the kick, everything is back to normal.
- **K commits first touching of a grounded kick**
  - A bean bag should be on the ground indicating K has first touched the kick.
  - R may still recover and advance
  - **OR** take the spot of first touching provided they do not touch the ball and then foul or if a penalty is accepted for any foul during the down.
- **K first touches a kick in the air (the ball has not touched the ground):**
  - Kick-catching interference if in the field of play.
  - Also first touching occurs only if K touched the ball in the neutral zone.
  - R may take the spot of first touching
  - **OR** accept an awarded fair catch at the spot of the catch
  - **OR** R may have K re-kick after a 15-yard penalty.

- **R muffs the kick on K's 49:**
  - Once R touches the Free kick all kinds of things can happen since this is now a "free ball" and K can possess it as well as R may possess it.
  - K may try to recover and advance (a big "NO NO").
  - Probably will end up with 22 players in a big pile and some poor official will have to dig under the pile and determine who has possession of the ball.
  - Just keep this in mind, a short Free kick is just another ball play and there is no need to get excited.
- **R muffs the kick on R's 49:**
  - Same as above "R muffs the kick on K's 49"
  - It does not matter where on the field R touches the Free kick and does not immediately possess the ball.
  - A rather large pile will develop.
  - Once it is determined who has possession of the ball you can bet an opponent will claim the ball was stolen from him.
- **R doesn't cover a grounded kick on his 45-yard line:**
  - Don't be too surprised if K doesn't try to cover it either.
  - But be prepared for anything.
  - The kick remains live until possessed or until you decide you have to stop action with near whistle.
  - The loose ball will belong to R once you have blown the play dead.
- **R1, standing inbounds, muffs the kick which then lands out-of-bounds:**
  - R was the last to touch the kick before it went out, so there is no foul.
  - Do you know the exact spot the ball went out-of-bounds?
- **R1, standing out-of-bounds, touches or catches a kick which is also outside the sideline. Any difference if the kick is inside the sideline when touched?**
  - Since both the ball and R are out-of-bounds K kicked the ball out-of-bounds.
  - A flag should be dropped on the out-of-bounds spot. I
  - If the ball is still inbounds when R, being out-of-bounds, touches it, R is responsible for the ball being out-of-bounds.
- **In the neutral zone, K3 muffs the kick causing it to touch R1 who is in the neutral zone and inbounds, K then muffs the ball which goes out-of-bounds.**
  - Since both the ball and R are out-of-bounds K kicked the ball out-of-bounds.
  - A flag should be dropped on the out-of-bounds spot.
  - If the ball is still inbounds when R, being out-of-bounds, touches it, R is responsible for the ball being out-of-bounds.
- **K2 muffs the grounded kick beyond the neutral zone, which then goes out-of-bounds. Any difference if the ball strikes R before going out-of-bounds?**
  - Same foul as above, unless the ball does touch or is touched by R.
  - Then there is no foul
  - R must take the ball at the out-of-bounds spot.
- **Either R2 or K2 are blocked into the grounded kick.**
  - Since these are Free kicks, "forced touching" provisions are not in effect unless the touching occurs in the neutral zone.
  - Both teams can possess the ball if recovered beyond R's restraining line.
  - The ruling also does not change for the kickoff going out-of-bounds.
- **R2 muffs the kick, then K2 recovers and advances.**
  - Once R2 touches the kick anywhere in the field of play **K may then possess the kick, but may not advance the ball.**

- **R is forming a wedge of interference during a high, long kick. One of R's wedge people (not R2) is raising his hand to indicate to his teammates where to form the wedge. R2 then catches the kick deep behind the wedge. What difference might it make if the player raising his hand catches the kick?**
  - Many officials ignore hand signals given by players of R who are not going to try and catch the kick.
  - But if this is a foul in one situation it should be a foul for every situation.
- **R2 gives a valid fair catch signal**
  - R2 may signal for and make a fair catch of a kickoff.
- **R2 gives an invalid signal**
  - the penalty, if accepted, would be measured from the previous spot as for any loose ball play.
- **R2 signals and R3 catches the kick and advances:**
  - Once the Team R has signaled for a fair catch, the ball will be dead once they possess the kick.
  - R3 cannot advance the ball, and a nearby official will be blowing the ball dead to avoid this type of play from occurring.
- **R2 muffs the kick near the goal line and the ball rolls into R's end zone. (a) K recovers the ball or (b) R recovers**
  - In this play nothing has occurred to end the kick, it's a kicked ball entering R's end zone for a **touchback**.
  - Who might recover the ball is immaterial, the ball is dead.
- **R muffs the kick then attempts to field the grounded ball when K knocks the ball from R's hands into the end zone. (a) K recovers the ball, or (b) R recovers. Is this a legal bat by K?**
  - Since there was no possession to end the kick, it will be a touchback in either (a) or (b.)
  - If an official knows that K batted the ball (which is a grounded loose ball) it would be a foul during a loose ball play.
  - However, you have to see the play clearly to determine if K batted the ball or simply dislodged it from R.
- **R recovers a grounded kick, or catches the kick then K bats the ball out of his hands into the end zone where (a)K recovers, or (b) R recovers.**
  - In this play the kick has ended, so R has fumbled the ball and K can score a touchdown if they can recover the live ball in R's end zone.
  - If R recovers the fumble in his own end zone, it will be a safety.
  - Remember, K cannot impart a new force until the fumble is grounded.
- **K1 is to kickoff and punts the ball and is not after a safety.**
  - The ball remains dead since this would not be a legal kick for a kickoff.
  - It is a dead ball foul and will be penalized from the succeeding spot, which is also the previous spot in this case.
- **There is an inadvertent whistle during the kicking down (a) before the ball has been possessed or (b) after the ball has been possessed**
  - If it happens when did it happen?
  - Was the kick still a kick?
  - Had the kick ended we would have a running play with a player in possession or at least in last possession.
  - Treat it accordingly.

## **Punting: (K1 is the punter)**

- **K1 gets a bad snap and cannot immediately field the ball. (a) K1 recovers and attempts a run or a pass, (b) R2 recovers the snap and advances.**
  - Even though we are discussing the kick game, scrimmage kicks must begin with the snap.
  - Be prepared for a bad one.
  - In this example treat it as any ordinary scrimmage play.
  - Rights of advancement for both teams remain intact
- **K1 gets a bad snap and attempts to get the kickoff.**
  - Careful here.
  - K1 may have to chase a bad snap and the defense is not sure of his intention to kick the ball.
  - They will need a little more leeway for avoiding the kicker if he does indeed get off the kick.
  - This does not mean the kicker line of scrimmage es his protection; it may just start a little bit later
- **K1 is hit by R1 before K1 can get off the kick.**
  - Even though K1 intends to kick, he does not become a kicker until his foot hits the ball.
  - In the meantime, he is still a runner and at peril just as any runner would be.
- **K1 is hit as the kick is blocked**
  - Our rule states that the defense may touch the kick near the kicker and if the contact is unavoidable no foul has occurred.
  - In this example, the contact with the kicker and the block of the kick are simultaneous; therefore, this meets the above criteria
- **K1 is hit and the kick is not touched by R**
  - In this situation, R has clearly fouled if K1 has not yet regained his balance
- **R2 is blocked into the punter by K6.**
  - If a teammate of K1 caused R to contact the kicker, then the resultant contact is ignored unless
  - It is unnecessarily rough. This is why it is important the referee positions himself in the best
  - position possible to view all of this action
- **R2 partially blocks the kick which goes straight up and comes down on K's side of the neutral**
  - This play always creates havoc.
  - Who knows where the neutral zone is after all the players lock up in their blocks, the ball is kicked and is coming down and the officials have moved to view action?
  - The linesman must stay on the line to determine if the ball has actually crossed the line.
  - If it comes down in or behind the neutral zone, both K and R may recover and advance. But what if R touches the ball, then K recovers, you ask? "Has the ball been touched by R beyond the neutral zone", I reply.
- **R4 gives a valid fair catch signal, makes the catch and (a) advances, or (b) stops.**
  - Once R has given that fair catch signal, either valid or invalid, his team may not advance the kick.
  - In (a) he has tried to advance a dead ball, which delays the game and is a foul.
  - In (b) no foul has occurred since he obviously did not try to advance the ball. He must be given a reasonable opportunity to come to a stop if he was running to make the catch.

- **R4 signals for a fair catch and R6 makes the catch and (a) advances or (b) stops.**
  - Same as above. Even though the player who catches the kick did not give the signal, his team may not advance the kick.
  - Good officiating will prevent this from being a foul by being on the spot and whistling the ball dead before any advancement has been made.
  - This also prevents the kicking team from taking a cheap shot at the receiver.
- **The punt goes beyond the neutral zone and (a) K2 first touches the grounded kick, or (b) K2 catches the punt.**
  - In (a) a bean bag on the yard line where the first touching occurred will mark the spot.
  - In (b) If R is not in position to catch the kick, put the flag on the yard line on which the kick-catching interference occurred.
  - Continue to officiate since nothing has occurred to kill the ball
- **The punt goes beyond the neutral zone and R4 muffs then (a) K recovers and down the ball, or (b) K recovers and advances.**
  - In (a) since R was the first to touch the kick beyond the neutral zone, K may possess the ball and have a first down.
  - If K recovered the muffed kick in or behind the neutral zone, he may advance it. This is one play every official needs to be alert for.
  - If the recovery by K is beyond the neutral zone, he may not advance.
- **R4 catches the punt beyond the neutral zone, then R2 fouls, R4 fumbles and K3 recovers. What is the enforcement spot?**
  - Once R4 has caught the kick, the kick has ended.
  - A running play is now in progress.
  - Therefore, R2 committed his foul during a running play and when R4 fumbled and K3 recovered, K may keep the ball by declining R's penalty
  - If not declined the enforcement spot would be either the end of the R4's run or from the spot of the R2's foul, if it is behind the end of the run.
  - Not a PSK example
- **R4 catches the punt after R2 fouled, fumbles and K3 recovers. What is the enforcement spot?**
  - In this play R fouled during a loose ball play and if K wants to keep the ball, they must decline R's penalty.
  - If the penalties are not declined, the enforcement spot, is the previous spot, if K chooses to accept the penalty. Not a PSK example.
- **K or R fouls prior to the punt, then either K or R foul after the kick ends.**
  - Be careful with this one.
  - Let us assume the fouls are all live ball fouls.
  - It may be a PSK application, or it may not.
  - If R fouled beyond the expanded neutral zone prior to the end of the kick and R has possession at the end of the kick, either physically or by rule it is a PSK application.
  - If R fouled and is in possession, then they will keep the ball and may be penalized for their foul.
  - If K fouled and R has the ball R can decline K's penalty and keep the ball. It may be to R's advantage to accept K's penalty and replay the down after enforcement from the previous spot.
  - If K possesses the ball after the kick ends, they may keep the ball by declining R's penalty.
  - If K fouled and possesses the ball after the kick ends R will more than likely accept the penalty for K's foul, leaving K in possession, 1st and 10.
  - **The important thing to remember here is the kick has ended and we now have a running play.**

- **K2 runs into R4 who is attempting to catch the punt.**
  - A good back judge has positioned himself to see this happen.
    - He will drop a flag on the line of the foul.
    - What are the options for R?
      - R can accept the penalty for kick-catching interference, have K penalized from the previous spot 15 yards and replay the down.
        - The clock- start will not start until the ball is touched other than first touching by K
      - If R accepts the kick-catching interference and keeps the ball at the spot of the foul, the clock will start on the snap.
      - If R chooses to have the down replayed the clock will start on the ready if there was no major clock stopper.
      - If R, choose to Free kick the ball after the kick-catching interference the clock will not start until the ball is touched other than first touching by K. This might mean R scores 3 points, has to kick off and the clock will not start until that Free kick is touched other than first touching.
- **K2 runs by R4 who is in position to catch the kick. R4 flinches as K1 goes by him.**
  - K may not obstruct R's opportunity to catch a kick.
  - Does this mean K can obstruct R without contact? It sure does.
  - This involves judgment on the part of the officials and if R flinched he was obstructed.
  - Be there, see it, then rule on it.
- **The punt goes out-of-bounds.**
  - The Referee needs to line up a deep official, usually the Back Judge
  - Other crew members can help line-up the covering official.
- **The punt rolls out-of-bounds.**
  - The official on that sideline and the back judge simply triangulate the ball's position
- **R4 muffs the punt and both K2 and R2 recover the ball but K2 is lying across a sideline.**
  - Simultaneous possession means the receivers get the ball.
  - But in this case there was no simultaneous possession.
  - K was lying on the sideline and by his touching the ball he caused the ball to be out-of-bounds.
  - Since the kick went out of bounds it belongs to R
- **R4 muffs the punt and the ball rolls into R's end zone where (a) K2 recovers, or (b) R recovers.**
  - Be prepared when the goal line is involved.
  - This is just a **touchback**, possession in the end zone is meaningless.
  - This play is messed up every year by some officials.
  - **They may rule a safety by R or a touchdown by K, neither is possible.**

- **R4 catches the punt inside his 5-yard line while he is running toward his goal. He carries the ball into his end zone and (a) runs out to his 10-yard line, or (b) is downed in the end zone. R2 fouled during the time R4 is running with the ball while in the end zone or before he got into the end zone. Does it make any difference where R2 fouled?**
  - Momentum is only involved if R is downed or line of scrimmage es possession, and the ball leaves the end zone sideline or end line.
  - If R carries the ball out of the end zone or fumbles the ball out of the end zone the momentum exception ceases.
  - Of course, a bean bag has been dropped on the yard line where possession was gained inside of R's 5-yard line.
  - If R's foul occurs during momentum, then the momentum spot will be the basic spot.
  - If R's foul occurs after R leaves the end zone, then all-but-one applies.
  - If R's fouls in in his end zone, then a safety is scored.
- **Same play as previous example, except K2 fouls during the momentum exception interval.**
  - Since K fouled, the possession spot will be the enforcement spot if the momentum rule is applied.
  - The end of the run is the enforcement spot if the momentum exception is off.
  - It will be either from the spot of the possession or from the 20-yard line if the play ends in R's end zone
- **K2 bats a grounded kick (a) back toward his goal, or (b) toward R's goal.**
  - You may wonder why this is an unexpected case. No one suspects K will bat the ball toward R's goal line.
  - But if it happens it is a loose ball play foul.
  - If accepted the down will be replayed after enforcement of the 15-yard penalty for an illegal bat.
  - K's batting of a grounded kick is an exciting play and one everyone expects to happen.
  - It takes a good back judge to be on his toes for this type of foul.
  - This good back judge will have a bean bag down for first touching by K
- **K2 bats a punt before it is grounded (a) back toward his goal, or (b) toward R's goal.**
  - If R is in position to catch the ball K may not touch the ungrounded kick without committing kick-catching interference.
  - If no R player is in position to catch the kick, then K may legally bat the kick back toward K's goal.
  - If K bats the ungrounded kick toward R's goal it is a foul and will be treated the same as the illegal bat in the previous example.
- **K2 catches the punt in R's end zone.**
  - Many people think this is a foul for kick-catching interference. It is not.
  - As soon as the non- scoring kick passes the plane of R's goal line it is dead, and the result of the play is a touchback.
- **K2 leaps from the field of play and is over the out-of-bounds when he bats the punt (a) after it has been grounded, or (b) before it has been grounded. K2 then returns to the ground out-of- bounds. R4 was in position to catch the kick if he desired.**
  - If the kick has been grounded, K may legally bat the live ball back toward his goal. K is not out-of-bounds since he is not touching out-of-bounds.
  - If the kick is still in flight, it is a foul for kick- catching interference.
  - If he bats this kick toward R's goal it is a foul for an illegal bat.
  - It may go into R's end zone resulting in a touchback in which case R may take the ball and decline the foul



## **Field Goal Attempts**

- **K2, the holder, gets a bad snap and has to rise from his knee to catch the snap. He then drops back to his knee to place the ball for a kick.**
  - This is OK and probably should not be unexpected.
- **K2, the holder, does not have his knee on the ground. He receives the snap and immediately drops to one knee to hold for the kick.**
  - Since the holder does not receive the snap with a knee on the ground, the dead ball exception is not in effect.
  - Therefore, when he next drops to his knee, he causes the ball to become dead.
  - Be there and blow the play dead
- **The holder muffs or fumbles the snap but retrieves the ball while still on his knee/s and places the ball for a kick.**
  - This looks funny when you see it happen, but the dead ball exception is still in effect since the holder did not remove his knee from the ground or move a distance to retrieve the ball.
- **The holder muffs or fumbles the snap, rises to regain possession, then without getting on his knee places the ball for a kick.**
  - Since the holder did not go back to the ground, he has not caused the ball to become dead and the kick is legal.
- **The holder muffs or fumbles the snap, rises to regain possession, then drops to his knee/s and places the ball for a kick.**
  - Since the holder did not have to rise to get possession of the snap but muffed or fumbled it while his knee was on the ground, rising after this removes the dead ball exception so when he returns to his knee/s he causes the ball to become dead
- **K1 gets off the place kick which strikes the helmet of a teammate in the neutral zone and the ball continues over the crossbar and between the uprights.**
  - The touching of a low scrimmage kick in, or behind, the neutral zone is ignored.
  - The kick scores 3 points. Be prepared to do some explaining to the coach of the scored-on team
- **K2, the holder, catches the snap with his knee on the ground but Team K has no kicker in position to kick the ball. K2 rises and passes the ball to K8 in the end zone.**
  - Since there is no kicker in place to make the place kick, the holder cannot employ the dead ball exception and the ball is dead immediately.
  - The rest of this plays looks good, but is action with a dead ball.
  - Any foul? Probably not because the referee has blown his whistle when the holder caught the snap.
- **R1 signals for a fair catch on a punt by K. He makes the catch on K's 25-yard line. The captain of R requests the referee to place the ball in the center of the field so they can Free kick for a field goal. Have you had this occur? It is really not all that unusual.**
  - This is all legal. Team R may even call a time out then make their choice.
  - Experience tells me you will have to do some explaining to the players and the opposing coach before you can get the play started.

## **TRY BY KICK**

- **The kick is blocked behind the neutral zone where K2 recovers and advances across the goal line.**
  - Since it is apparent the kick cannot score, kill the play and stop the confusion
- **K2, the holder, is speared as the ball is passing over the crossbar, between the uprights.**
  - This is tough. Is the foul a live or dead ball foul? If you can answer that you can then determine when and where to penalize
- **K2, the holder, muffs the snap, rises and tries to gain possession of the ball but pushes it to R's 2-yard line. R1, in attempting to recover, muffs the ball into the end zone where (a) K3 recovers, or (b) R2 recovers.**
  - Since there has been no kick during this play using terms A and B are more appropriate.
  - Since the ball has been grounded R's (B's) muff may be a new force and cause the ball to go into the end zone.
  - If K3 (A3) recovers, it will be worth 2 points since this is a play which would be a touchdown during a normal play.
  - If R (B) recovers, then it will be worth 1 point for (K) A since this results in a safety.

## **Terms**

**Advantage/Disadvantage** – Officials should not unnecessarily interrupt the flow of the game to penalize incidental personal contact which does not give the responsible player an advantage, nor place his opponent at a disadvantage.

**Blitz** - A defensive strategy in which several players commit to rushing the passer. See "Showing blitz."

**Balanced Formation** - An offensive formation in which the same number of eligible receivers are outside the tackles on both sides of the snapper.

**Breaking the Plane** – The imaginary line that rises from the goal line on the field and goes straight up. If the ball crosses the line at any point, it is considered a touchdown.

**Box** - Apparatus (also known as the down marker) used by the chain crew to show ball position and the current down.

**Chain Crew (or chain gang)** - Non-officials in charge of the line to gain equipment and box.

**Dead-Ball Officiating** – Officials being alert between downs for actions of discussions between opponents that are likely to cause a negative response.

**Digger** - Official who burrows into a pile and determines which team has recovered a fumble.

**Echoing a Signal** - Giving the same signal as a crewmate (i.e., stop the clock, touchdown).

**Eye Contact** - Gaining the visual attention of another official before making a ruling. By doing so, officials can avoid conflicting calls.

**First Touching by K** – when on a Free kick, K touches the ball in the field of play before R does and before it has gone the required 10 yards. It is not a foul, thus no flag, just a bean bag. On a scrimmage kick, when K touches the ball in field of play beyond the expanded neutral zone before R touches it and before ball has come to rest.

**Flat** - The area behind the offensive linemen where backs go to receive short passes. A pass to a back in the flat is thrown shortly after the snap, thus making it different from a screen pass.

**Free Blocking Zone** - is a rectangular area extending laterally 4-yards either side of the spot of the snap and 3-yards behind each line of scrimmage. A player is in the FBZ when any part of his body is in the zone at the snap. The FBZ disintegrates once the ball has left the zone.

**Free Kick Line** - for the kicking team shall be its 40-yard line for a kickoff and its 20-yard line for a safety kick unless moved by penalty.

**Give up** - Turning attention from a specific player (usually the runner) because the player has entered another official's coverage area.

**Goal Line Extended-** The imaginary extension of the goal line beyond the pylon (out of bounds) used as a reference point for officials to take near side scoring plays, as well as a reference point for the ball on scoring plays.

**Hurry-Up Offense** – is a strategy where the offense skips the huddle to give the defense little resting time or the ability to substitute players.

**Inside-Out Look** - Pivot that turns an official's back toward the middle of the field, allowing him an angle to action in a side zone or on the sideline.

**Line to Gain Equipment** - Ten-yard length of chain connected at each end to poles used to indicate the line team A has to reach in order to achieve a first down. Commonly referred to as "the chains." The box is also considered to be part of the line-to-gain equipment. See "Box," "Chain gang" and "Stakes."

**Look through** - Use of depth-of-field vision to observe a player lined up inside the nearest player.

**Mirror a Spot** - Mechanic, usually used by wing officials, in which one official marks the spot of forward progress and another indicates the same spot from across the field.

**Motion** – When an offensive player, who is already in motion and must be at least 5 yards behind and then run parallel to the line of scrimmage, before the ball is snapped.

**Neutral Zone** – The space between the 2 restraining lines during a free kick down (which are 10-yards apart) and between the 2 scrimmage lines during a scrimmage down (which is as wide as the length of the ball) both are established at the ready-for-play.

**Neutral Zone Expanded** – The 2-yard area beyond the line of scrimmage used as a reference point during forward pass and scrimmage kicks.

**Neutral Zone Extended** - The imaginary extension of the line of scrimmage beyond the sideline (out of bounds) used as a reference point wings to officiate from, as well as a reference point for passes in flight when determining an intentional grounding exception.

**No Mans Land** – The initial position in a formation by an A player which is not On, or Off, the line of scrimmage by rule.

**O2O's**- Official to Official communication using on-field radios during games.

**Onside Kick** – is a free kick this is deliberately kicked short in an attempt by the kicking team to regain possession of the ball.

**Point of Attack** - On a running play, the area in advance of the runner through which he runs; on a passing play, anywhere in the vicinity of the passer or any player attempting to reach the passer.

**Pop up Kick** -is a Free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately to the ground, the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee.

**Preventive Officiating** - Actions by officials who prevent problems from occurring by talking to players and coaches. Preventive officiating is often related to dead-ball officiating.

**Restraining Line** - for the kicking team shall be its 40-yard line for a kickoff and its 20-yard line for a safety kick, unless moved by rule. The restraining line for the receiving team shall be the yard line 10-yard in advance of the kicking team's restraining line.

**Restricted Area** - is the six-foot wide area beside the sidelines and between the 25-yards lines, which is reserved for the officials and line crew only and runs the length of the field.

**Shift** - When two or more players on the offense move simultaneously before the play, who must reset for one second before the snap.

**Short Side (of the field)** - The side of the field from the hashmark to the nearer sideline when the ball is snapped from the hashmark; opposite of the "wide side."

**Showing Blitz** - The defense places eight or more players within four yards of the snap, making no secret of the fact it intends to place pressure on the quarterback or kicker. See "Blitz."

**Shuffle Step** - Movement used mainly by wing officials on pass plays. The torso remains perpendicular to the line of scrimmage and the feet are alternately scraped along the ground (not a crossover step.)

**Side Zone** - The area of the field between the sidelines and the hashmarks.

**Slot receiver** – The player who lines up in the position between the offensive tackle and the wide receiver. This player is often quick and is in a position to catch the ball or take a handoff.

**Soft Spot:** opposite Wings mirrors the covering Official so the Umpire can get the ball and not have to turn to get the spot, he just looks across the field.

**Stacked** - One player lined up directly behind a teammate (e.g., a linebacker positioned immediately behind a defensive tackle).

**Stakes (or sticks)** - See "Line to gain equipment" and "Chain crew."

**Strong Side** - For the purposes of this book, the side of the offensive line on which there are more eligible receivers outside of the tackles; opposite of "Weak side."

**Square Off** – Ninety-degree turn made by an official when marking the spot of forward progress.

**Squib Kick** - The kicker kicks the ball low and at a line drive, where the ball will then bounce on the ground before being picked up by the opposing player for a return.

**Up Field** - The direction the defense or receiving team is moving. Opposite of "Downfield."

**Wide Side (of the field)** - The area from the opposite hashmark through the middle of the field and side zone to the sideline when the ball is snapped from the opposite hashmark. Opposite of the "Short side."

**Wideout** - An eligible receiver who lines up outside the last player on the offensive line, on the line of scrimmage.

**Wing Official** - The Linesman or Line Judge.

## **Self-Educational Resources**

- The Redding study Guide to NFHS Football
- Referee.com
  - High School Football- “Position Power”- by Jeffrey Stern
    - Referee
    - Umpire
    - Working the Wings
    - Back Judge
  - NFHS.com
    - <http://www.nfhs.com/c-204-football.aspx>
    - <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/officiating-football>

### **PowerPoint Rule Changes, Current to Prior Years:**

**2023:**

[https://mmfoa.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023\\_NFHS\\_Football\\_Rules\\_PowerPoint\\_-\\_FINAL\\_-\\_5-22-23.pdf](https://mmfoa.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023_NFHS_Football_Rules_PowerPoint_-_FINAL_-_5-22-23.pdf)

**2022:**

[https://www.ahsaa.com/Portals/0/PDF's/AHSAA/AHSAA/Memos/2022\\_NFHS\\_Football\\_Rules\\_PowerPoint\\_-\\_FINAL\\_-\\_5-19-22%20\(1\).pdf?ver=5S4CD-ee6WdRvS9A7q0-0g%3D%3D](https://www.ahsaa.com/Portals/0/PDF's/AHSAA/AHSAA/Memos/2022_NFHS_Football_Rules_PowerPoint_-_FINAL_-_5-19-22%20(1).pdf?ver=5S4CD-ee6WdRvS9A7q0-0g%3D%3D)

**2021:**

<https://fcfoa2.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/2021-nfhs-new-rules-powerpoint.pdf>

**2020:**

[https://azfoa.org/Training/2020/2020\\_NFHS\\_Football\\_Rules\\_PPT.pdf](https://azfoa.org/Training/2020/2020_NFHS_Football_Rules_PPT.pdf)

## **Resources used**

- Illinois High School Association
- NFHS: <https://www.nfhs.org/activities-sports/football/>
- Ohio High School Athletic Association
- The Redding Study Guide to NFHS Football Rules
- West Virginia “The High School Kicking Game”
- Football Officiating, Mechanics Illustrated, 4 and 5 Person High School Crews

# The Appendix Section

## Appendix A: RIFOA Approved Uniform and Equipment

### **Standard Varsity Uniform:**

- Black and White Striped Jersey.
  - 
  - RIFOA Patch on Pocket (Sewn or Sublimated).
  - American Flag on Left Shoulder.
  - Short or Long Sleeve (Crew Choice)
- Solid Black Undershirt.
- Long Black Pants w/1" White Stripe.
- Solid Black Sneakers (or with white logos).
- Solid Black Belt.
- Official's Hat w/Association Logo. (Required for the 2024 season)
  - Referee: All White Hat.
  - Position: Black Hat w/White Piping.
- Solid Black Socks (No Ankle Socks).
- Black Jacket w/Association Logo (Not to be worn during game time).

### **Approved Uniform for Inclement Weather:**

- Black and White Stripped Weather Jerseys or Jackets.
  - 2" Stripes Standard, 1" and 2 ¼" Acceptable (Crew Choice).
  - Available at Ump-Attire.com
- Black Gloves
- Officials Hat w/ear flaps (Logo Optional)
- Black Ear warmers.
- Long Black Pants w/1" White Stripe.
- **All Black Sneakers or black with white logos only**
- Face Covering (Black Only)

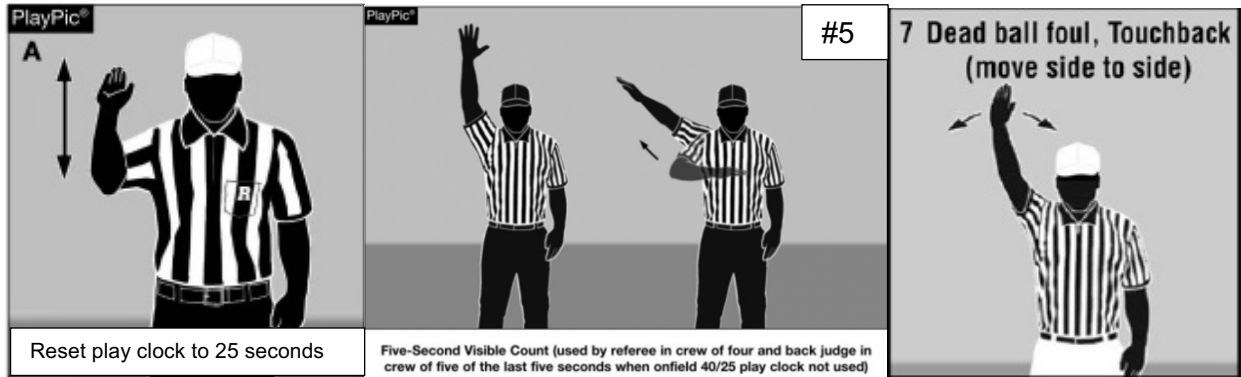
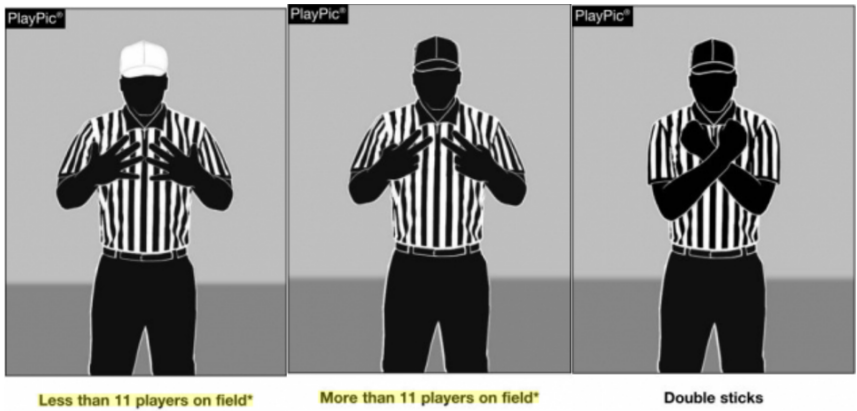
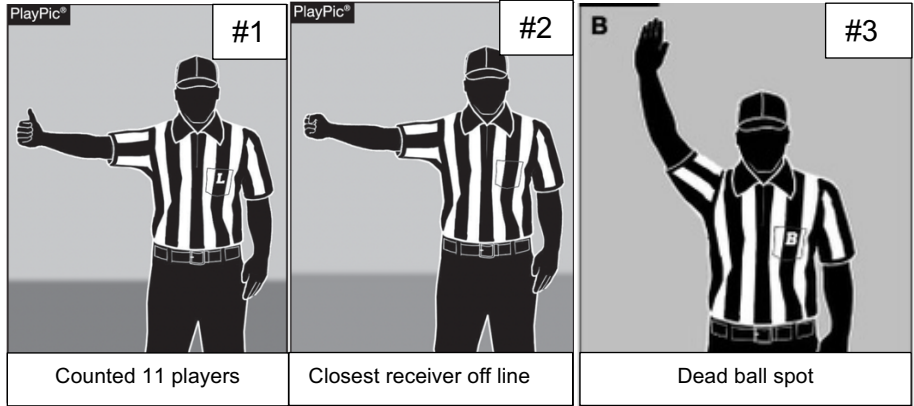
### **Alternate Varsity Jersey:**

- Black and White Striped Jersey w/Black Sleeves.
  - 2 1/4" Stripes.
  - RIFOA Sublimated Alternate Logo.
  - American Flag on Left Shoulder.
  - Short or Long Sleeve (crew choice)
- Solid Black Undershirt.

### **Officials' Equipment/Accessories:**

- Lanyard Whistle (Fox40)
  - Secondary Fox40 Finger Whistle (suggested).
- Two (2) Penalty Flags (tucked in belt/not visible).
- Bean Bag(s) to Mark Significant Spots (crew choice of color).
  - Secondary Bean Bag of Alternate Color (Back Judge).
- Game Card and Pencil to Record Crucial Game Time Activity.
- Down Indicators for Current Down (all Officials) or Ball Position (Umpire).
- Flipping Coin (Referee).
- Yard Clip for Chains (Linesman).
- 40/ Play Clock - Ready Ref (Back Judge).
- Sports Watch w/Countdown Function (Back Judge/Line Judge).
- O2O's are suggested.

## Appendix B: Crew Signals





## Appendix C: Officials' Signals

<p>1 Ball ready for play *Untimed down</p>	<p>2 Start clock</p>	<p>3 Time-out Discretionary or injury time-out (followed by tapping hands on chest)</p>		
<p>4 TV/radio time-out</p>	<p>5 Touchdown, Field goal, Point(s) after touchdown</p>	<p>6 Safety</p>	<p>7 Dead ball foul, Touchback (move side to side)</p>	
<p>8 First down</p>	<p>9 Loss of down</p>	<p>10 Incomplete forward pass Penalty declined No play, no score Toss option deferred</p>	<p>11 Legal touching of forward pass or scrimmage kick</p>	<p>12 Inadvertent whistle</p>
<p>13 Disregard flag</p>	<p>14 End of period</p>	<p>15 Sideline warning</p>	<p>16 First touching Illegal touching</p>	<p>17 Reset play clock to 25 seconds (Use both hands to have play clock reset to 40 seconds)</p>
<p>18 Encroachment</p>	<p>19 False start Illegal formation Free kick infraction</p>	<p>20 Illegal shift (2 hands) Illegal motion (1 hand)</p>	<p>21 Delay of game</p>	<p>22 Substitution infraction</p>

23 Disconcerting act 	24 Illegal helmet contact Targeting 	25 Illegal horse-collar tackle 	26 Illegal blindside block 	27 Unsportsmanlike conduct Noncontact foul 
28 Illegal participation 	29 Sideline interference (Face press box) 	30  Running into or Roughing kicker or holder	31 Illegal batting/kicking (Followed by pointing toward toe for kicking) 	32 Invalid fair catch Illegal fair catch signal 
33 Forward pass interference Kick catching interference 	34 Roughing passer 	35 Illegal pass/forward handing (Face press box) 	36 Intentional grounding 	37 Ineligible downfield on pass 
38 Personal foul 	39 Clipping 	40 Blocking below waist 	41 Chop block 	42 Holding/obstruction Illegal use of hands/arms 
43 Illegal block 	44 Helping runner Interlocked blocking 	45 Grasping face mask or helmet opening 	46  Tripping	47 Disqualification 