



# FOOTBALL OFFICIATING MANUAL



**2022 HIGH SCHOOL SEASON**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	vii
<b>MESSAGE FROM THE LHSAA AND LHSOA</b> .....	viii
<b>PART ONE OFFICIATING OVERVIEW</b> .....	1
<b>NATIONAL FEDERATION OFFICIALS CODE OF ETHICS</b> .....	2
<b>PREREQUISITES AND PRINCIPLES OF GOOD OFFICIATING</b> .....	3
<b>PART TWO OFFICIATING PHILOSOPHY</b> .....	5
<b>WHEN IN QUESTION</b> .....	6
<b>PHILOSOPHIES AND GUIDANCE</b> .....	7
<b>BLOCKING</b> .....	7
A. HOLDING (OH / DH).....	7
B. BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST (BBW) .....	7
<b>CATCH / RECOVERY</b> .....	8
<b>CLOCK MANAGEMENT</b> .....	9
A. HEAT AND HUMIDITY TIMEOUT.....	9
B. DELAY OF GAME (DOG) .....	10
C. CLOCK ADJUSTMENTS AND REFEREE DISCRETION .....	10
<b>DEAD OR LIVE BALL</b> .....	10
A. FORWARD PROGRESS .....	10
B. HAND OR FOOT .....	10
C. SLIDING BALL CARRIER .....	11
<b>KICKING PLAYS</b> .....	11
A. OVER OR BEYOND TEAM K'S FREE KICK LINE (ENC / OFK) .....	11
B. KICKS TRAVELING NEAR TEAM R'S GOAL LINE.....	12
C. CATCH SIGNALS .....	12
<b>LINE OF SCRIMMAGE</b> .....	13
A. FORMATIONS .....	13
B. MOVEMENT AND THE NEUTRAL ZONE .....	14
C. DISCONCERTION .....	15
<b>PASSING PLAYS</b> .....	16
A. DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE (DPI).....	16
B. OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE (OPI).....	16
C. INELIGIBLE DOWNFIELD PLAYERS (IDP) .....	17
D. INTENTIONAL GROUNDING (ING).....	18
E. FORWARD AND BACKWARD PASS.....	20
<b>PENALTY ENFORCEMENT</b> .....	20
A. FOULS DURING AND AFTER TOUCHDOWN BUT BEFORE TRY .....	20
<b>PERSONAL FOULS</b> .....	21
A. TARGETING (TGT) .....	21
B. BLINDSIDE BLOCKS (BSB).....	21

C. FIGHTING (FGT) .....	22
D. ROUGHING THE PASSER (RPS) .....	22
E. ROUGHING OR RUNNING INTO THE KICKER (RRK / RNK) .....	22
F. MISCELLANEOUS .....	23
<b>SPECIAL / TRICK PLAYS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT (UNS) .....</b>	<b>23</b>
A. PLAYERS .....	23
B. COACHES .....	24
C. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT INVOLVING MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS .....	25
<b>PART THREE ONFIELD MECHANICS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>MECHANICS POINTS OF EMPHASIS .....</b>	<b>27</b>
INTENTIONAL GROUNDING AND LEGALLY THROWING THE BALL AWAY .....	27
LATERAL POSITIONS .....	28
PENALTY ENFORCEMENT AND SPOTS .....	28
PROCESSING CATCHES AND FOULS .....	29
<b>CREW OF FIVE OFFICIATING MECHANICS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>MECHANICS CHANGES FOR 2022 .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>II. PREPARATION LEADING UP TO GAME DAY .....</b>	<b>32</b>
A. REFEREE CONTACT WITH HOME MANAGEMENT .....	32
B. INDIVIDUAL AND CREW PREPARATION .....	32
C. CREW COORDINATION .....	32
D. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND DRUGS .....	33
<b>III. AFTER ARRIVAL AT GAME SITE .....</b>	<b>33</b>
A. ARRIVAL AND PREGAME CONFERENCES .....	33
B. INDIVIDUAL OFFICIAL'S PREGAME AND AUXILIARY GAME DUTIES .....	33
<b>IV. COIN TOSS .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>36</b>
A. NORMAL FREE KICKS .....	36
B. ANTICIPATED SHORT FREE KICKS .....	38
<b>VI. PLAY RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>39</b>
A. PRE-SNAP AND GENERAL DUTIES .....	39
B. RUNNING PLAYS .....	42
C. PASSING PLAYS .....	45
D. REVERSE MECHANICS .....	47
<b>VII. SCRIMMAGE KICK (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>VIII. FIELD GOAL TRIES AND TRY FOR POINT .....</b>	<b>50</b>
A. SNAP BETWEEN GOAL LINE AND SHORT OF 15-YARD LINE .....	50
B. SNAP AT OR BEYOND R'S 15-YARD LINE .....	52
C. SWINGING GATE FORMATION .....	53
<b>IX. MEASUREMENT FOR FIRST DOWN .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>X. PLAYS NEAR THE GOAL LINE .....</b>	<b>56</b>
A. BALL ON AND INSIDE TEAM B'S 10-YARD LINE .....	56

B. GOAL LINE COMING OUT .....	56
<b>XI. END OF A PERIOD .....</b>	<b>56</b>
A. AFTER THE FIRST AND THIRD QUARTERS .....	56
B. AFTER THE END OF THE FIRST HALF .....	57
<b>XII. OVERTIME PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>XIII. END OF THE GAME .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>XIV. INITIAL KEYS .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>CREW OF SIX OFFICIATING MECHANICS .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>MECHANICS CHANGES FOR 2022 .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>II. PREPARATION LEADING UP TO GAME DAY .....</b>	<b>64</b>
A. REFEREE CONTACT WITH HOME MANAGEMENT .....	64
B. INDIVIDUAL AND CREW PREPARATION .....	64
C. CREW COORDINATION .....	64
D. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND DRUGS .....	65
<b>III. AFTER ARRIVAL AT GAME SITE .....</b>	<b>65</b>
A. ARRIVAL AND PREGAME CONFERENCES .....	65
B. INDIVIDUAL PREGAME AND AUXILIARY GAME DUTIES .....	65
<b>IV. COIN TOSS .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>67</b>
A. NORMAL KICKS .....	68
B. ANTICIPATED SHORT FREE KICKS .....	69
C. FREE KICK FOLLOWING FAIR CATCH .....	71
<b>VI. PLAY RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>71</b>
A. PRE-SNAP AND GENERAL DUTIES .....	71
B. RUNNING PLAYS .....	74
C. PASSING PLAYS .....	77
D. REVERSE MECHANICS .....	79
<b>VII. SCRIMMAGE KICK (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>VIII. FIELD GOAL TRIES AND TRY FOR POINT .....</b>	<b>82</b>
A. NORMAL SCORING KICK FORMATION .....	82
B. SWINGING GATE FORMATION .....	84
<b>IX. MEASUREMENT FOR FIRST DOWN .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>X. PLAYS NEAR THE GOAL LINE .....</b>	<b>86</b>
A. BALL OUTSIDE TEAM B'S 7-YARD LINE .....	86
B. BALL ON AND INSIDE TEAM B'S 7-YARD LINE .....	87
C. GOAL LINE COMING OUT .....	87
<b>XI. END OF A PERIOD .....</b>	<b>88</b>
A. AFTER THE FIRST AND THIRD QUARTERS .....	88
B. AFTER THE END OF THE FIRST HALF .....	88
<b>XII. OVERTIME PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>XIII. END OF THE GAME .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>XIV. INITIAL KEYS .....</b>	<b>90</b>



<b>CREW OF SEVEN OFFICIATING MECHANICS .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>MECHANICS CHANGES FOR 2022 .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>II. PREPARATION LEADING UP TO GAME DAY .....</b>	<b>95</b>
A. REFEREE CONTACT WITH HOME MANAGEMENT .....	95
B. INDIVIDUAL AND CREW PREPARATION .....	95
C. CREW COORDINATION .....	95
D. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND DRUGS .....	96
<b>III. AFTER ARRIVAL AT GAME SITE.....</b>	<b>96</b>
A. ARRIVAL AND PREGAME CONFERENCES .....	96
B. INDIVIDUAL PREGAME AND AUXILIARY GAME DUTIES.....	96
<b>IV. COIN TOSS.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>99</b>
A. NORMAL FREE KICKS .....	99
B. ANTICIPATED SHORT FREE KICKS.....	101
C. FREE KICK FOLLOWING FAIR CATCH.....	102
<b>VI. PLAY RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>102</b>
A. PRE-SNAP AND GENERAL DUTIES.....	102
B. RUNNING PLAYS .....	106
C. PASSING PLAYS.....	109
D. REVERSE MECHANICS .....	111
<b>VII. SCRIMMAGE KICK (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>VIII. FIELD GOAL AND TRY KICK PLAYS .....</b>	<b>114</b>
A. FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS SNAPPED ON OR INSIDE THE R-7 AND TRY KICKS .....	114
B. FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS (NON-TRY) SNAPPED BEYOND THE R-7 YARD LINE .....	115
C. FAKE KICKS OR PLAYS TURNING INTO A RUN OR PASS.....	116
D. SWINGING GATE FORMATIONS .....	117
E. RETURNS .....	118
<b>IX. MEASUREMENT FOR FIRST DOWN .....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>X. PLAYS NEAR THE GOAL LINE .....</b>	<b>119</b>
A. BALL OUTSIDE TEAM B’S 7-YARD LINE .....	119
B. BALL ON AND INSIDE TEAM B’S 7-YARD LINE.....	120
C. GOAL LINE COMING OUT .....	120
<b>XI. END OF A PERIOD .....</b>	<b>120</b>
A. AFTER THE FIRST AND THIRD QUARTERS .....	120
B. AFTER THE END OF THE FIRST HALF .....	121
<b>XII. OVERTIME PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>XIII. END OF THE GAME .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>XIV. INITIAL KEYS AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>CLOCK OPERATOR MECHANICS .....</b>	<b>133</b>
GAME CLOCK OPERATOR .....	134
PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR .....	135
<b>ADDITIONAL DUTIES AND MECHANICS .....</b>	<b>138</b>

CHAIN CREW INSTRUCTIONS .....	139
PREGAME DUTIES .....	139
GAME PROCEDURES .....	140
FUMBLE COVERAGE.....	141
PENALTY ENFORCEMENT.....	141
USE OF THE BEAN BAG AND HAT.....	143
POST-GAME REPORTING .....	145
FOUL ABBREVIATION CODES .....	146
<b>PART FOUR OTHER OFFICIATING MATTERS .....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>CONFERENCES .....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>COMMUNICATION WITH HOME MANAGEMENT DURING WEEK .....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>ONSITE PREGAME ADMINISTRATIVE CONFERENCE (PAC) .....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>FOOTBALL PAC CHECKLIST .....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>PREGAME CREW CONFERENCE.....</b>	<b>152</b>
A. GENERAL.....	152
B. PREGAME DUTIES .....	152
C. COIN TOSS.....	152
D. FREE KICKS .....	153
E. SCRIMMAGE PLAYS .....	153
F. RUNNING PLAYS.....	153
G. FORWARD PASS PLAYS .....	154
H. PUNTS .....	154
I. FIELD GOAL AND TRY .....	154
J. GOAL LINE OR SHORT YARDAGE PLAYS.....	155
K. FOULS .....	155
L. MEASUREMENTS .....	155
M. POST-GAME DUTIES .....	156
N. MISCELLANEOUS .....	156
<b>PREGAME COACH CONFERENCE .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>CREW UNIFORM.....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>LATERAL FIELD POSITIONS .....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>PLAY CLOCK .....</b>	<b>163</b>
40- AND 25-SECOND PLAY CLOCK.....	164
CASE PLAY EXAMPLES.....	168
SUMMARY PLAY CLOCK CHART .....	170
PLAY CLOCK REFERENCE FOR TIMERS .....	172
<b>RUNNING CLOCK .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>SIGNALS .....</b>	<b>176</b>

# INTRODUCTION

This Football Officiating Manual is the result of continuing discussions, considerations, and research by several experienced football game officials from different associations, levels, and conferences who are dedicated to assisting, advancing, and supporting high school officials and officiating in Louisiana. The Louisiana High School Athletic Association (“LHSAA”) and the Louisiana High School Officials Association (“LHSOA”) have adopted it for use by all football officials and local associations to promote the consistent application of rules, philosophies, and mechanics throughout the state for all varsity football contests. Substantive revisions from the previous Officiating Manual are highlighted.

This Manual is designed to be a comprehensive supplement to the National Federation Rules Book and Case Book. It contains, in one publication, information involving several football officiating subjects, including: basic officiating requirements; philosophies to guide judgment; mechanics for crews of five, six, and seven on-field officials; mechanics for clock operators; use of the 40-second play clock; sample outlines of various conferences; and other officiating information. It is hoped that placing all of these items into one manual assists officials in their preparation.

While no manual can address every possible scenario that may occur in a high school football game, the information contained here provides a strong foundation for officials around the state throughout the season. The procedures outlined in this manual must be supplemented with a strong knowledge and understanding of the Federation rules and interpretations, as well as the materials, statements, and directives of the LHSAA and LHSOA.

For the most part, there is nothing here that has not been said in one way or another in previous years. With each season, we must all continue to work hard and improve in our role to protect the value and integrity of the high school football game. Hopefully, this Manual assists you in accomplishing that goal.

Best wishes to all of you for a great season.

## **Officiating Manual Committee**

Trey Albritton  
Kevin Boitmann (Chair)  
Marc Gervais  
Bryan Greenwood  
Marlon Harrison  
Tutashinda Salaam  
Bobby Segal  
Stuart Slaughter  
Ron Turner  
Michael VanderVelde

# MESSAGE FROM THE LHSAA AND LHSOA



August 1, 2022

Dear LHSOA Football Official,

Let's start with something you don't hear enough – thanks! We value you and the important service you provide our 400+ member schools and over 100,000 student-athletes, coaches, and administrators.

We recognize that officiating high school sports is not easy. It requires professionalism, specialized knowledge of rules and mechanics, teamwork, courage to make tough decisions, and people skills to communicate in emotionally charged environments.

Please know that we appreciate your commitment to officiating Louisiana high school football. Best wishes for a safe and successful season.

Yours in Officiating,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Sanders".

Lee Sanders  
LHSAA Director of Officials

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul LaRosa".

Paul LaRosa  
LHSOA President

**PART ONE**  
**OFFICIATING OVERVIEW**





# NATIONAL FEDERATION OFFICIALS CODE OF ETHICS

Officials at an interscholastic athletic event are participants in the educational development of high school students. As such, they must exercise a high level of self-discipline, independence, and responsibility. The purpose of this Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all interscholastic officials.

- Officials shall master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, and shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm, and controlled manner.
- Officials shall work with each other and their state associations in a constructive and cooperative manner.
- Officials shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interaction with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues, and the public.
- Officials shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, and shall comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.
- Officials shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.
- Officials shall remain mindful that their conduct influences the respect that student-athletes, coaches, and the public hold for the profession.
- Officials shall, while enforcing the rules of play, remain aware of the inherent risk of injury that competition poses to student-athletes. Where appropriate, they shall inform event management of conditions or situations that appear unreasonably hazardous.
- Officials shall take reasonable steps to educate themselves in the recognition of emergency conditions that might arise during the course of competition.
- Officials shall maintain an ethical approach while participating in forums, chat rooms, and all forms of social media.

# PREREQUISITES AND PRINCIPLES OF GOOD OFFICIATING

As game officials, the integrity of Louisiana's high school football games is entrusted to you. It is your responsibility to enforce the rules promptly, fairly, and consistently while observing relevant action and using good judgment. To do this, you must have a thorough knowledge of the playing rules, guiding philosophies, and officiating mechanics.

Officials must maintain a professional attitude from the time they assume responsibility for the game until the end of the contest. It is important that officials not only know the rules but also communicate with players and coaches in all game matters. Set a good example for players and coaches by treating them with courtesy and respect at all times, especially when that courtesy and respect is not reciprocated. Never use profanity or inappropriate language or gestures when talking with your crew or with players or coaches. Your proper conduct is always important.

Officials must exhibit and represent the integrity of the officiating profession. Image, honesty, and high ethical standards matter. Be courageous. Make each decision in each game based on the circumstances presented without regard to either team and to any history with a particular team, player, or coach. If you feel that you have a conflict with an assignment, let your Regional Coordinator of Officials know immediately.

Officials must penalize all fouls when appropriate, especially those involving player safety and unacceptable behavior. Taunting and baiting opponents and other improper displays demean the image of the high school game, which itself is an extension of the high school classroom. Similarly, unnecessary and excessive contact puts the health and well-being of student athletes in danger and jeopardizes the longevity of the game itself. Such behavior must never be tolerated, and it should be penalized as provided in the rules.

Officials must know rules, philosophies, and mechanics to properly officiate a game. You are expected to exercise good judgment in real-time situations, which requires that you rely on more than technical applications of a written rule. Players who have practiced long hours deserve competent officials who have a complete understanding of the letter and spirit of the rules and will administer them consistently and fairly. Study and prepare each week throughout the season to improve. Each opportunity to work is an opportunity to perfect your craft.

Officials must strive to be good communicators with coaches. The game may be fast-paced, hard-hitting, and emotional for players, coaches, and fans. Officials, however, must remain calm in all situations. Officials working on the sidelines have the best opportunity to provide coaches with necessary information in a calm and professional manner. Coaches may not agree with an officiating decision or its explanation. It is not necessary to convince a coach of the correctness of a decision, but it is necessary to give a coach correct and accurate information. You should answer questions that a coach asks as soon as you are able to do so, but you should never answer statements when a coach is only venting. Be honest in your communications, and never argue with a coach.

Officials must become good communicators with their crew. If you have definitive information to bring to crewmembers that could prevent a misapplication of a rule or the incorrect enforcement of a penalty, bring it to their attention immediately. Do not wait until the game is over. Similarly, if you do not have definitive information but would only inject uncertainty by guessing, do not give any information. Rather, be in position to provide help when you can.

Officials must constantly prepare for all assignments, both mentally and physically. Prepare yourself to handle the physical demands of the game as well as the mental toughness that each game uniquely requires.

Officials must collaborate and work well with a diverse group. All officials are distinct, exceptional individuals from different backgrounds. They bring their own unique history, knowledge, and experience to this craft. Work and talk with and learn from each other so that, by sharing what is learned, football officials throughout the state can provide their best each week for their crew and each game.

Officials must be receptive to constructive criticism and to new ideas and new concepts. Accept the evaluations of your coordinators and film reviewers. Use these as opportunities to improve and refine your skills.

Finally, officials should be passionate about officiating and enjoy working each game. Always recognize the importance of your position and the enjoyment that comes with being a part of high school football in Louisiana.

## **PART TWO**

# **OFFICIATING PHILOSOPHY**



# WHEN IN QUESTION

The following guidelines should assist in making decisions when officials are in doubt of what occurred. Important game situations occur very quickly, and making a correct ruling is sometimes difficult because of timing, views, lighting, and other circumstances. When unsure of what occurred, a covering official should apply the following principles. However, “when in question” is not a substitute for “when it’s close.” Officials must work hard to be in proper position and observe and evaluate all plays to make correct rulings in all situations. Just because an action is close does not mean an official should normally be in doubt. When confident on a close play, the official should make the correct call without question.

1. Incomplete pass or fumble by potential passer ..... **Incomplete Pass**
2. Forward or backward pass ..... **Forward**
3. Kick / pass touched or not touched ..... **Not touched**
4. Catch or no catch ..... **No catch**
5. Touchback or safety ..... **Touchback**
6. Defenseless player or not..... **Defenseless player**
7. Fumble or down by rule..... **Down by rule**
8. Helmet on or off..... **Off**
9. Accidental or intentional contact, touching, kicking..... **Accidental**
10. Five- or Fifteen-yard facemask ..... **Fifteen yards**
11. Roughing or running into the kicker / holder..... **Roughing**
12. Fighting or personal foul ..... **Personal foul**
13. Legal or illegal blindside block..... **Illegal**
14. Targeting or legal block ..... **Targeting**
15. Score or no score..... **No score**
16. Passer in or out of zone to legally throw ball away..... **Out**



# PHILOSOPHIES AND GUIDANCE

## BLOCKING

### A. Holding (OH / DH)

A holding foul usually consists of some grabbing or grasping action with restriction that materially affects or could materially affect the play. Actions qualifying as holding usually fall in the following categories:

1. **Grab and Restrict (GR).** A player grabs and opponent and materially restricts him, keeping the opponent from making a move he is trying to do.
2. **Hook and Restrict (HR).** A player extends his arm across and opponent's body and pulls back, materially restricting the opponent from moving to a desired location.
3. **Takedown (TD).** A player grabs and restricts an opponent, and eventually takes him to the ground. Takedowns at the point of attack, in the open field, and in the free-blocking zone deserve special focus.
4. **Tackle (TK).** A player uses his arm and swipes at an opponent's lower leg, tripping him, and materially affecting his pursuit.

### B. Blocking Below the Waist (BBW)

Blocking below the waist is legal only when all the following conditions are met:

1. The block is in the free-blocking zone;
2. All players involved in the blocking are on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at the snap;
3. The contact is in the zone; and
4. The block is an immediate, initial action following the snap.

The rule allows for normal line play by linemen in the free-blocking zone at the snap but limits low contact to the initial charge.

Whether the snap is made from a shotgun or hand-to-hand formation, and whether the player is an upright or down lineman has no bearing on whether a low block is legal. A lineman in the zone at the snap may make a low block on an opposing lineman in the zone at the snap if the block is in the immediate, initial action following the snap.

The focus is the immediacy of the action; not the offensive formation or a player's stance. The contact must be made as part of a player's immediate, initial line

charge and part of one motion. Where officials judge that any action is delayed, a foul should be called.

### APPLICABLE RULES

Rules 2-17-2; 9-3-2

Case Book 9.3.2 Situations A, B, E

### **CATCH / RECOVERY**

1. To complete a catch, a player must: (1) secure control of a live ball in flight with a firm grip; (2) contact the ground inbounds; and **then** (3) maintain possession of the ball long enough to perform a “football move” common to the game.
2. For a player going to the ground attempting to catch a pass, he must “survive the ground” by maintaining complete and continuous control of the ball throughout the process of contacting the ground.
3. A player going to the ground **also** completes a catch when, before **something other than hand or foot** contacts the ground, he makes an exaggerated “second act” common to the game showing that he has clearly maintained possession of the ball (such as extending the ball with firm control forward to reach the line-to-gain or the opponent’s goal line).
4. A ball can be controlled only with the hands and arms. A player pinning a ball with his legs has not secured control of the ball with a firm grip.
5. A player does not need his entire foot to come down inbounds to make a catch. He is inbounds as long as any part of his body touches the ground inbounds **while not also touching out of bounds**.
6. A ball in a player’s firm control may touch the ground before the catch is completed. However, if the ball hits the ground and comes loose before the catch process is completed, it is not a catch.
7. The requirements for a catch do not change when the end zone is involved. If the pass would be incomplete at the 50-yard line, it is incomplete in the end zone.

### PLAY SITUATION

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** Team A throws a pass to A88 who is eight yards deep in Team B’s end zone and near the sideline. A88 leaps to catch the pass. While airborne, A88 secures control of the ball and is then contacted hard toward the sideline by B27. As A88 goes sideways and downward to the ground, his right foot touches inbounds in the end zone while A88 controls the ball. A88 continues downward and hits the ground out of bounds where (a) he loses control of the ball; or (b) maintains firm control of the ball. **RULING:** In (a), it is an incomplete pass because A88, who is going to the ground, did not maintain control of the ball after he hit the ground. In (b), it is a touchdown, and the official will signal only after making sure A88 survived the ground by **maintaining firm control of the ball after hitting the ground.**

## **APPLICABLE RULES:**

**2-4-1; 2-31-4; 8-2-1-b**

## **CLOCK MANAGEMENT**

### **A. Heat and Humidity Timeout**

During the months of August and September, LHSAA bylaws require taking an official's timeout "at the six-minute mark of every quarter." To provide consistency for officials, players, and coaches, the following procedures should be used:

1. The timeout will be taken when (a) the ball is dead and the game clock reaches six minutes remaining, or (b) the ball first becomes dead after the game clock reaches six minutes remaining.
2. If the clock reaches six minutes during a play that ends in a touchdown, the timeout will be taken after the Try.
3. The timeout will be taken regardless of play, momentum, and whether a team is driving.
4. The timeout will be taken even if the game is played indoors.
5. For Jamboree games in which the period has a length other than twelve minutes, the timeout will be taken at the halfway point of the period.
6. After this timeout, the game clock will start on the snap.

## **PLAY SITUATIONS**

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** During the first quarter of a game played in August or September, A35 is tackled in bounds and short of the line to gain at the B-15. The game clock shows 6:15 and running. The Umpire places the ball down, and Team A lines up for the next play, with the QB going under center. The game clock reaches 6:00 before the ball is snapped. **RULING:** Officials will stop the clock and take an official's timeout for heat and humidity. Following the timeout, the game clock will start on snap.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** During the first quarter of a game played in August or September, the game clock is stopped at 6:02 after an incomplete pass. Team A snaps the ball and runs for a 20-yard gain to the B-25 for a first down. After the play, the game clock reads 5:54. **RULING:** Officials will stop the clock and take an official's timeout for heat and humidity. The game clock remains at 5:54 and will start on the snap.

## **APPLICABLE RULES**

LHSAA Bylaw 14.3.8; Rule 1-1-6.

## **B. Delay of Game (DOG)**

1. When the play clock reaches “0,” the official monitoring the play clock should look for the ball. If the ball is starting to move, no foul should be called. If the ball is not moving, it is a foul for delay of game.
2. On a free kick, there is no foul if the kicker is moving toward the ball when the clock reaches “0” and goes on to make the kick.
3. When a team calls a timeout simultaneous with the play clock reaching “0,” or when there is any question as to whether the request for a timeout occurred before the play clock expired, award the charged team timeout and do not penalize for delay of game.

## **C. Clock Adjustments and Referee Discretion**

1. Any loss of time due to the game clock being started erroneously when a dead-ball foul occurs should be corrected.
2. In general, the Referee should consider invoking Rule 3-4-6 when fouls occur in the last five minutes of each half.

## **DEAD OR LIVE BALL**

### **A. Forward Progress**

1. When a runner’s progress is being stopped and the runner is being driven backward due to being held by one opponent, the covering official should rule the ball dead at the spot of forward progress.
2. When a runner’s progress is clearly stopped due to being held by two or more opponents, the covering official should rule the ball dead at the spot of forward progress.
3. Any time a runner is stood up and loses his feet due to being held by an opponent, the covering official should rule the ball dead at the spot of forward progress.

### **B. Hand or Foot**

1. The ankle is considered part of the foot, and the wrist is considered part of the hand.
2. The ball is not dead if only a runner’s ankle or wrist contacts the ground.

## **PLAY SITUATIONS**

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** Runner A35 is advancing down the field when B57 attempts to tackle him. As B57 pulls A35 toward the ground, A35’s (a) wrist or ankle; or (b) forearm or shin contacts the ground. **RULING:** The ball remains live in (a). The runner is down, and the ball is dead in (b).

### APPLICABLE RULES

2-1-1; 2-1-2; 4-2-2(a)

#### **C. Sliding Ball Carrier**

1. The ball becomes dead whenever the runner obviously starts a feet-first slide signaling that he is giving himself up.
2. The spot of forward progress is the spot of the ball at the time the runner begins his feet-first slide.

### PLAY SITUATIONS

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** A - 3/10 at A-37. QB A11 sweeps to his right and goes into a feet-first slide to give himself up. When he starts his slide the forward-most point of the ball is at the A-46, and when he comes to a stop the forward-most point of the ball is at the A-48. **RULING:** A - 4/1 at A-46. The ball is dead immediately at the A-46 when A11 begins to slide.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** A - 4/10 at A-37. QB A11 sweeps to his right and goes into a feet-first slide to give himself up. When he starts his slide the forward-most point of the ball is at the A-46, and when he comes to a stop the forward-most point of the ball is at the A-48. After A11 starts his slide, B97 throws a block and forcibly contacts A11 in the helmet with his shoulder. **RULING:** B - 1/10 at B-39. The ball became dead immediately at the A-46 when A11 began to slide. Because the ball is short of the line-to-gain, Team A's series is over, and Team B will take over on downs. The targeting foul by B97 is administered as a dead-ball foul.

### APPLICABLE RULES

2-32-16(f); 4-2-2(a)

## **KICKING PLAYS**

#### **A. Over or Beyond Team K's Free Kick Line (ENC / OFK)**

1. On a normal kickoff, a Team K player (other than the kicker or holder) commits a foul if the player contacts the ground clearly beyond his team's restraining line before the ball is kicked.
2. On an onside or short kickoff, a Team K player (other than the kicker or holder) commits a foul if the player breaks the plane of the line before the ball is kicked.

### PLAY SITUATION

**CASE PLAY . . .** K - FK at K-40. K27's upper body and right foot are beyond the plane of Team K's restraining line when the ball is free kicked, but K27 is not contacting the ground beyond the restraining line. The kick is (a) a deep kick; (b) a short pooch kick; or (c) an onside kick attempt. **RULING:** No foul in



(a) because the K27 has not contacted the ground clearly beyond Team K's restraining line. In (b) and (c), it is a foul because K27 has broken the plane early on a short kickoff.

#### APPLICABLE RULE

6-1-3-a

### **B. Kicks Traveling Near Team R's Goal Line**

1. When in question, a free or scrimmage kick has broken the plane of Team R's goal line.

### **C. Catch Signals**

1. Any **waving** signal, including a "get away" signal, during a kick given by any Team R player other than a valid fair-catch signal is an invalid fair-catch signal.
2. If any Team R player touches, catches, or recovers a kick after any Team R player has given an invalid fair-catch signal, a foul should be called. If Team R does not touch the ball after any Team R player has given an invalid fair-catch signal and allows the ball to continue in play, no foul should be called.
3. It is not an invalid fair-catch signal if a receiver shades his eyes from the sun without waving a hand, and it does not cause the ball to become dead when possessed.
4. Pointing, without waving, **at the shoulder level or below** is neither a valid nor invalid fair catch signal and does not cause the ball to become dead when possessed. If the pointing occurs above the shoulder level, officials should treat it similar to a waving signal.
5. It is the receiver's responsibility to make sure that any signal he gives is not an invalid signal.

#### PLAY SITUATIONS:

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** As Team A's punt is bouncing on the ground, receiver R32, while standing at the R-20, waves both side to side around his waist level, signaling to his teammates to get away from the ball. After the signal: (a) no Team R player touches the ball, and the ball rolls dead at the R-15; (b) R32 moves forward and recovers the ball at the R-25; (c) a Team R player touches the ball at the R-23, changing its direction, and the ball goes out of bounds at the R-18. **RULING:** R32's signal is invalid. There is no foul in (a) because all Team R players "got away" and let the ball continue in play without touching it. A foul has occurred in (b) and (c) because Team R, after indicating it would "get away," made plays on the ball by touching or recovering it, preventing the ball from continuing its normal motion. In (b), the 5-yard penalty is enforced from the R-20 to the R-15. In (c), the 5-yard penalty is enforced from the R-18

to the R-13.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** On a bright, sunny day, while Team A's punt is high in the air, receiver R32, standing at the R-25, puts his right hand just above his eyes. He does not move his right hand at all while the ball is in the air. As the punt comes down, he catches it and runs for a touchdown. **RULING:** Legal play, and the touchdown stands. R32 has legally shielded his eyes with one hand and without any waving action.

**CASE PLAY 3 . . .** While Team A's punt bounces on the ground beyond the neutral zone at the R-20, receiver R32 (a) points downward at the ball below his shoulders; or (b) points up and outward above his shoulders. R32's arms do not waive in either case. Afterward, an R player recovers the ball at the R-15 and advances to the R-30 yard line. **RULING:** In (a) the non-waving pointing signal below the shoulders is not illegal and does not cause the ball to become dead when recovered. Team R's advance is legal, and Team R will next snap from the R-30. In (b), the non-waving pointing signal is above the shoulders. This is treated as a waving signal that is invalid and causes the ball to become dead when possessed. Because Team R played the ball after giving this invalid signal, a foul has occurred, and the penalty is enforced under post-scrimmage kick rules from the R-15 to the R-10.

#### APPLICABLE RULES

Rules 2-9-3; 2-9-4; 6-5-1; 6-5-2; 6-5-7

Case Book 6.5.7 Situation B & Comment

### **LINE OF SCRIMMAGE**

#### **A. Formations**

1. Officials should work to keep offensive linemen legal, and they should attempt to determine whether a Team A player is a lineman or a back, especially in the free-blocking zone. They should call formation fouls only when obvious or when warnings to players and coaches have been ignored.
2. At the snap, if a Team A player is clearly behind the rear of the snapper and obviously not on the line of scrimmage, the player is considered a back. If this causes Team A to have more than four backs, a foul should be called without warning.
3. Officials should not be technical when determining whether a wide receiver or slot back is off the line of scrimmage. When in question, work to determine that the formation is legal.
4. Wide receivers and slot backs lined up outside of a tight end should be ruled on the line of scrimmage and covering the tight end if there is no stagger between their alignment.
5. For routine plays, the formation is legal if there is any question.

6. Trick or unusual plays require the highest degree of scrutiny, and formations must be completely legal when teams run them.

#### APPLICABLE RULES

2-25-1; 2-25-2; 7-2-5

### **B. Movement and the Neutral Zone**

1. When in question as to whether an action is a false start or illegal motion, it is a false start.
2. If a defensive player, who is initially aligned tight to the line of scrimmage in the free-blocking zone, moves forward and the offense reacts and there is a question of whether the defense encroached before the offense false started, penalize the defense for encroachment.
3. When in question, a quick or abrupt movement by the snapper or quarterback is a false start, and a foul should be called if it causes a reaction from the defense.
4. When a back moves or shifts so abruptly that it looks like action normally occurs at the snap, it is a false start, especially if it causes a reaction by the defense.

#### PLAY SITUATIONS

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** Running back A43 takes a legal position in the backfield. After all Team A players are set for one second, QB A9 goes under center and begins his snap count. Before the ball is snapped, A43 abruptly moves forward about two steps, as if he were charging forward at the snap. **RULING:** False start by A43.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** Running back A43 takes a legal position in the backfield. After all Team A players are set for one second, QB A9 goes under center and begins his snap count. A43 begins in motion toward the sideline. Before the ball is snapped, A43 abruptly turns up field and moves forward as if he were charging forward at the snap. QB A9 then snaps the ball. **RULING:** False start by A43.

**CASE PLAY 3 . . .** Running back A43 takes a legal position in the backfield. After all Team A players are set for one second, QB A9 goes under center and begins his snap count. A43 begins in motion toward the sideline using a “side-step” motion. When the ball is snapped, A43, still in a side-step motion, has veered slightly toward the line of scrimmage. **RULING:** Illegal motion by A43. Although A43 is moving forward, his movement toward the line is not abrupt, quick, or jerky, and he is not simulating a charge or action at the snap.

#### APPLICABLE RULES

2-8; 7-1-6; 7-1-7

## C. Disconcertion

Before the snap, Team B players may not use disconcerting acts or words in an attempt to interfere with Team A's signals or movements. The rule does not prevent defensive communications or movements. The defense may move quickly and abruptly. However, defensive acts or words may not be used to interfere with offensive pre-snap actions. When deciding whether the defense has committed a disconcertion foul, officials should consider the following:

1. Players aligned in a stationary position and near the line of scrimmage may not make quick, abrupt, or exaggerated actions that are not part of normal defensive player movement.
2. Defensive signals should not simulate the sound or cadence of, or otherwise interfere with, offensive starting signals.
3. Down and distance is a factor.
4. If the defensive action is a foul for disconcertion but the offense does not react in any way, a foul need not be called. However, the players and the defensive Head Coach should be warned that this action is a foul and will be called if repeated.

### PLAY SITUATIONS

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** LB B56 is stationary and close to the neutral zone. As the offense is calling signals, B56 (a) stomps his foot hard on the ground; or (b) abruptly moves forward and stops in an obvious attempt to cause the offense to false start. In neither situation is B56 trying to time the snap. On seeing this action, LG A62 flinches. **RULING:** Foul for Disconcertion in both (a) and (b).

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** Team B has three down linemen up against the neutral zone. After the QB goes under center, all three defensive linemen quickly and abruptly shift to the right without any strange movement. On seeing this action, LG A62 flinches. **RULING:** False Start on A62. The defense may move quickly and abruptly if all actions are part of normal football movements.

**CASE PLAY 3 . . .** Team B has three down linemen up against the neutral zone. After the QB goes under center, all three defensive linemen quickly and abruptly shift to the right. While shifting, the linemen raise up, make exaggerated hand motions, and then go back to the ground. Meanwhile, teammate B55, who is near the line, flinches his arm forward as if he were about to advance. On seeing this action, A62 flinches. **RULING:** Foul for Disconcertion. Although Team B may legally shift and shift abruptly, the exaggerated non-football movements by the linemen and LB B55 are not allowed and indicate an attempt to cause the offense to false start.

## APPLICABLE RULE

7-1-9

### PASSING PLAYS

#### A. Defensive Pass Interference (DPI)

Actions constituting defensive pass interference involve contact with an opponent that materially affects the receiver's ability to catch the pass or play the ball. It does not include incidental contact or other actions having no material effect on the play. Defensive pass interference actions generally fall into one of the following six categories:

1. **Not Playing the Ball (NPB).** Early contact by a defender who is not playing the ball regardless of how deep the pass is thrown to the receiver.
2. **Playing Through the Back (PTB).** Early contact by a defender who runs through the back of the defender while attempting to make a play on the ball.
3. **Grab and Restrict (GR).** Grabbing and restricting an offensive player's arm or body in such a manner that restricts the player's opportunity to catch the pass.
4. **Arm Bar (AB).** Extending an arm across the receiver's body in such a manner as to restrict the receiver's ability to catch the pass, regardless of whether the defender is attempting to play the ball.
5. **Cut Off (CO).** Early contact involving cutting off or riding the receiver out of the path of the ball without playing the ball.
6. **Hook and Turn (HT).** Hooking the receiver in a manner that causes the receiver's body to turn prior to the ball arriving without playing the ball.

## APPLICABLE RULES

7-5-7; 7-5-8; 7-5-9; 7-5-10; 7-5-11

#### B. Offensive Pass Interference (OPI)

Actions constituting offensive pass interference involve contact with an opponent in situations materially putting the defense at an unfair disadvantage. Offensive pass interference actions generally fall into one of the following four categories:

1. **Creating Separation (CS).** Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing off and creating separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
2. **Driving Through (DT).** Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.
3. **Blocking Downfield (BD).** Blocking downfield (other than when legally blocking in the expanded neutral zone under Rule 7-5-11-b) during or prior to



a pass that legally crosses the neutral zone. A foul should not be called for blocking downfield if an overthrown and incomplete screen pass crosses the neutral zone unless the pass lands near or beyond the area of the block, and the block reasonably prevents the defender from catching the ball.

4. **Pick Play (PP).** Picking off a defender who is attempting to cover a receiver. A foul will not be called for a pick play if the defender is blocking the offensive player when the pick occurs, and the offensive player does not make a separate action.

#### APPLICABLE RULES

7-5-7; 7-5-8; 7-5-9; 7-5-10; 7-5-11

### **C. Ineligible Downfield Players (IDP)**

1. An ineligible receiver is illegally downfield when his entire body is clearly more than two yards downfield before a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone is in flight.
2. A foul should not be called for an ineligible receiver being illegally downfield **when** an overthrown and incomplete screen pass crosses the neutral zone.
3. A foul should not be called for an ineligible receiver being illegally downfield when a passer is legally throwing the ball away out of bounds and the ball lands near or beyond the sideline.
4. When in question, the ineligible receiver is not illegally downfield.

#### PLAY SITUATIONS

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** Team A snaps from the A-30. During the play, A56 blocks a defensive lineman. As a result of the block, A56's right foot is at the A-32 ½ but his left remains behind the A-32. After this, A9 passes the ball to A88, who catches it at the A-37. **RULING:** Legal play. A56 was not entirely beyond the expanded neutral zone before A9 passed the ball.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** Team A snaps from the A-30. During the play, A56 blocks a defensive lineman. As a result of the block, A56's entire body is at the A-33 with no part of him behind the A-32. A56 breaks from his block and retreats to his line of scrimmage. A9 then throws a pass that crosses the neutral zone. **RULING:** Foul for ineligible downfield player because A56's entire body was clearly beyond the expanded neutral zone before A9 passed the ball.

**CASE PLAY 3 . . .** Team A snaps from the A-30. QB A9 is chased toward the sideline and outside of the lateral boundary of the free blocking zone. To avoid being tackled behind the line of scrimmage, A-9 throws a forward pass from the A-26 that lands beyond the neutral zone (a) out of bounds; (b) inbounds within one yard of the sideline; or (c) inbounds and five yards from the sideline. Before the pass was released, A56 and A79 were at least three yards downfield.

**RULING:** A-9's pass is legal. In (a) and (b), there is no foul for A56 and A79 being illegally downfield because A9's legal pass was landed out of bounds or near the sideline. In (c) officials should call a foul for A56 and A79 being illegally downfield because A9's pass landed inbounds and not near the sideline.

#### **D. Intentional Grounding (ING)**

1. If the passer is clearly contacted before he starts his throwing motion, it is a foul for intentional grounding if the pass is thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver.
2. If the passer is contacted after he starts his throwing motion, it may be ruled that there is no foul for intentional grounding because of the contact.
3. There is no specific distance for determining whether an eligible receiver is in the area of a forward pass. However, any distance should be reasonable based on judgment, experience, and common sense. Do not be overly technical in making this decision.
4. For an eligible receiver to be considered in the area of a forward pass when the pass ends in the field of play, the receiver must be close enough to the pass to reasonably be able to move toward and attempt to reach the ball if he knew that a pass was thrown. **However, the receiver is not required to attempt to reach or play the ball, know the location of the ball, or know that the pass was thrown.**
5. For an eligible receiver to be considered in the area of a forward pass when the pass is thrown high and out of bounds, the pass must be thrown in the general direction of the receiver and the receiver must be between the sideline and the numbers.
6. If a pass being legally thrown away out of bounds would have crossed the neutral zone extended but for being obstructed by something on or beyond the sideline other than the ground, consider the pass as reaching the neutral zone.
7. When a passer has been beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone and is legally throwing the ball away, do not be overly technical in determining whether the pass reaches the neutral zone or the sideline. However, when an incomplete pass is clearly short of the neutral zone and no eligible receiver is in the area, intentional grounding has occurred.
8. Generally, a quarterback moves beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone by taking three normal, lateral steps from his starting position. Additionally, the lateral field positions can be referenced to determine if a passer has moved beyond the boundary (see pages 160 through 162 for a detailed explanation of the lateral field positions).
9. A passer has been beyond the lateral boundary only when he possesses the ball beyond the lateral boundary and subsequently passes it.

## PLAY SITUATIONS

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** A9 drops back to pass. He scrambles to the right while being chased by B40, who grabs A9 and attempts to pull him down. After B40 grabs him, A9 throws the ball forward incomplete into an area not occupied by a Team A eligible receiver. **RULING:** Intentional grounding.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** A9 drops back to pass. He scrambles to the right while being chased by B40. While on the run, A9 begins a passing motion. Before he can release the pass, he is hit by B40. A9's arm moves forward, and the ball falls incomplete in an area not occupied by a Team A eligible receiver. **RULING:** No foul for intentional grounding because B40's contact affected the pass after the throwing motion had started.

**CASE PLAY 3 . . .** Team A snaps from the middle of the field. A9 drops back to pass. While under a heavy rush, A9 throws a forward pass that lands beyond the neutral zone and in the side zone at the numbers. The nearest eligible receiver, A88, is in the middle of the field. Before throwing the pass, (a) A9 never moved beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone; or (b) A9 scrambled to his right into the side zone with the ball. **RULING:** In (a), foul for intentional grounding. To be legal the pass must be thrown into an area occupied by an eligible receiver, and A88 is too far away to reasonably have an opportunity to play the ball at the numbers. In (b), legal play. A9 had been outside the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone before throwing a pass, which reached the neutral zone.

**CASE PLAY 4 . . .** Team A snaps from the middle of the field. A9 drops back to pass and is chased into the side zone. A9 throws a pass that lands (a) three yards behind the neutral zone near RB A32; (b) one foot short of the line of scrimmage with no eligible receiver in the area; or (c) is clearly short of the line with no eligible receiver in the area. **RULING:** Legal in both (a) and (b). Foul for intentional grounding in (c). In (a), A9 threw the pass into an area occupied by an eligible receiver. A9 is not required to throw the pass beyond the neutral zone in this situation. In (b), the pass lands close enough to the neutral zone for purposes of this rule. In (c), the pass is clearly short of the neutral zone.

**CASE PLAY 5 . . .** Team A snaps from the middle of the field. QB A9 drops straight back to pass and fumbles the ball, which stays inside the lateral boundaries of the free-blocking zone. A88, who was beyond the lateral boundary at the snap, runs inside, picks up the ball, and throws the ball from the middle of the field beyond the neutral zone to an area with no eligible receiver. **RULING:** Foul for intentional grounding. The exception to legally throw the ball away applies only to a passer who has been beyond the lateral boundary of the free blocking zone. A passer is a player who passes the ball, and he must have possession of the ball to be a passer. Because A88 never possessed the ball outside the lateral boundary, he was never a passer who had

been beyond the lateral boundary.

APPLICABLE RULES:

2-32-11; 7-5-2 & Exception 2

**E. Forward and Backward Pass**

1. A pass is forward if its initial direction is forward, even if it first contacts a player, official, or the ground behind the yard line from which it was thrown.
2. When the passer begins a forward pass throwing motion, and subsequent contact by a defender causes the pass to go backward, it is a forward pass.

APPLICABLE RULES:

2-31-2 & Note

**PENALTY ENFORCEMENT**

**A. Fouls During and After Touchdown But Before Try**

1. Penalties for fouls by the defensive opponent of the scoring team during a down ending in a touchdown and penalties for all fouls occurring after a touchdown but before the Try begins may be enforced either on the Try or the subsequent kickoff.
2. When a team may enforce multiple penalties for such fouls, all penalties for its opponent's fouls must be enforced together either on the Try or on the subsequent kickoff.
3. A team may not enforce some penalties for such fouls on the Try and others on the subsequent kickoff.

PLAY SITUATION:

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** Immediately after A32 scores a touchdown, B56 unnecessarily and forcefully knocks A32 to the ground. B56 then stands over A32 and flexes. The Back Judge flags B56 for a dead ball personal foul and for unsportsmanlike conduct. The Team A coach requests one penalty be enforced on the Try and the other penalty be enforced on the kickoff. **RULING:** Request denied. Because both fouls occurred before the Try began, they must both be enforced together either on the Try or the subsequent kickoff. One penalty may not be "banked" for a later enforcement.

APPLICABLE RULES:

8-2-2; 8-2-3; 8-2-4; 8-2-5

## PERSONAL FOULS

### A. Targeting (TGT)

Targeting is an act by any player who takes aim and initiates contact above the shoulders with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow, or shoulders. While not definitive, a player attacking an opponent while doing any of the following are high-risk indicators of targeting:

1. **Launching.** Leaving the ground to initiate contact.
2. **Thrusting.** Without leaving the ground, crouching and thrusting upward to initiate contact.
3. **Leading.** Attacking an opponent while leading with his helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow, or shoulders.
4. **Head Dip.** Immediately before initiating contact, lowering the helmet so that its crown (top portion) initiates contact with the opponent.

Spearing is an act by any player who takes aim and initiates contact against an opponent at the shoulders or below with the crown (top portion) of the helmet.

### APPLICABLE RULES

2-20-1; 2-20-2

### B. Blindside Blocks (BSB)

A blindside block is a foul when all of the following are present:

1. The player being blocked does not see the block coming or does not see it with a reasonable amount of time to defend himself.
2. The block is not initiated with open hands, meaning that the force of the block is not generated from the hands or extended arms.
3. The block does not occur in the free-blocking zone.
4. The block is forceful.

Officials should be alert for the possibility of blindside blocks occurring on change of possession plays (including kick plays) and when the offense reverses direction.

### PLAY SITUATIONS:

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** On a punt return, R20 is running while being pursued by K30. R56 runs toward K30 from outside K30's vision. As he approaches, R56 lowers his shoulder and throws a hard block against K30, "going through" K30 with his shoulder. Just before impact, K30 turned his head and saw R56.

**RULING:** Foul for Illegal Blindside Block. Although K30 saw R56 just before contact, he did not see him with enough time to reasonably defend himself.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** On a punt return, R20 is running while being pursued by K30. R56 runs toward K30 from outside of K30's vision. As he approaches, R56 lowers his shoulder and throws a hard block against K30 and "goes through" K30. Just before impact, R56 raises his right hand, and his open hand makes first contact with K30's chest. **RULING:** Foul for Illegal Blindside Block. Although R56's open hand made first contact, the force of the block came from R56's body and shoulder, which is the type of forceful contact the rule is intended to prohibit. The requirement that a legal blindside block be initiated with open hands is to reduce the violent force associated with the block. It is not intended to allow an otherwise illegal block to become legal.

**APPLICABLE RULES:**

2-3-10; 9-4-3-n.

**C. Fighting (FGT)**

1. It is always a foul for fighting when a player swings at an opponent with a closed fist.
2. Opposing players scuffling with each other in the continuing action following a play is generally not fighting, even though they may contact each other forcibly with open hands, and even though the action may be a personal foul for unnecessary roughness. However, a player has committed fighting if he either swings at his opponent with a closed fist; attempts to strike his opponent in a combative, non-football manner after the opponent has withdrawn from the scuffle; or when there has been a break in the action.
3. When in question, the player is not fighting.

**D. Roughing the Passer (RPS)**

The following are examples are actions constituting a foul for roughing the passer:

1. The defender is late and attempts to punish the passer.
2. The defender forcibly contacts the passer's head or neck area, even if the action is not targeting.
3. The defender forcibly drives the passer into the ground and lands on him in an unnecessary manner.

**APPLICABLE RULES**

9-4-3(g); 9-4-4

**E. Roughing or Running Into the Kicker (RRK / RNK)**

1. It is a foul for *roughing* the kicker when a Team R player makes forcible contact to the kicker's plant leg, regardless of whether the kicker's plant leg is on the ground.

2. It is a foul for *roughing* the kicker if there is forcible contact to the kicker's body.
3. It is a foul for *running* into the kicker if a Team R player runs through the kicker's kicking leg without forcible contact.
4. It is a foul for *running* into the kicker if Team R player displaces the kicker without forcible contact or gets into the kicker's space and prevents the kicker from cleanly returning to the ground.

#### **F. Miscellaneous**

1. When in question, a player is defenseless.
2. When in question regarding timing of personal fouls away from the ball near the end of a play, the foul should be considered a dead-ball foul rather than a live-ball foul.

### **SPECIAL / TRICK PLAYS**

1. Trick or unusual plays require the highest degree of scrutiny.

### **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT (UNS)**

#### **A. Players**

High school football is a game of high emotion played by exceptionally talented teenagers. Officials should not be overly technical in applying the rules, but they should always be aware of conduct that does not exemplify the highest principles of sportsmanship and ethics of competition. In determining whether an action rises to the level of a foul, officials should consider the following:

1. Allow for brief, spontaneous, emotional reactions at the end of a play.
2. Penalize acts that are clearly prolonged or self-congratulatory and those that make a mockery of the game.
3. The following actions are unsportsmanlike conduct that should always be penalized without warning:
  - Throat slash
  - Demonstrations of violence, such as "six guns" or "machine gun"
  - Removal of helmet to celebrate or protest
  - "Heisman pose"
  - Gestures with sexual connotation
  - Dancing
  - Somersault or flip
  - High step
  - Dunking the ball over the crossbar

- Spiking or spinning the ball
  - Any act that is clearly intended to taunt or demean an opponent or show disrespect to an opponent or the game
4. Spitting on an opponent is a flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct foul requiring disqualification.

### APPLICABLE RULES

2-16-2(c); 9-5-1 & Pen.

## **B. Coaches**

The Coaches Code of Ethics calls for coaches to respect and support contest officials. They are not to indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. When having contact with officials, coaches are called upon to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.

Mutual respect and appropriate communication must be part of any dialogue between coaches and officials. Coaches may ask questions, and officials should make every effort to provide correct and complete answers as soon as possible.

Coaches will understandably disagree and legitimately express disagreement with officiating decisions during the game. However, there is no place for excessive demonstrations and abusive comments directed toward the game officials in these situations.

Coaches needing to have conversations about officiating must do so from the team box or restricted area outside the field of play. Coaches and other non-players who leave this area to protest or debate an officiating decision commit an unsportsmanlike conduct foul that officials should automatically penalize.

### PLAY SITUATIONS:

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** RB A27 runs to the B-10 where he is tackled inbounds near the hash mark. After the play, the Team A Head Coach (a) runs onto the field about five yards; (b) runs down the sideline to the B-10 yard line but remains out of bounds; or (c) remains out of bounds in his team's area. In (a), (b), and (c), the Head Coach yells at the officiating crew for missing an apparent facemask foul on the tackle. **RULING:** Automatic foul for Unsportsmanlike Conduct in (a) and (b) for protesting or debating an officiating decision while outside the team box or restricted area. There is no foul in (c) because the Head Coach remained in his team's area.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** RB A27 runs to the B-45 for a first down. After the play, the Team B defensive coach curses at the Line Judge for not calling a holding foul. The coach remains in this team area the whole time. **RULING:** Foul for Unsportsmanlike Conduct. Although the coach did not leave the area to protest



or debate an officiating decision, he may not act in an obviously unacceptable and abusive manner when addressing an official.

#### APPLICABLE RULES

9-8-1-a; 9-8-1-c; 9-8-1-d; 9-8-1-i; 9-8-1-k

### **C. Unsportsmanlike Conduct Involving Multiple Individuals**

When multiple players from one team take part in one organized unsportsmanlike act, only one unsportsmanlike act has occurred, and only one fifteen-yard penalty should be assessed for that act. However, each player involved in the act is charged with one unsportsmanlike conduct foul that counts toward possible disqualification.

#### PLAY SITUATIONS:

**CASE PLAY 1 . . .** After a touchdown, five Team A players run to the end zone and begin doing a series of push-ups. The Back Judge throws a flag for Unsportsmanlike Conduct. **RULING:** All five players involved in the push-ups are charged with one unsportsmanlike conduct foul. Because the push-ups were part of one organized act, only one fifteen-yard penalty will be enforced, either on the Try or subsequent kickoff at Team B's option.

**CASE PLAY 2 . . .** After a touchdown, five Team A players run to the end zone and begin doing a series of push-ups. The Back Judge throws a flag for Unsportsmanlike Conduct. After, as the players are walking back to their sideline, A39 does a series of backflips on the field on the way to his team bench. The Line Judge throws a flag for Unsportsmanlike Conduct. **RULING:** All five players involved in the push-ups are charged with one unsportsmanlike conduct foul. A39's backflipping is another unsportsmanlike act that is separate from and unrelated to the push-ups. As a result, Team B can enforce two fifteen-yard penalties—one for the push-ups and one for A39's separate backflips—which will both be enforced either on the Try or the subsequent kickoff. The penalties are not split between the Try and the subsequent kickoff. If A39 was involved in the push-ups, his backflips constitute a second foul for Unsportsmanlike Conduct resulting in his disqualification.

# **PART THREE**

## **ON-FIELD MECHANICS**



# MECHANICS POINTS OF EMPHASIS

## Intentional Grounding and Legally Throwing the Ball Away

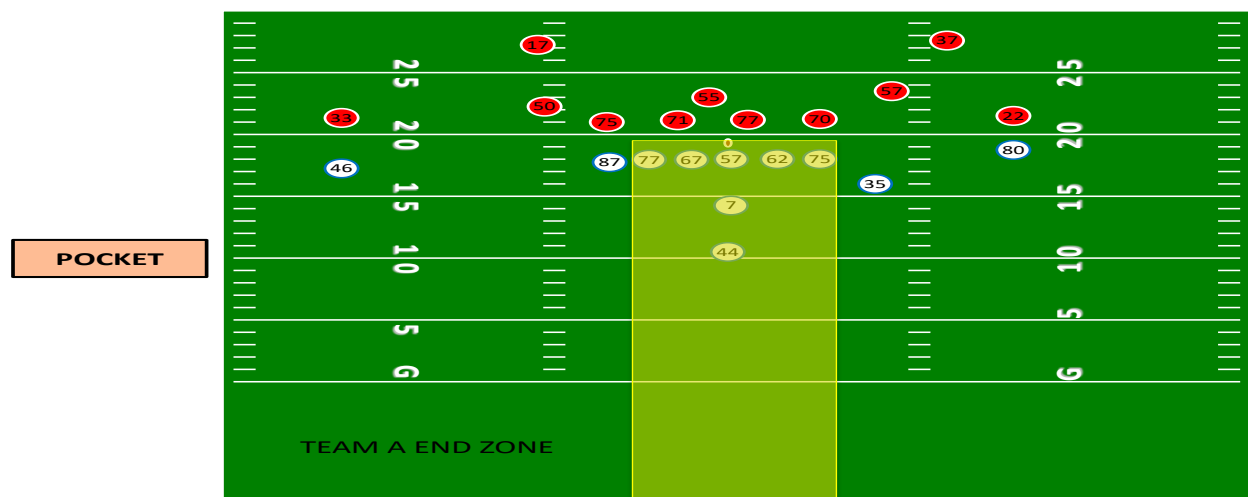
National Federation rules have long required a passer to throw a forward pass into an area occupied by an eligible receiver. The rules later were amended to allow a player directly behind the snapper to catch the snap and immediately spike the ball to stop the clock, but the basic requirement that a pass be thrown to an area with an eligible receiver stayed.

This year, National Federation adopted an exception allowing passers who move outside the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone (an area often referred to as the “pocket” or “tackle box”) to legally throw the ball away to avoid a loss of yardage. This exception is similar to what collegiate and professional rules allow a passer to do.

Under the new exception, what a passer must do to throw a legal forward pass depends on whether he has stayed inside or gone outside the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone in possession of the ball during the down.

- **INSIDE PASSER**: For a passer who never possesses the ball beyond the lateral boundary, the pass must be thrown to an area occupied by an eligible offensive receiver to be legal.
- **OUTSIDE PASSER**: For a passer who has possessed the ball beyond the lateral boundary, the pass must reach the neutral zone, which extends indefinitely beyond the sideline.

For purposes of this rule, the lateral boundaries of the free-blocking zone extend to Team A’s end line, and they disintegrate only when the passer in possession of the ball has moved beyond a boundary. The following diagram demonstrates the area:



The exception is not limited to the Quarterback or the player who first possesses the snap. Any passer may use the exception as long as that passer has been beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone while possessing the ball and subsequently passes the ball. Also, a player who runs beyond the neutral zone and then returns behind the neutral zone may legally throw the ball away under this exception as long as that player has been beyond the lateral boundary while possessing the ball. Remember, however, that Team A may throw only one legal forward pass during a down.

Officiating this play requires participation and communication from the entire crew. Normally, it will be the sideline and deep officials who determine whether a pass was in an area occupied by an eligible receiver and whether a pass reaches the neutral zone. Covering officials should visibly point to an eligible receiver in the area. They should also communicate that a pass has reached the neutral zone. Additionally, those officials should report that information to the Referee. When there is no official in the area and the ball has not reached the neutral zone, the covering official should run to the Referee as if the official were reporting a foul and provide all information. The Referee will then decide whether to call a foul for intentional grounding.

Remember that once a passer is beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone while possessing the ball, the lateral boundaries disintegrate. The player may then legally throw the ball away under the exception even if he moves back inside the original lateral boundaries. Remember that if a pass is thrown to an area occupied by an eligible receiver, there can never be a foul for intentional grounding, even if the pass does not reach the neutral zone.

Further guidance is located in the Philosophy section at Part II of this manual.

### **Lateral Positions**

To promote consistency and assist with returning the ball to the correct previous spot when necessary, officials should be aware of both the yard line and the lateral position within the hash marks where the ball was snapped. For reference, there are five lateral positions on a field that run from end line to end line: (1) the hash marks on the press box side of the field; (2) the goal post on the press box side of the field; (3) the middle of the field; (4) the goal post opposite the press box; and (5) the hash marks opposite the press box. When possible, the ball should be spotted on one of these five positions on a yard line. Referees and Umpires should wear a second down indicator to reference the lateral spot of the ball at the snap. More information on this topic is located in Part IV of this manual.

### **Penalty Enforcement and Spots**

Strive for perfect enforcement of penalties. Initial responsibility for enforcing penalties belongs to the Umpire, Head Linesman, and Line Judge, but the entire crew is fully responsible for all enforcements. The decision to call a foul involves judgment and discretion. The enforcement of a penalty, however, requires no judgment. It

involves only straight-forward application of written rules. This part of the game should always be administered correctly. Officials must be knowledgeable of the rules involving penalty enforcements, especially those explaining the enforcement spot. It is not enough that officials enforce a penalty from the correct yard line; they must also enforce it from the correct spot on the correct yard line. Know when a penalty must be enforced from the previous spot, succeeding spot, or spot of the foul. When calling a foul, adjust your flag to the correct spot before informing the Referee of your call. Work at enforcing penalties correctly and efficiently, but never speed through the process. If any official believes a mistake has been made, bring it to the crew's attention before moving on.

### **Processing Catches and Fouls**

To complete a catch, a receiver must complete a three-step process. First, the receiver must secure firm control of the ball. Second, he must touch the ground in bounds while having firm control of the ball. Third, he must then maintain possession of the ball long enough to make a “football move” common to the game.

For an upright receiver attempting to catch a ball while in stride, time is the biggest factor in determining whether the receiver has maintained possession. If the player loses control of the ball too quickly after being contacted, he has not caught the ball.

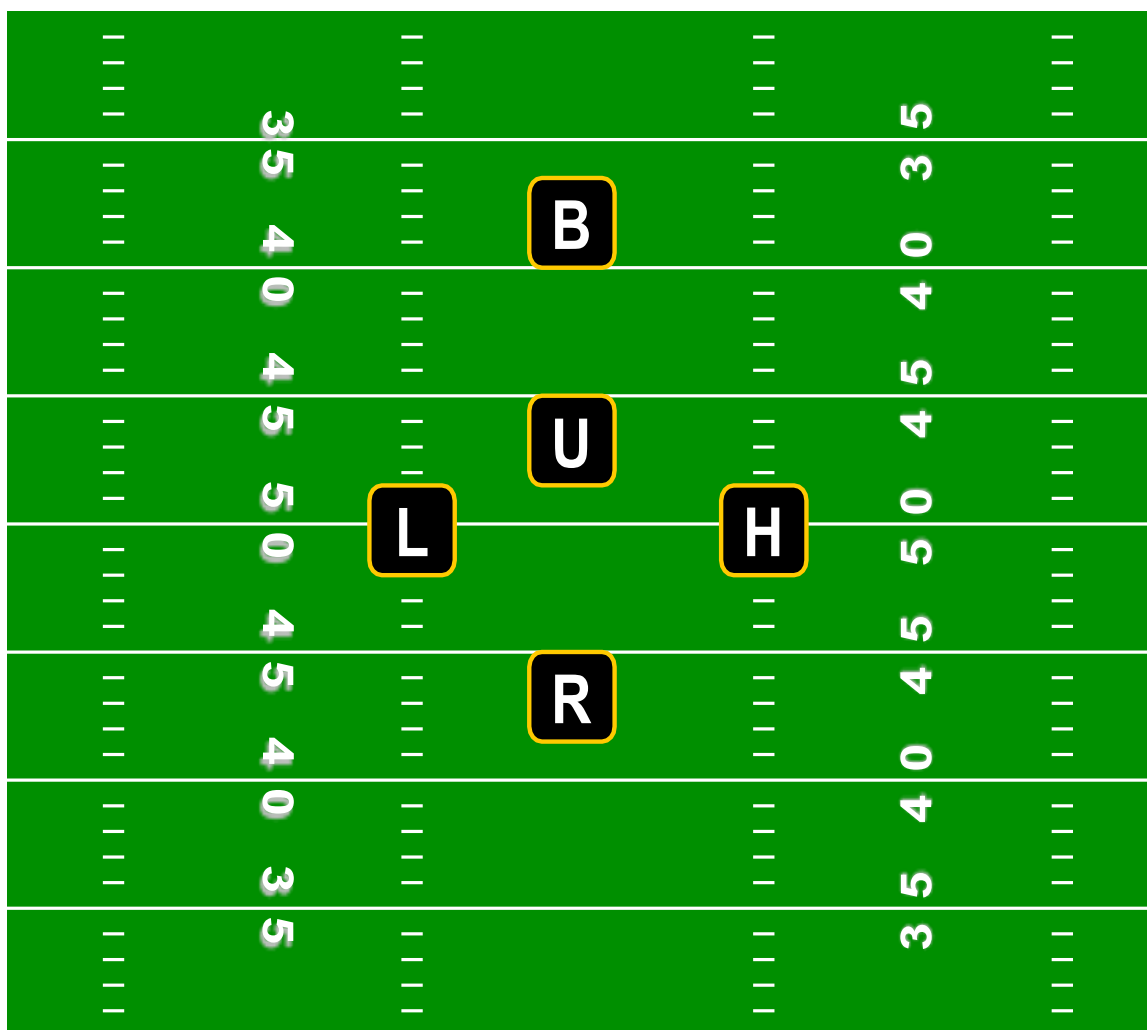
An airborne receiver going to the ground and attempting to catch the ball must “survive the ground” by maintaining secure control of the ball after contacting the ground. He may also make an exaggerated second act with the ball (such as extending it toward a goal line or line to gain) to demonstrate he has maintained control of the ball. Only then has a receiver going to the ground completed a catch.

When ruling on a catch, do not be quick in making your decision. The receiver must complete a process. Officials must complete a process as well and make sure that all three parts of the catch process have occurred. Securing control of the ball in the end zone does not change this process—the receiver must still touch the ground inbounds and maintain possession or survive the ground. If it is not a catch at midfield, it is not a catch in the end zone. Be sure to be in good position to observe the player's feet and control of the ball. Follow a receiver out of bounds to make sure he has maintained control of the ball. Take your time, process the entire action, and then make your decision.

Use a similar process when calling fouls requiring a greater level of judgment, such as holding and pass interference. Do not be quick to throw flags based on your first view of action or of action that you saw late. Never be overly technical. Instead, observe and process the entire action from start to finish and then determine whether the action rises to the level of a foul requiring the officiating crew to intervene. Use the categories located in the Philosophy section at Part II of the manual to help judge the action you observe.



# CREW OF FIVE OFFICIATING MECHANICS



## 2022 FOOTBALL SEASON

# MECHANICS CHANGES FOR 2022

## CHANGES FROM THE PREVIOUS MANUAL

### NORMAL FREE KICK MECHANICS

Clarified that the Referee may line up in the end zone when a receiver or the kick is likely to threaten the goal line, and that the Head Linesman and Line Judge are responsible for the goal line plane.....36—37

### SWINGING GATE MECHANICS

Added mechanics for when Team A or K present in a swinging gate formation ..... 53—54

# **LOUISIANA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL OFFICIALS MECHANICS FOR AN ON-FIELD CREW OF FIVE**

Significant Changes From the Previous Manual are **Highlighted**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

These mechanics have been approved by the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (“LHSAA”) and the Louisiana High School Officials Association (“LHSOA”) after much research and discussion. They are intended to be easy to understand, allow for consistent use, and provide maximum field coverage for high school football. Unless written, specific authorization has been given otherwise, all local officiating associations are to apply these mechanics for use in all varsity football contests.

The on-field officiating crew of five includes a Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, Line Judge, and Back Judge. Unless stated otherwise, the Line Judge works on the press box sideline, and the Head Linesman works on the sideline opposite the press box.

## **II. PREPARATION LEADING UP TO GAME DAY**

### **A. Referee Contact With Home Management**

At least two days before a varsity contest, the Referee should contact the Home Team Athletic Director to verify logistical information about the game and matters pertaining to the officiating crew. The conversation should not involve plays or rule interpretations, as the head coaches from each team will have an opportunity to discuss those matters with the Referee at the game site. A sample outline of the conversation is in Part Four of this manual.

### **B. Individual and Crew Preparation**

All officials should take time during the week to prepare for the upcoming contest, because the limited crew pregame conference at the game site is never the time to begin getting ready. Review game film, continue studying the rules, and know the appropriate philosophies and mechanics in advance of the game. Follow any additional rules and instructions from your local association, your Regional Coordinator of Officials (“RCO”), and the LHSAA.

### **C. Crew Coordination**

The crew should discuss well in advance of the day of the game when and where the officials will meet for traveling to and arriving at the game site. Make sure to arrive at the designated location in ahead of the scheduled time.



## **D. Alcoholic Beverages and Drugs**

Alcoholic beverages and drugs that may hinder physical or mental capacity may not be consumed the day of any game at any level of play. Never purchase alcoholic beverages or enter an establishment that serves such beverages while wearing any part of a recognizable officiating uniform.

## **III. AFTER ARRIVAL AT GAME SITE**

### **A. Arrival and Pregame Conferences**

The entire crew, including clock operators, shall arrive at the game site at least 90 minutes before game time.

Upon arrival at the game site, the crew will conduct a pregame conference led by the Referee with all on-field officials and clock operators participating. A sample officials' pregame conference checklist is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

No later than 45 minutes remaining before game time, the Referee and Umpire will conduct the Pregame Administrative Conference ("PAC") with game day management, representatives of each team, security personnel, contracted and medical personnel from each team, and, if applicable, any broadcast production representatives. A sample checklist for the PAC is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

No later than 30 remaining before game time, the Referee and Umpire will conduct a conference with each Head Coach of each team, beginning with the home team. The Referee will discuss any necessary items with the Head Coach. The Umpire will obtain in writing each Head Coach's verification that all of his team's players are legally equipped and in compliance with all necessary requirements. A minimum, suggested pregame conference checklist is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

### **B. Individual Official's Pregame and Auxiliary Game Duties**

After any respective conferences, officials will complete the following pregame responsibilities:

**Referee:** Secure and approve the game balls, inspect the playing field and pylons, and order the removal of any hazards on or near the field.

**Umpire:** Check player equipment and rule on any questions regarding its legality.

**Head Linesman:** Secure and check the line-to-gain equipment and review with the chain crew members their duties and responsibilities. Sample instructions to give the chain crew are in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

**Line Judge:** The Line Judge, together with the Back Judge, shall inspect the playing field and pylons, as well as the sideline and end line boundaries. The Line Judge and Back Judge shall locate and instruct the team ball handlers on their duties. During the game, the Line Judge shall maintain official time remaining in absence of a game clock operator or in case of a game clock malfunction.

**Back Judge:** The Back Judge, together with the Line Judge, shall inspect the playing field and pylons, as well as the sideline and end line boundaries. The Back Judge and Line Judge shall locate and instruct the team ball handlers on their duties. Observe the play clock while the Play Clock Operator is testing it. You are responsible for monitoring the play clock during the game. If there is no functional play clock that visibly displays both a 25- and 40-second count, time the play-clock interval yourself, raising your hand overhead when there are 10 seconds remaining. You are responsible for correct time and assisting in getting the game started on time. Time all time outs and intermissions during the game.

**Clock Operators:** Become familiar with the operation of the game clock and the play clock. Test each clock before the game and immediately report any problems to the Referee. Operate only the clocks. Do not operate other scoreboard functions.

- ***Game Clock Operator:*** Have a back-up timing device (countdown timer) suitable for timing the game should the game clock become inoperative. If the game clock becomes inoperative, move to the field and continue to time the game from a location on the field approximately 15 to 20 yards behind the Referee. If wearing the crew uniform, your penalty flag and bean bag should not be visible. When the crew enters the field 30 minutes prior to game time, start a visible 30-minute countdown on the game clock.
- ***Play Clock Operator:*** Have a backup timing device suitable to time the 40- or 25-second intervals between plays and when the ball is ready for play. If you have been assigned to a game and there is no functioning play clock, report to the Referee. You may be needed to time the play clock intervals using your backup timer from a position either on the sideline or on the field behind the Back Judge. If the play clock operator is not an official, the Back Judge shall conduct a pregame conference with him to instruct him in his duties following the crew's pregame conference.

**Crew:** No later than 30 minutes remaining before game time, the entire crew should be on the field. At least one member of the crew should always be present on the 50-yard line to observe both teams. Officials should take different positions around the field to observe the teams as they warm up, and they should not congregate or otherwise stand around aimlessly while teams are on the field.

When either team leaves the field, the crew should assemble at a location off the field and discuss any last-minute matters before the coin toss.

#### IV. COIN TOSS

Before the coin toss, the Line Judge and Back Judge will escort the teams to the sidelines according to the order stated at the PAC. The Line Judge will escort one team to the press box side, and the Back Judge will escort the other team to the side opposite the press box. Both teams should be on their sidelines no later than 5 minutes before the scheduled start of the game.

At 4 minutes before the scheduled start time, the Referee and Umpire should jog to the middle of the field from the press box sideline to conduct the coin toss. The Referee should enter from the right side of the press box, and the Umpire should enter from the left. The Line Judge and Back Judge will obtain a game ball for the kickoff and line up next to the speaking captains. The Head Linesman will line up on the right side of the team captains.

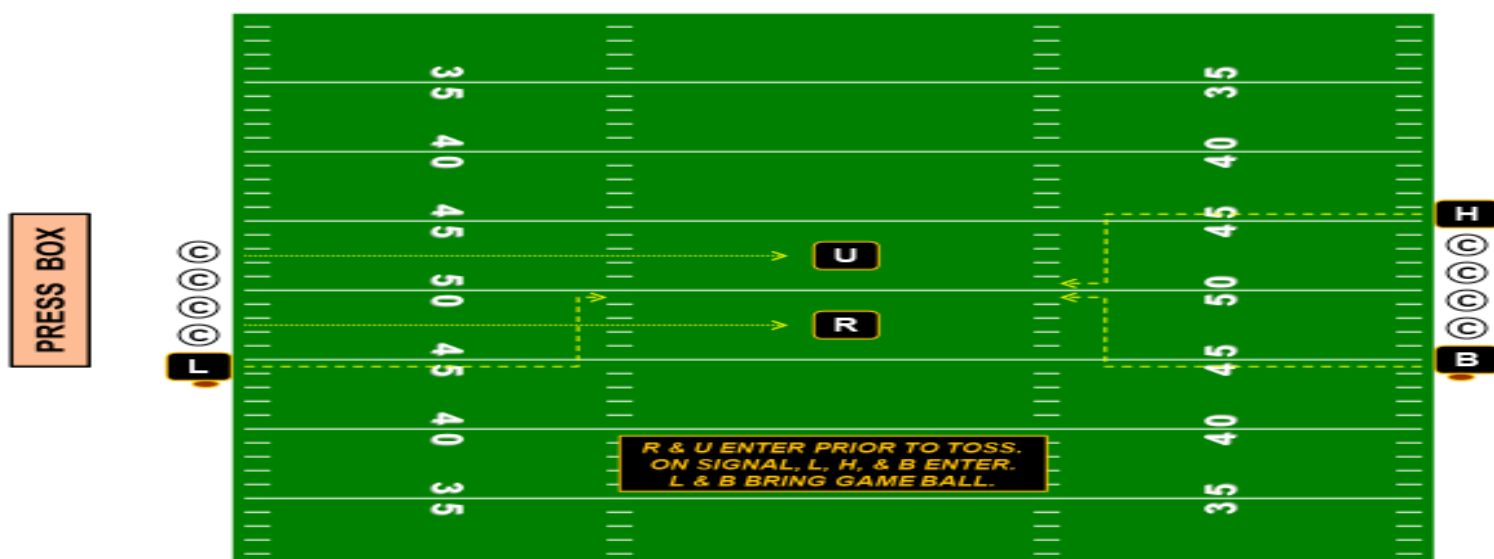
At the Referee's signal, the Head Linesman, Line Judge, and Back Judge will escort the team captains on to the field. The officials will stop at the hash marks and send the captains to the Referee and Umpire. The captains will face each other with their backs to their sidelines.

The visiting captain will call the toss. After, the Referee will toss the coin and then obtain each team's option. Officials will record the results and team choices.

If the National Anthem is played following the coin toss, all officials will stand at attention, facing the flag (or music source if there is no flag), with the cap held by the right hand over the left chest.

After, the crew will assemble at midfield for final instructions. Crewmembers will then break to their positions for the opening kickoff.

The officiating positions for the coin toss are illustrated in the following diagram:



## V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES

**Generally:** Signal to start the clock if you observe the kick being touched other than “first touching” in your area of responsibility. Mark a spot of “first touching” that you observe with your bean bag. If you observe the kick go out of bounds untouched by Team R, mark the spot the kick crossed the sideline with your penalty flag. The Referee, Line Judge, and Head Linesman should be ready to bean bag any spot of momentum within the 5-yard line.

### A. Normal Free Kicks

**Referee:** Starting position is on or behind Team R’s goal line and laterally between the goal posts based on the kicker’s position. When a receiver lines up inside Team R’s 10-yard line, or when you anticipate that the kick will threaten the goal line, move deeper into the end zone. Count Team R players with the Line Judge and Head Linesman and signal. Be sure that all officials are in position. Once the Back Judge hands the ball to the kicker and takes position at the sideline, sound your whistle to signal that the ball is ready for play. You are responsible for the play clock and for knowing whether Team K has at least four players on each side of the kicker when the ball is kicked.

After the ball is kicked, move laterally based on the kick’s direction to observe action setting up in front of the catch. Assist in observing the catch or recovery when in your area, but primarily observe action around and in front of the runner. Watch for illegal blocks, clips, forward handing, and other potential fouls. As the runner moves upfield into other officials’ areas, observe action behind the runner and off-ball activity. You are not responsible for determining whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R’s goal line.

**Umpire:** Starting position is on Team R’s free kick line outside the sideline opposite the press box. Count Team K with the Back Judge, and never allow the kickoff to proceed without the proper number of players. Be alert for encroachment by Team R, short kicks, onside kicks, and first touching.

When the ball is kicked, all Team K players have crossed Team R’s restraining line, and there is no longer a threat of an early block by Team K, move onto the field at an angle to a spot near the hash marks and no more than 8 to 10 yards up field. Observe action mainly toward the center of the field. Watch for illegal blocks and observe off-ball action in front of the runner as he approaches, working inside-out as on any running play. Move with the action as the play moves toward you, but you do not have goal line responsibility.

**Line Judge and Head Linesman:** Starting position is on Team R’s goal line at the pylon on your sideline. Count Team R players and signal to the Referee.

Cover the receiver touching, catching, or recovering the kick when in your area. You are responsible for determining whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R’s

goal line and for winding the clock when the ball is touched in your area.

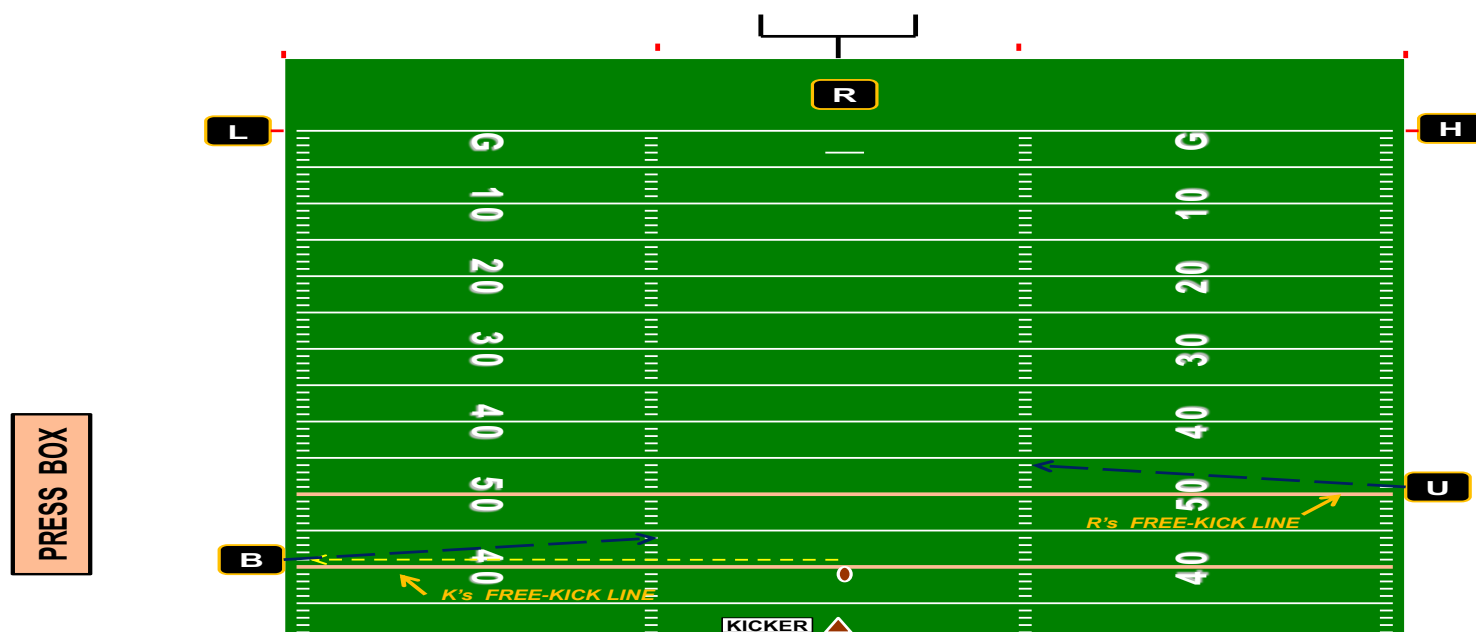
When the kick is deep and the goal line is threatened, stay near the pylon on the goal line to rule on a potential touchback. You must be on the goal line before the ball reaches the goal line. When it is obvious that the goal line is not threatened, or when the return begins, start moving down the sideline to cover the play. When not covering the action around the runner, look across the field for illegal blocks, holding clips, forward handing, off-ball action, and other potential fouls.

Be prepared to rule on kicks out of bounds on your sideline. You are responsible for forward progress to Team K's goal line.

**Back Judge:** Align Team K on their restraining line and hand the ball to the Kicker. Count Team K with the Umpire, and never allow the kickoff to proceed without the proper number of players. On the first kickoff, point out the Referee to the Kicker and explain kicking procedures. Make sure that all Team K players other than the kicker are within 5 yards of Team K's restraining line. Jog to a position on Team K's restraining line outside the sideline on the press box side of the field and signal the Referee when ready. Be alert for Team K encroachment and formation violations, short kicks, onside kicks, spots of first touching, and early blocking by Team K.

After the kick, run onto the field at an angle toward a spot near the hash marks and no more than 8 to 10 yards up field. Observe action mainly toward the center of the field including off-ball action. As the return develops, work inside-out as on any running play, staying alert for holding, illegal blocks, clips, and other potential fouls. Maintain a cushion, be in advance of the run at all times, and be on the goal line before the runner crosses it to rule on a possible touchdown.

The free kick positions are illustrated in the following diagram:



## B. Anticipated Short Free Kicks

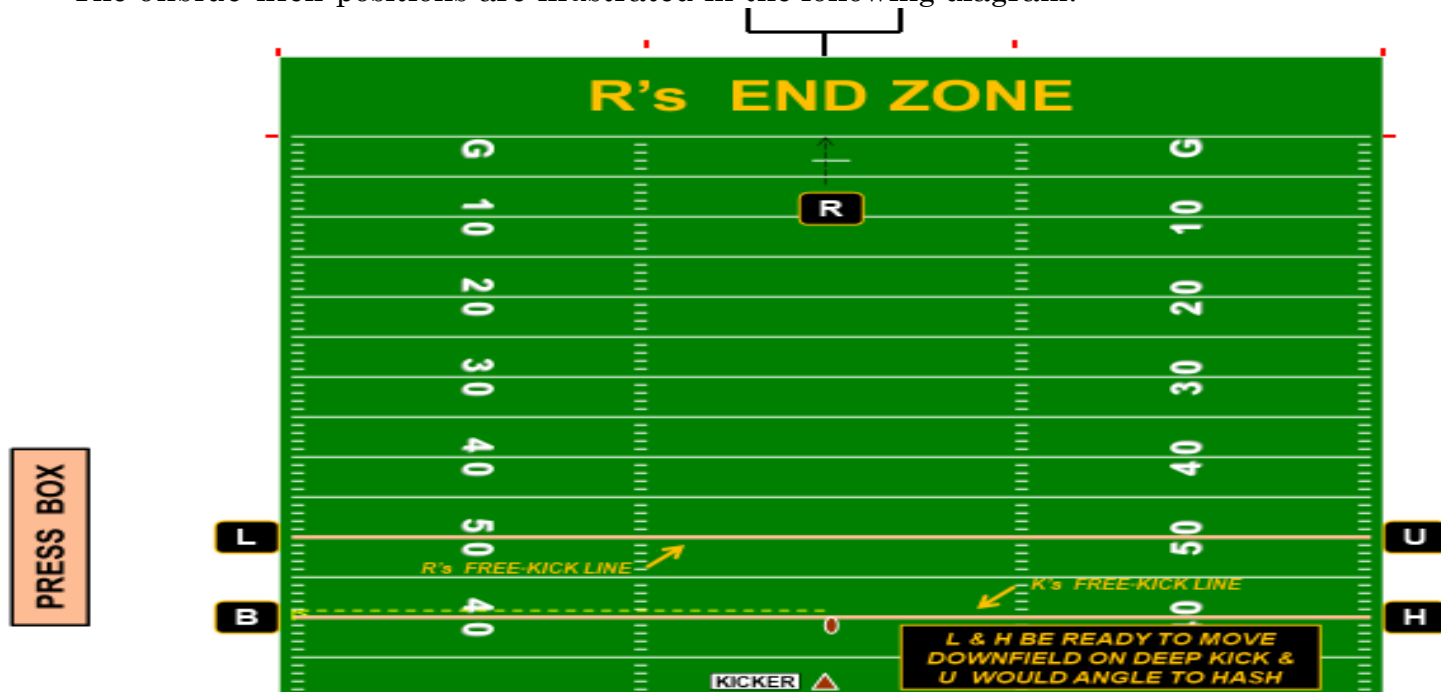
When an onside kick is likely, the Head Linesman moves to Team K's restraining line on or outside the sideline. The Line Judge will move to Team R's restraining line on or outside the sideline. The other officials will maintain their normal free kick positions, except that the Referee may move forward as needed.

**Referee:** Same primary duties as on a normal free kick. You are also responsible for Team R's goal line and end zone.

**Head Linesman and Back Judge:** Treat Team K's free-kick line as a plane and penalize if any Team K player (other than the kicker or holder) breaks the plane of the line before the ball is kicked. If the kick is moving in your direction, be alert for first touching and the catch or recovery. If the kick is moving away from you, watch for illegal blocks, including early blocks by Team K. Be prepared to cover the play if Team R gains possession and advances. If the kick is deep downfield, move downfield about five to 10 yards and officiate the play, being alert for blocking and holding in front of the play. If a return develops, maintain a sufficient cushion in front of the play and be on the goal line before a runner crosses it.

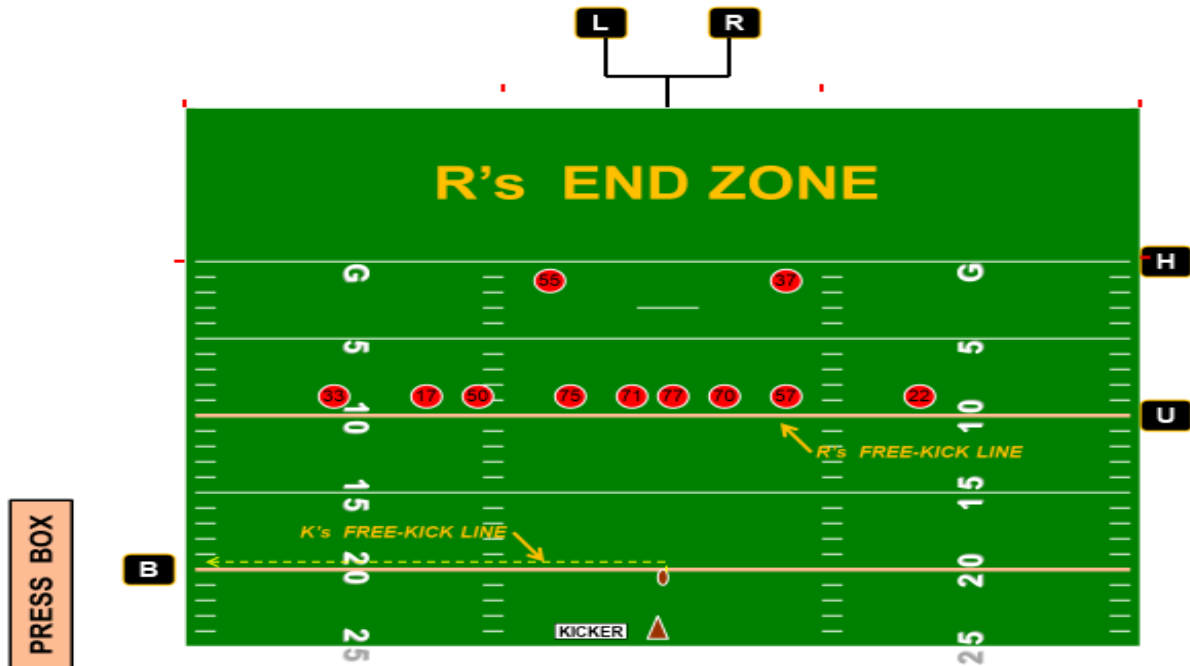
**Line Judge and Umpire:** Be alert for clear encroachment by Team R. Know if the kick touches the ground and breaks the plane of Team R's free-kick lines. Be alert for touching by either team, and assist with early illegal blocks by Team K. Be alert for fair catch signals by Team R. If the kick is deep downfield, move downfield to assist the Referee with coverage. If a long return develops, trail the play, and take forward progress to Team K's two-yard line.

The onside-kick positions are illustrated in the following diagram:



### C. Free Kick Following Fair Catch

The positions for a free kick following a fair catch is illustrated in the following diagram:



## VI. PLAY RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Pre-Snap and General Duties

**Crew:** All officials should know the formation, their initial keys and areas of responsibility, and when to shift into zone coverage. Illustrations of initial keys are shown in Part XIV.

Before each play, complete all pre-snap duties. Know the down and distance and status of the clock. Count the players for the squads and teams that you are responsible for. Be aware that substitutions and offensive shifts may cause you to change your keys and recount players.

All officials should also be aware of the need to properly signal the end of a play when it ends in their coverage area. Only the covering official's signal is needed. Generally, other officials should not mirror signals unless it is needed to assist the clock operators. Even then, an official should never mirror a scoring signal unless that official is in position to rule and is positive that a score occurred.

When a play ends in your area following a regular non-kicking scrimmage play with no administrative stoppage, the covering official should signal that the ball is dead and that the 40-second play clock should start by giving one of the following signals: (1) **Runner Down Inbounds:** Raise your hand straight above your head (Sig. 7), or, if needed, a wind-clock signal when down near a sideline (Sig. 2); (2) **Runner Out-Of-Bounds:** Stop-clock signal (Sig. 3); (3) **Incomplete Pass:** Incomplete pass signal

(Sig. 10); (4) ***First Down Awarded:*** Stop-clock signal (Sig. 3).

When the ball is dead, accend on to the field to give a presence and assist with dead-ball officiating. Always finish dead-ball officiating before moving the chains, relaying game ball, or moving on to the next play. When there is no pertinent dead-ball action, hustle back to your starting position so that the next snap may occur once the ball is ready for play without needing to reset the play clock.

When marking progress, square off from the sideline to give a spot. Use your forward foot to give the spot of forward progress.

**Referee:** Signal and make sure of the correct down. Starting position is approximately 12 to 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage and at least as wide as the tight end on the passing-arm side of the quarterback. Be able to comfortably observe the set backs and quarterback for possible illegal motions and false starts.

Count Team A players along with the Umpire, and signal with a clenched fist when 11 are counted. Assist with spotting the ball when able to do so.

Following a scrimmage play that ends inbounds and results in a new series for Team A, be ready to start the game clock when required by giving a “silent wind” of your arm without sounding your whistle. Be aware of the 40-second play clock, and know when the ball is spotted and made ready for play. “Pump up” the play clock if needed.

Notify the Head Coach when his team has used its last timeout.

**Umpire:** Starting position is approximately 8 to 10 yards deep on Team B’s side of the line of scrimmage. Be able to observe the offensive interior line. Vary your starting position depending on the location of the ball and the formation, but keep the ball visible to rule on snap violations.

Count Team A players along with the Referee, and signal with a clenched fist if 11 players are counted. Read the offensive alignment and make sure there are five players numbered 50 through 79 (or numbering exceptions) on the line at the snap.

Be alert for snap infractions, interference with the snap, false starts, encroachment with contact by Team B, and disconcerting words or acts by the defense.

Be aware of the lateral position of the ball for assistance in returning the ball to the previous spot and penalty enforcement. You are the primary official to spot the ball, but the Referee can assist.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is outside the sideline and on the line of scrimmage. Be alert for incoming and outgoing substitutes on your sidelines. Work to keep the restricted area of the sideline clear.

Know numbers of eligible pass receivers. Check positioning of the wingbacks, slot backs and split ends. Use hand to backfield signal when the closest offensive player is



off the line, and hold this signal until the snap or until the closest offensive player is no longer off the line. Know whether there are more than four Team A players in the backfield at the snap. Communicate with each other.

Read the offensive formation and be aware of your initial, eligible receiver keys and responsibilities. If they are not pressed, be ready to assist with action on your tackle following the snap.

You are responsible for forward progress along your sideline. Assist each other with forward progress using cross-field mechanics when necessary.

Be alert for false starts and encroachment by either team and disconcertion by the defense. Sound your whistle, moving in quickly and shutting down all action immediately. If a player goes in motion, observe him while he is on your side of the ball to ensure the motion is legal. If that player is not on your side, you should still be ready to make an obvious call.

If a first down is obvious, stop the clock. If the spot is close, call the Referee over to rule.

- ***Head Linesman – Additional Duties:*** Supervise the auxiliary chain crew consisting of the line-to-gain chains and the down box marker. You are primarily responsible for keeping the accurate down count, though all officials are responsible for this. Visually confirm the next down with the Referee using an appropriate hand signal. As a general rule, do not call for the chain crew to move until the Referee signals. For all first downs, the Head Linesman will mark the spot with his foot for the chain crew at the sideline. If the down box marker is not in place when the next snap is imminent, drop a bean bag at the line of scrimmage behind you on the sideline. When the goal line is the line to gain, only use the down box marker to mark the line of scrimmage, and have the chains removed from the area and placed on the ground.

**Back Judge:** Starting position is 25 yards deep on the defensive side of the ball and deeper than the deepest defensive back roughly in the center of the field. When the ball is snapped between Team B's 25- and 10-yard lines, your initial position is on Team B's goal line. You are the primary official to count Team B players. Signal with a clenched fist to the Head Linesman and Line Judge when there are 11 players.

Check the numbers of the eligible receivers and the numbers of the players inside the eligible receivers when possible.

You are responsible for observing the play clock and ruling on whether the ball was snapped in time. If the play clock is not working or has been turned off, maintain the play-clock count and signal that there are 10 seconds left by extending one arm above your head.

Be alert for incoming substitutions, check the game clock, and assist in relaying the ball from the sideline and relaying messages to the sideline and wing officials,

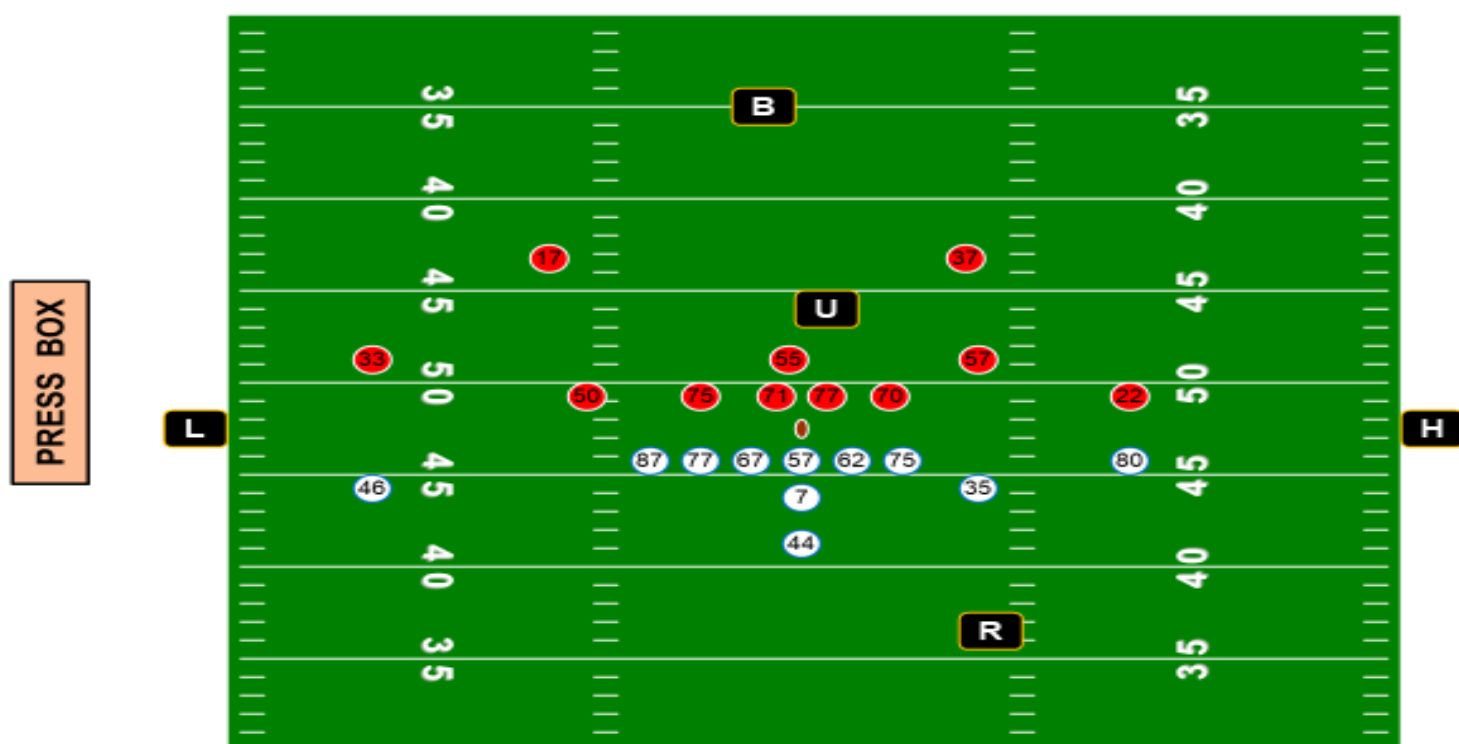
especially penalty information.

Cover the play working inside out. You are responsible for the goal line and the end line.

On snaps on or inside Team B's 10-yard line, take an initial position on the end line. The Head Linesman and Line Judge will cover the goal line. If formations dictate that you need to position yourself on the end line sooner, let the Head Linesman and Line Judge know so that they will be ready to cover the goal line.

You are responsible for monitoring the play clock and enforcing the 25- or 40-second intervals between plays. Be ready to begin the 40-second count yourself if the visible play clock has malfunctioned or is not being used.

The initial positions for scrimmage plays are illustrated in the following diagram:



## B. Running Plays

**Referee:** You are generally responsible for the football until it is beyond the line of scrimmage. While the ball is behind the line of scrimmage, focus on blocks in the area immediately around the point of attack, generally working from the inside-out. Once the runner moves beyond where a tight end or wingback would normally be positioned, begin covering the action behind the runner as he advances into clear space.

At the snap, move with a purpose and only if necessary. Delay moving immediately to avoid hindering reverse or delayed plays and to assure maximum vision of play. If needed, move backwards at an angle to keep the play in front.

If the play is wide, slowly move in that direction and watch for action around the runner to the neutral zone. On option plays, if the quarterback keeps the ball and turns up field, observe action on the trailing back until there is no longer a threat of a foul.

When the quarterback keeps the ball and runs into a side zone or out of bounds, follow him all the way including out of bounds. When runners other than the quarterback move into the side zone, move in that direction covering the play and action as normal, but it is not necessary to go beyond the hash mark.

Unless the runner was the quarterback or Team A is running a “hurry-up” offense, assist in spotting the ball at the hash mark when the ball is dead between the nine-yard marks and the sideline or out of bounds. For obvious first downs on long plays, or on short gains between the hash marks when you are not spotting the ball, there is no need to run to the line of scrimmage. Instead, move to your position to be ready for the next snap.

**Umpire:** Your coverage depends on whether the run is between or outside the tackles. If between the tackles, focus on the point of attack in front of and around the runner and action on or by the interior linemen. Be alert for holding, low blocks, and chop blocks. On run plays outside the tackles, slowly turn toward the flow of the play and focus on blocks and action in the area immediately behind and away from the runner as the runner moves forward. In addition to offensive holding, defensive holding, and chop block fouls, be alert for clipping fouls behind the play. Do not be restricted by the hash marks.

When the ball becomes dead in a side zone or out of bounds, move out and retrieve the ball. When the ball is dead between the nine-yard marks and the sideline or out of bounds, relay the ball to the Referee to spot the ball at the hash mark, unless the Referee is not in position to assist with spotting. For obvious first downs and long gains, short gains between the hash marks, or balls that become dead within a few steps beyond the hash marks, retrieve and spot the ball getting forward progress from the wing official. In the last two minutes of each half, when a runner is down inbounds, move sideline to sideline after each play to retrieve the ball that was used in the previous play and place it at the succeeding spot for the next play without relaying the ball to any official.

When spotting the ball, hustle, but do not hurry. Maintain a consistent pace throughout the game when retrieving a ball and spotting it for the next play. When time is critical, increase your pace, but you should never move faster than a brisk jog. After the ball is spotted, make eye contact with the Referee, and be ready to move toward the line of scrimmage to prevent the snap if the Referee signals you to do so because the crew is not yet in position. Use your voice and presence to communicate to the snapper to hold up. It will not usually be necessary to step up exactly over the ball to hold the snap.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Observe actions by tackles, the nearest interior

lineman, and inside receivers. Observe blocking action in the zone in front of and around the runner on runs to your side, generally working from the outside-in. Maintain position on the line of scrimmage until the runner crosses it, allowing the play to develop in front of you. If your position is threatened, be ready to move down the sideline into the backfield and trail the play as the runner moves beyond the neutral zone. If the play is away from you, observe cleanup action behind the Referee and Umpire while moving downfield with the play, giving special attention to late action on the quarterback when he no longer has the ball.

Give an accurate forward progress spot on every play, and hold the spot until the Referee or Umpire acknowledges it for spotting. Use cross-field mechanics when needed to assist each other in marking forward progress.

When the ball is dead inbounds near the sideline, including when a runner is forced sideways or backwards out of bounds, give a winding signal to indicate that the game clock should continue running and that the 40-second play clock should start. If the ball goes out of bounds, hold the out of bounds spot and face the action out of bounds while either the Referee or Back Judge retrieves the ball. When marking the out of bounds spot, keep your head up and observe the action.

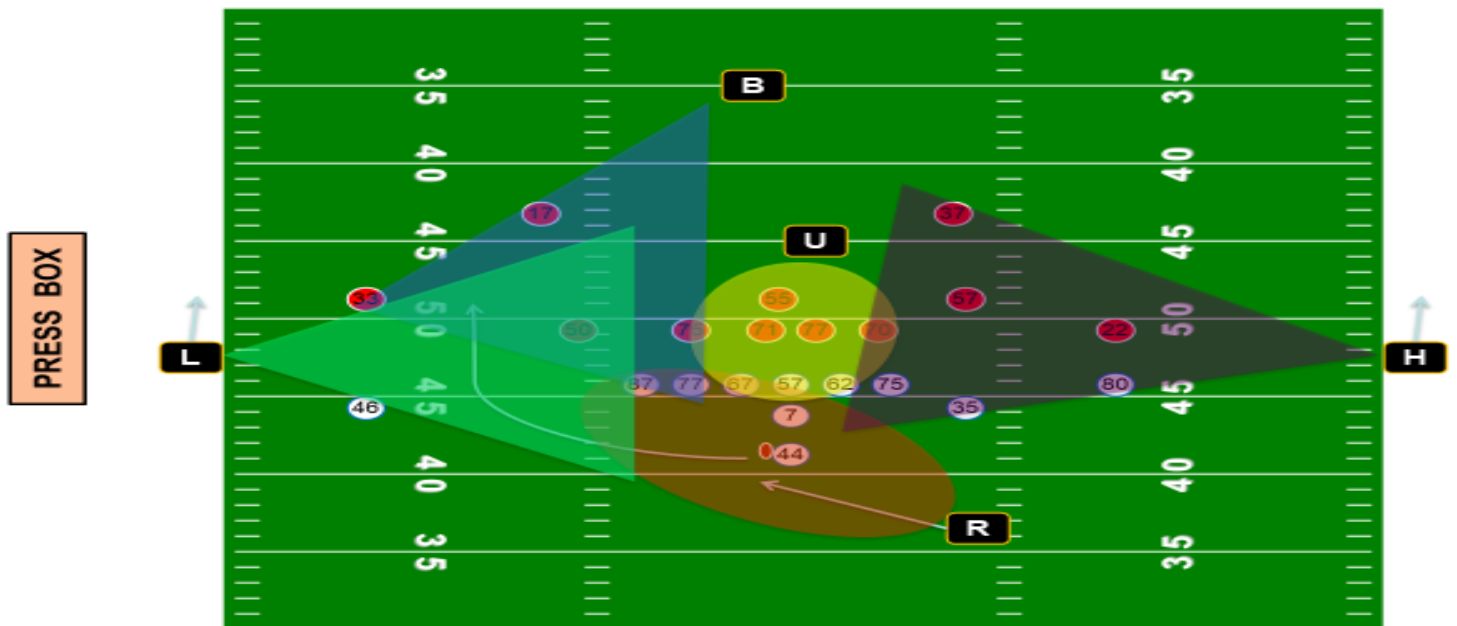
If a first down is obvious, give a signal to stop the game clock, which will also signal the 40-second play clock to start. If close, signal to and wait for the Referee to rule. The Line Judge will usually have the best view to initially advise the Referee on the ball's location relative to the line to gain.

**Back Judge:** Initially observe action on or by your key eligible receiver. Move laterally and backwards if needed to observe the action of players behind the Umpire and ahead of the runner. As the play develops, progress with the flow of the play, working from the inside out. Assist with observing second-level blocks.

Be on the goal line ahead of the runner to rule on a touchdown and to assist with forward progress near the goal line. When a runner crosses the goal line after running closely down the sideline, check with the covering sideline official to see whether the runner stayed in bounds before signaling touchdown.

On plays into the side zones and out of bounds, cover action around and in front of the runner. When the ball becomes dead, accordion in and observe dead-ball action. Assist in separating players if necessary. Be mindful of off-ball activity, especially in wide-open plays.

Areas of coverage on run plays are shown in the following illustration:



### C. Passing Plays

**Referee:** On passing downs, as the passer drops back within the tackles, retreat with him and stay outside of and deeper than him, moving backwards at an angle to maintain cushion. Observe drop back blockers in vision, especially the tackles and other linemen potentially holding. Be aware of action by the tackles and any offensive linemen that could potentially foul. Most importantly, be alert for any defensive player moving through the offensive line that presents as a possible threat to the passer, who is your primary responsibility until there is no longer a threat for a foul. After the pass is thrown, continue to observe action on and around the passer until there is no threat of a foul. Verbally alert defenders when the passer has released the ball. You have secondary responsibility for whether a pass is forward or backward behind the line of scrimmage.

You are the sole judge for calling intentional grounding, but you must first obtain information from other officials as to whether a forward pass was thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver or, if the passer was outside if the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone, whether the pass reached the neutral zone. Know whether the passer has been beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone in possession of the ball.

On a change of possession, be alert for action on the quarterback. Specifically, be alert for targeting fouls at all times and illegal blocks against him when he is clearly out of the play.

**Umpire:** Adjust your position to maintain a view of the line action, and begin moving towards the line of scrimmage cautiously, looking for holding or other illegal blocks. Be alert for ineligible receivers being down field early.

Know whether the pass crossed the neutral zone. Observe whether the passer crosses the line of scrimmage and then throws a forward pass, and drop your flag at the spot if he does. Know if the forward pass is touched and signal accordingly.

Once the pass has been released, turn and assist in determining if there is a catch or incompleteness, but maintain coverage of your area of responsibility as long as there is a threat of action. After a catch, cover continuing action around the runner in the side zone.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Cautiously slide about 5 yards downfield while facing the field at all times. Observe action initially by the tackle and then receivers in your area, beginning with the nearest to you. If receivers in your area do not move downfield, or if a back or other eligible receiver enters your area in position to catch a pass behind the line of scrimmage, hold your position at the line of scrimmage and rule on any pass. You are responsible for ruling on quick sideline passes thrown to your side.

When possible, assist with observing ineligible receivers being too far downfield before the pass is thrown, especially if the play is going away from you and you are the offside official.

When the pass is released downfield, move downfield with the pass. Assist in ruling on receptions between you and other covering officials. If the pass is not thrown into your area, help observe off-ball action involving players other than the potential receiver. For shorter downfield passes, especially when the ball is thrown directly into your area, reducing movement as the ball nears the receiver will improve your ability to see the play more clearly.

Provide information to the Referee on whether eligible receivers were in the area of a forward pass **or if an incomplete pass reached the neutral zone** in situations involving possible intentional grounding.

You have responsibility for your sideline to the end line.

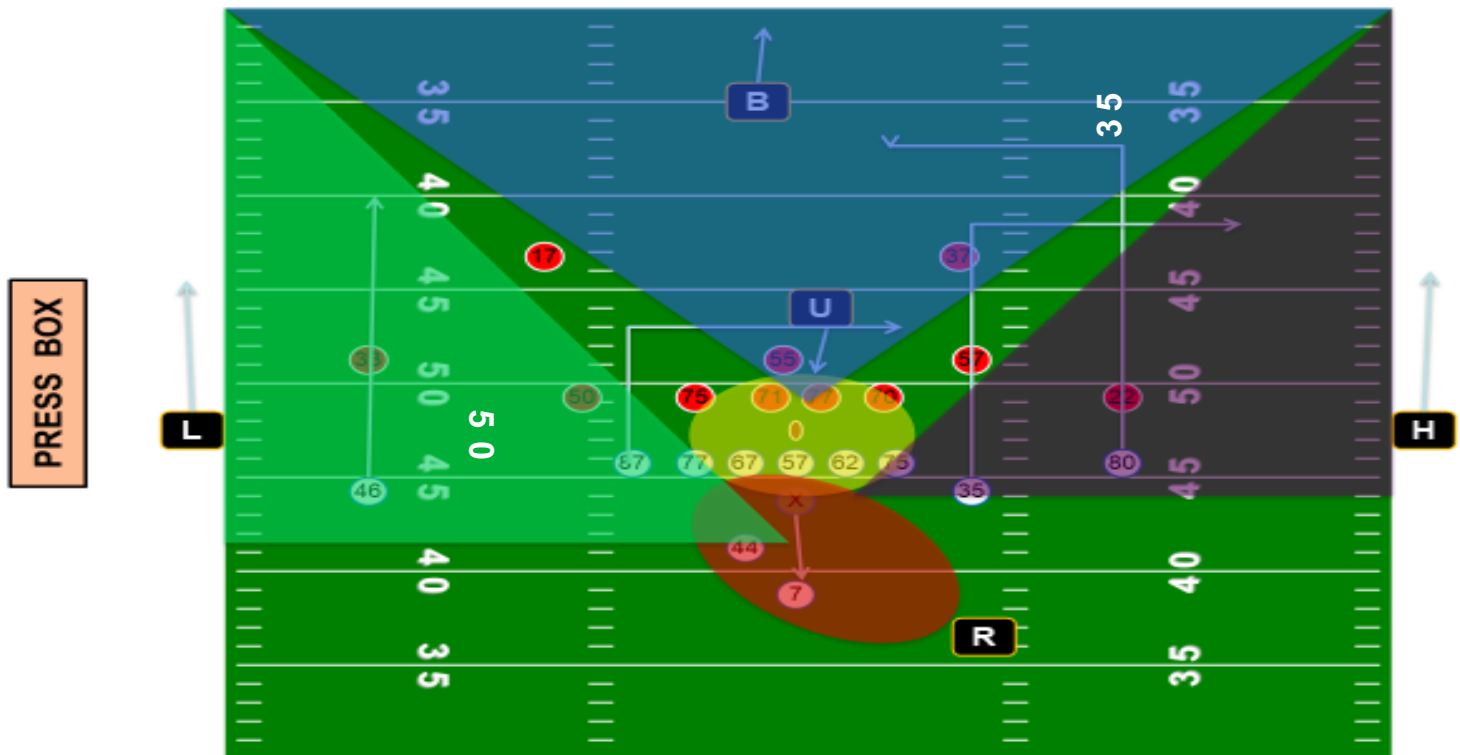
If there are two wide outs on the same end of the line of scrimmage, your initial responsibility is for the widest player, but be ready to widen your zone to cover necessary action on any player. On a completion, square off to get accurate forward progress.

**Back Judge:** Initially observe action on the tight end or other receiver on the strong side of the field, and then to other receivers moving into your zone. If the receivers are balanced, initially focus on the tight end or interior receiver on the Line Judge's side. Move backwards and maintain cushion to assure maximum vision. Be ready to cover the deepest receivers, action behind the Umpire, the goal line, and the end line.

On plays originating outside Team B's 10-yard line, be on the goal line before any ball carrier crosses it, unless you have given up the goal line based on the game situation and after informing the Head Linesman and Line Judge. Officiate the play

from the inside-out. Make eye contact with wing officials on sideline plays if control of the ball is questionable or if the pass in the middle of the field is in front of him. Know where the receivers are and never let a receiver get behind you.

Pass coverage areas of responsibility are shown in the following diagram:



#### D. Reverse Mechanics

During a scrimmage kick return, or when Team B advances following a change of possession, officials should use reverse mechanics to cover the play.

**Referee:** Cautiously move backwards towards Team A or K's goal line while maintaining coverage of the quarterback or kicker. Be alert for targeting fouls and illegal blocks against these players when they are out of the play, especially blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Work from the inside out to cover the play. Maintain a view of the quarterback or kicker as long as possible while moving to the goal line.

**Umpire:** Work as if covering any other play. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** When Team B or R begins its return, begin backing up along the sideline and officiating in front of the return, assisting with lead blockers. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Maintain a cushion in advance of the play and be on the goal line before the runner. Take forward progress to the goal line.

**Back Judge:** Trail the play and observe action behind the runner. As the play develops, move downfield and cover action behind the play being alert for off-ball activity, especially blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

## **VII. SCRIMMAGE KICK (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Referee:** Starting position is slightly behind and to the side of the kicker, outside the tight-end position, and on the right side of the field, in a position to look at approximately a 45-degree angle to the position where the kick will be made, so that you can see the snap, back blockers, and attacking defensive players. With the Umpire, count Team K players and signal accordingly when there are 11 players. Verbally alert Team R players when the kicker has kicked the ball. Observe action on and around the kicker, then clean up behind the kick action while cautiously drifting down field, opposite the side of the Umpire.

If the kick is blocked behind the line, box in the play with the Head Linesman.

If a return develops, use reverse mechanics to cover the play while staying alert to actions involving the kicker when he is out of the play. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

If the ball goes out of bounds in flight, assist the covering official in determining the out of bounds spot.

**Umpire:** Starting position is approximately 10 yards off the line of scrimmage and favoring the Line Judge's side of the field. Be in position to see the snap and rule on any contact with the snapper. Together with the Referee, count Team K players and give the signal accordingly when there are 11 players. Warn Team R players not to charge directly into the snapper. Locate ineligible receivers, remembering that Team A or K may use exceptions to the normal numbering requirement. Be alert for holding by either team, especially any "pull and shoot" action by Team R. Once the kick has crossed the neutral zone and action in the line has cleared, turn and observe action on the return, being alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

If the ball is blocked behind the line of scrimmage and picked up by a member of the receiving team, follow the play and cover action around and behind the runner.

**Head Linesman:** Starting position and pre-snap responsibilities are the same as for any scrimmage play. Communicate with the Line Judge, and observe whether there are more than four offensive players in the backfield. Be alert for a blocked kick and, if this occurs, move into the backfield to assist the Referee. You are responsible for determining if the kicked ball crosses the neutral zone.

After the kick crosses the neutral zone, move down field observing action in front of the receiver / runner. Be alert for holding, low blocks, illegal blindside blocks, targeting, and other blocking fouls. Cover the runner if he comes to your sideline. Observe off-ball action if the play is to the opposite sideline. You are responsible for your sideline to the end line and for forward progress when the runner is down in



your area.

If the kick goes out of bounds on your sideline, mark the spot. If it goes out of bounds in flight, the Back Judge will help spot the ball with assistance from the Referee.

**Line Judge:** Starting position and pre-snap responsibilities are the same as for any scrimmage play. Communicate with the Head Linesman, and observe whether there are more than four offensive players in the backfield. Be alert for a blocked kick. Be ready to help cover the play in the backfield.

If there is a clean snap, begin moving downfield. Be ready to cover valid and invalid fair catch signals, and rule on a fair catch in your area. You are responsible for your sideline to each end line and for coverage of the deep receivers. Officiate in front of the receiver / runner. Be alert for holding, low blocks, illegal blindside blocks, targeting, and other blocking fouls. On a return, cover the runner as well as sideline coverage all the way to the goal line when he is in your area. Observe off-ball action if the play is to the opposite sideline. You are responsible for your sideline to the end line and for forward progress when the runner is down in your area.

If the kick goes out of bounds on your sideline, mark the spot. If it goes out of bounds in flight, the Referee will assist you on determining the spot.

**Back Judge:** Starting position is 5 yards behind as the deepest receiver and 5 to 10 yards outside of the deepest receiver on the Head Lineman's side of the field. Count Team R players. You are responsible for Team R's goal line. Be ready to rule on touchbacks and batted balls near the goal line. Mark any spot of first touching and momentum spots with a bean bag.

You have primary responsibility for valid and invalid fair catch signals and ruling on a valid fair catch. Be alert for touching by players. Be ready to follow the ball if the receiver fails to field the kick cleanly.

On a return, cover action on and against the runner until he enters the Head Linesman's or Line Judge's area. If the kick is obviously to the Line Judge's side zone, the Back Judge should cover the play in front of the deepest receiver and behind the runner if the play is away from him while being alert for any illegal blocks, clips, holding, and other actions. Be alert for holding, low blocks, illegal blindside blocks, targeting, and other blocking fouls.

If the kick goes out of bounds in flight on the sideline opposite the press box, go to the sideline and mark the spot with assistance from the Referee.

The proper officiating positions for punts are illustrated in the following diagram:



With the Back Judge, rule on whether the kick is successful. You have primary responsibility for your goal post. The Back Judge has primary responsibility for the crossbar and the opposite goal post. If the ball nears the crossbar or your goal post, maintain focus on the kick, rule on the success of the field goal, and give the appropriate signal. When the ball will clearly pass above the crossbar and is nearing the Back Judge's goal post, focus on action involving the linemen and be prepared to move forward to assist with dead ball action. If you and the Back Judge are both under the goal post when the kick ends, communicate the result with each other and then move toward the players and dead ball officiate. It is unnecessary for both you and the Back Judge to simultaneously signal the result of the play. However, any signal should be held long enough for the Referee to observe it.

If the kick is blocked, the offense runs a fake, or a return begins, move up and officiate from the inside-out.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is the same as any other scrimmage play. Communicate with each other, and observe whether there are more than four offensive players in the backfield. Observe the neutral zone, and be alert for fouls by either team. Be ready to cover action on your sideline to the end if a run or pass develops. When the ball is kicked, be in position to determine whether the kick has crossed the line. Quickly close in after the kick to observe dead-ball action.

**Back Judge:** Starting position is behind the goal post opposite the press box. Count Team R players and give the appropriate signal when 11 players are present.

With the Umpire, rule on whether the kick is successful. If the ball nears the crossbar or your goal post, maintain focus on the kick, rule on the success of the field goal, and give the appropriate signal. When the ball will clearly pass above the crossbar and is nearing the Umpire's goal post, focus on action involving the linemen and be prepared to move forward to assist with dead ball action. If you and the Umpire are both under the goal post when the kick ends, communicate the result with each other, then move toward the players and dead ball officiate. It is unnecessary for both you and the Umpire to simultaneously signal the result of the play. However, any signal should be held long enough for the Referee to observe it. You may sound your whistle once the Try is kicked or when the field goal attempt is over.

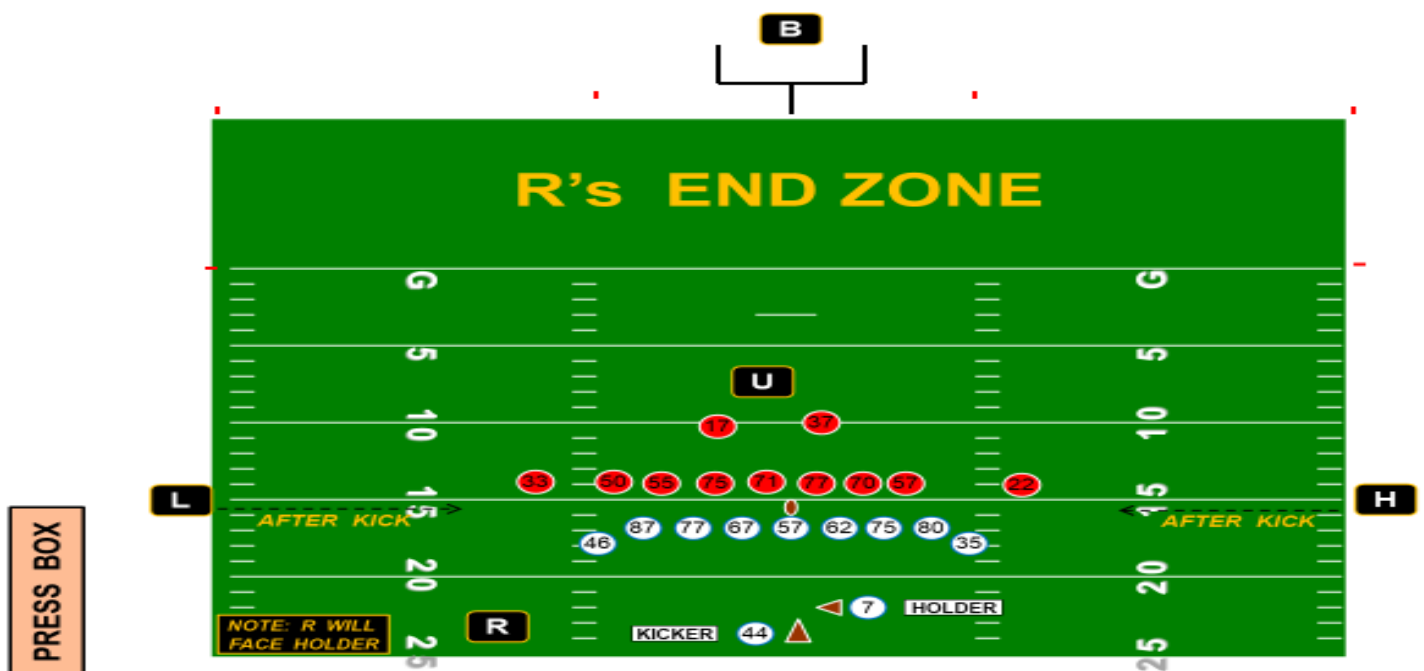
The positions for field goal and scrimmage-kick try attempts when snapped short of Team R's 15-yard line are illustrated in the following drawing:



between the goal posts. Your pre-snap duties are the same as when the snap is inside Team R's 15-yard line. During the play, you are responsible for ruling on the field goal attempt. As the kick approaches, move as needed toward either goal post to determine whether the kick is successful. At the kick, signal the result long enough for the Referee to observe it.

If the kick is blocked or if the play turns into a run or pass play, **move** toward the goal line and officiate as any other scrimmage play. If the kick is obviously short, **move** forward to help determine whether the kick breaks the plane of the goal line. If Team R possesses the ball (other than on the Try) and a return begins, use reverse mechanics and officiate as any other return.

The proper officiating positions for field goal and scrimmage-kick try attempts from beyond Team R's 15-yard line are illustrated in the following drawing:



### C. Swinging Gate Formation

**Referee:** Take an initial position in the offensive backfield at your normal scrimmage-play depth and between the snapper and the gate, even if this puts you on the non-throwing arm side of the potential passer. Be aware of potential numbering exceptions and alignment by the offense. If the offense snaps from this formation, officiate the play as necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your normal kick position.

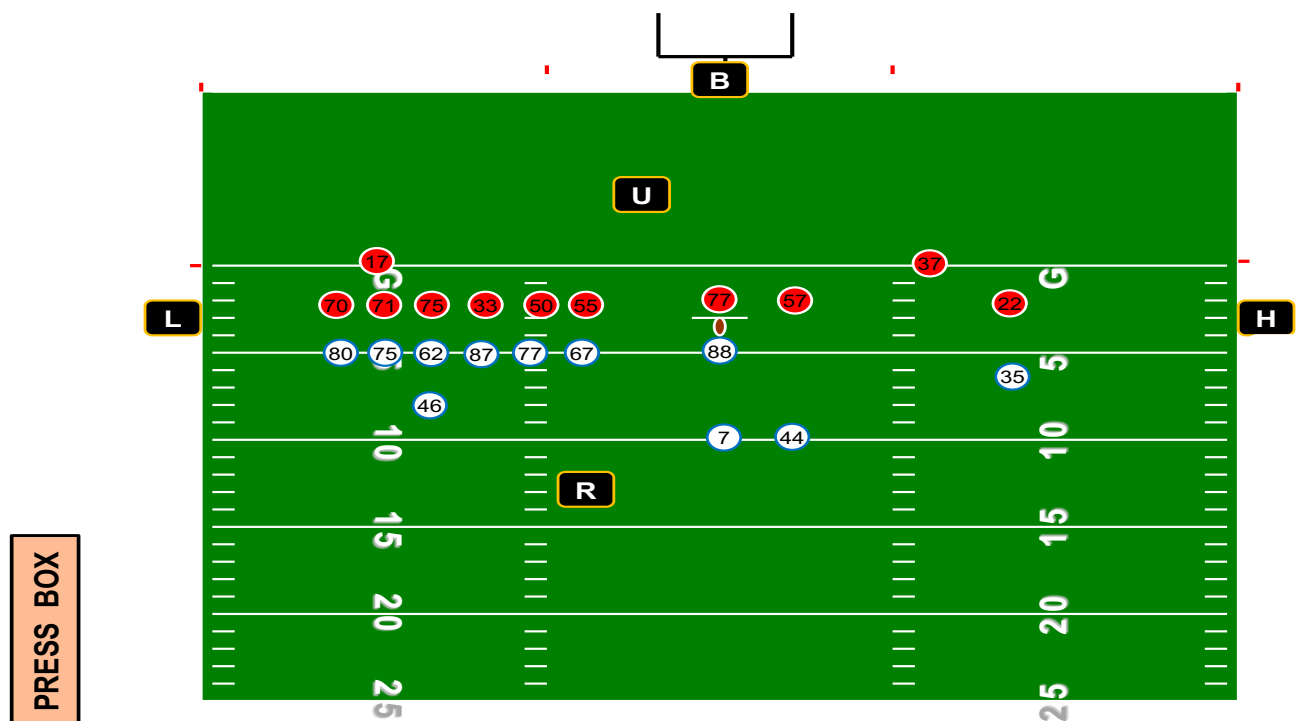
**Umpire:** Take an initial position between the snapper and the gate. Be slightly deeper than your usual depth on scrimmage-play formations. Be aware of potential numbering exceptions and alignment by the offense. If the offense snaps from this formation, be alert for illegal action against the snapper and officiate the play as necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your

normal kick position.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Take your normal positions on the line of scrimmage. Observe the formation and identify eligible receivers. Officiate the neutral zone. If the offense snaps from this formation, apply goal line mechanics and officiate the play. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, officiate the play accordingly.

**Back Judge:** Take an initial position on the end line around the middle of the field. Identify eligible receivers. If the offense snaps from this formation, officiate the play. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your kick position.

The initial positions for swinging gate formations are illustrated in the following drawing:



## IX. MEASUREMENT FOR FIRST DOWN

When the ball is dead and forward progress is close to the line to gain, the covering official should alert the Referee, who will decide if the clock should be stopped to signal a first down or ask for a measurement.

If a measurement is needed, the Referee will take a position near the ball on the side opposite the press box. The Back Judge will hold the ball in place on the ground from the downfield side while shading away from the press box.

The Head Linesman will go to the sideline and mark the front stake of the chains with the down box. He will then take the chain at the clip and move the chains with the chain crew onto the field toward the ball.

The Line Judge will help the Head Linesman to align the chains on the field for measurement by giving a spot on the yard line with the clip in line with, but on the press box side of, the ball. When necessary, the Line Judge will obtain a new ball from a team ball handler.

Once the Head Linesman has the clip down and secure, the Umpire will take the front stake from the chain crew man and stretch the chains on the press box side of the ball so the Referee can rule on whether the front of the ball is beyond the line to gain.

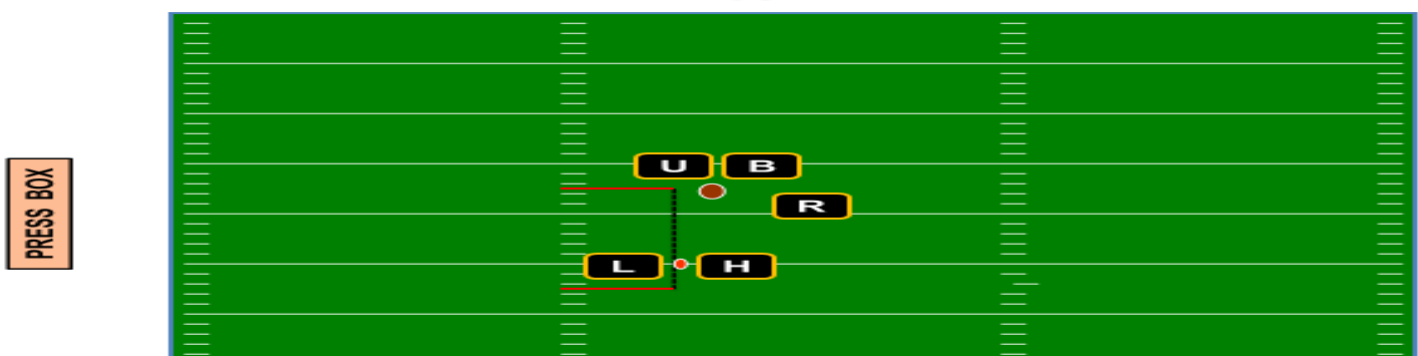
If a first down is indicated, the Head Linesman will release the chain crew to return to the sideline where he will give them a first down spot.

If the line to gain has not been reached and the ball is in between the hash marks, the Head Linesman will return to the sideline, re-spot the clip, and make sure the chain is stretched to place the chain in its original position. The ball will be kept in its spot on the ground for the next snap.

If the line to gain has not been reached and the ball is dead in a side zone, the Umpire will keep control of the front stake. The Referee, from the side of the ball opposite the press box, will show how short of the line to gain the ball is. The Back Judge will hold the ball in place on the ground, and the Line Judge will obtain a new ball. The Referee will then grasp the link of the chain in front of the ball. The Head Linesman will hold the clip, the Referee will hold the chain link, and the Umpire will hold the front stake. They will bring the chains to the hash mark and align them with assistance from the Line Judge. Once the chains are aligned, the Referee will spot it just inside the hash mark at the proper location with the new ball that the Line Judge obtained. While this process is occurring, the Back Judge will hold the dead ball in the side zone at its spot on the ground until the Referee has correctly spotted the new ball inside the hash mark and has released the chains back to the sideline. The Back Judge should then give the old ball to the ball handler. If the Referee happens to drop the chain, the new ball does not line up clearly with the old ball, or some other event occurs causing a problem with the process, return the chains to the old ball and start over.

The proper officiating positions for a measurement are illustrated in the following drawing:

MEASUREMENT



## **X. PLAYS NEAR THE GOAL LINE**

### **A. Ball On and Inside Team B's 10-Yard Line**

Initial pre-snap duties are the same as on any scrimmage play. The Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, and Line Judge assume their normal positions. The Back Judge will start on the end line. At the snap, the Head Linesman and Line Judge should move to the goal line outside the pylon and officiate from there. They should be on the goal line when the ball crosses it. The Referee will rule on whether passes behind the line of scrimmage are forward or backward. The Umpire will rule on whether the pass or passer crossed the line of scrimmage. When game situations and player positioning dictate, the Back Judge may move to the end line even if the ball is beyond Team B's 10-yard line, after communicating with the wing officials so they know to cover the goal line.

All officials should communicate with each other between each down about positioning and goal line coverage whenever the ball is to be snapped on or inside team B's 20-yard line and especially when nearing the goal line.

### **B. Goal Line Coming Out**

When Team A snaps the ball on or inside its own 3-yard line, the Head Linesman and Line Judge should immediately move to the goal line. When Team A snaps the ball between its 3 and 10-yard lines, the Line Judge holds the line of scrimmage, and the Head Linesman reads the play and retreats to the goal line if necessary. All other officials should officiate the play as normal.

## **XI. END OF A PERIOD**

When time expires for after any period, the Referee will hold the ball in one hand over head to signal the official end of the period after pausing momentarily to make sure that no foul, obvious timing error, request for a coach-official conference, or other irregularity has occurred.

### **A. After the First and Third Quarters**

Once the period officially ends, the Referee, Umpire, and Back Judge will meet at the ball and agree and record possession, next down to be played, and the yard line where the ball is located. All officials will record the same information, and the Head Linesman, while staying on his sideline, will record the position of the clip. The Line Judge will observe the teams and help each team get turned around and located at the correct yard line. The Referee and Umpire shall move to the location of the ball at the new spot.

Prior to moving the chains, the Back Judge will proceed to the sideline and confirm the information with the Head Linesman and note the yard line where the clip is located. The Back Judge will observe the chains being turned around and then go to the opposite end of the field to make certain the clip is placed in the correct location.



The Change of Quarters procedure should take no more than one minute and is timed by the Back Judge. With 15 seconds remaining in the time out, the Back Judge should signal the Referee. The Referee should then signal the wing officials to get the teams ready. After checking that all officials are in proper position, the clock has been reset, and there is no other delay, the Referee will mark the ball ready for play.

## **B. After the End of the First Half**

The Game Clock Operator will put the length of the half-time period on the Game Clock and wait for the Referee's signal. When all players and coaches have cleared the field, the Referee will signal the Game Clock Operator to start the Game Clock for the half-time period.

All officials will exit the field together. Neither avoid nor seek out coaches during the exit from the field. The Back Judge monitors the duration of half time, and the time will start when both teams have cleared the playing area. If there are any discussions between officials and coaches, the Referee will be the spokesman for the crew.

Five minutes prior to the end of half time, the Line Judge will make contact with the head coach for the team on the press box side of the field, and the Back Judge will make contact with the head coach for the team on the side of the field opposite the press box. They will notify the head coaches of the time remaining in the half-time period and make sure the teams return to the field in time for the mandatory warm-up period. These officials will obtain choices from the head coaches concerning receiving, kicking, and defending a goal.

## **XII. OVERTIME PROCEDURES**

All varsity non-Jamboree games must play an overtime period if, at the end of regulation time, the score is tied.

The overtime procedure to be used is the National Federation of State High School Association's 10-yard line overtime procedure specified in the Football Rules Book along with any additional procedures of the LHSAA. These procedures should be part of the pregame.

When the score is tied at the end of regulation, all field officials will meet at the center of the field to review overtime procedures for 3 minutes. The Game Clock Operator will come down to the field. The Play Clock Operator will continue to operate the play clock. After this 3-minute intermission, the Head Linesman and Back Judge will go to the sideline opposite the press box, and the Line Judge will go to the press box sideline to inform the coaches of any special penalties that will be enforced. Each team has one time out per team per overtime period.

Prior to the overtime coin toss, the Referee and Umpire will take a position in the center of the field. The other officials will escort their respective team captains to the center of the field. The Head Linesman and Line Judge will obtain a game ball from

their respective teams. When the coin toss is completed, the Umpire will place the offensive team's game ball on the appropriate yard line to begin the overtime. The Referee will indicate the team that will go on offense first by having their captains face the goal line they will be attacking while giving a first down signal. The crew will briefly meet at the 10-yard line with the Game Clock Operator to discuss any last-minute matters. The Game Clock Operator will shadow the down box on the Line Judge's side of the field and will hold his position until the ball has been snapped on the succeeding down.

Beginning with the third overtime, if a team scores a touchdown, it must attempt a two-point try.

### **XIII. END OF THE GAME**

The jurisdiction of the officials ends when the Referee declares the score final by holding the ball over his head. Unless the score is tied and there will be overtime played, there cannot be a dead ball foul following the end of regulation time. Any noteworthy event happening after the end of the game should be reported immediately to the RCO. All officials will immediately exit the field but will wait for the Clock Operators, who will join the crew as soon as possible at the crew meeting spot. Do not make any public statements about the game. All officials should give their foul information to the Referee so he can submit the foul information online at [www.foulreports.com](http://www.foulreports.com). The Referee should report any flagrant irregularity, player disqualification or coach disqualification to the RCO as soon as possible following the game.

### **XIV. INITIAL KEYS**

For complete coverage, all officials must know their assigned receiver keys at the snap. Keys are numbered from the sideline going in toward the center of the field. The widest receiver is 1, the next widest is 2, etc. Your initial key is determined by the position of players at the snap after any shifting occurs.

Remember that keys are part of your initial responsibility. As the play develops, you may need to leave a key and begin covering a zone and other players in your area of responsibility. When a pass is thrown, covering officials in the area need to focus on the spot of the impending catch to properly judge whether a catch is made and whether action involving receivers is legal.

**Referee:** Initial keys are the set backs and quarterback. Be aware of the tackle opposite you, and be ready to officiate action involving both tackles when necessary, such as when the offensive formation includes trips or an empty backfield. Maintain responsibility for the quarterback until and unless he advances beyond the neutral zone and another official picks him up. Officiate action at the point of attack on run plays. Be alert for defensive threats to your quarterback on passing plays.

**Umpire:** Ensure a legal snap. Initial players for whom you are responsible are the five interior offensive linemen. As a starting point, you may initially focus on the area

where defensive players are positioned nearest the snapper. Observe initial blocking and action involving the linemen.

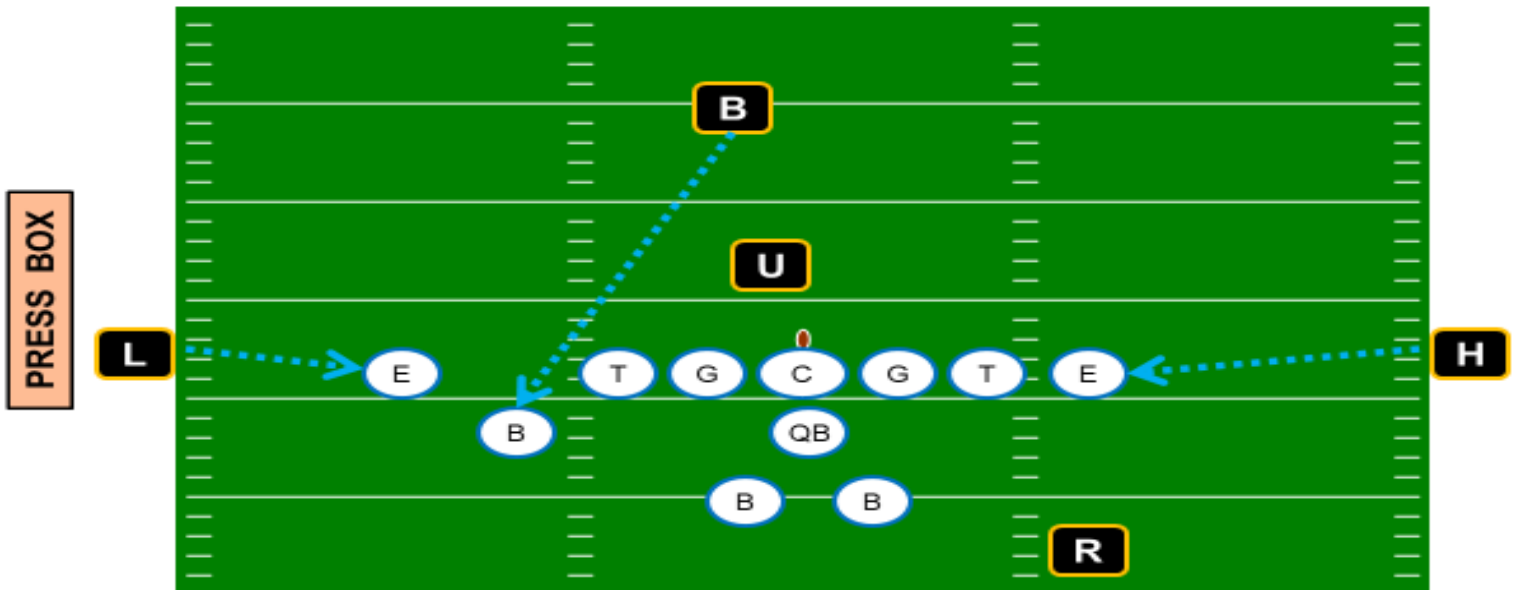
**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Initial key receiver is the widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field and additional inside receivers not covered by the Back Judge. Observe initial contact on your key and switch to zone coverage as the play allows. When receiver keys are not pressed, watch action by tackle at snap.

When in zone coverage, if the Back Judge is covering the deep receiver on your side of the field, you have underneath responsibility. If the Back Judge is covering a deep receiver on the other side of the field, you have coverage all the way downfield on your side of the field.

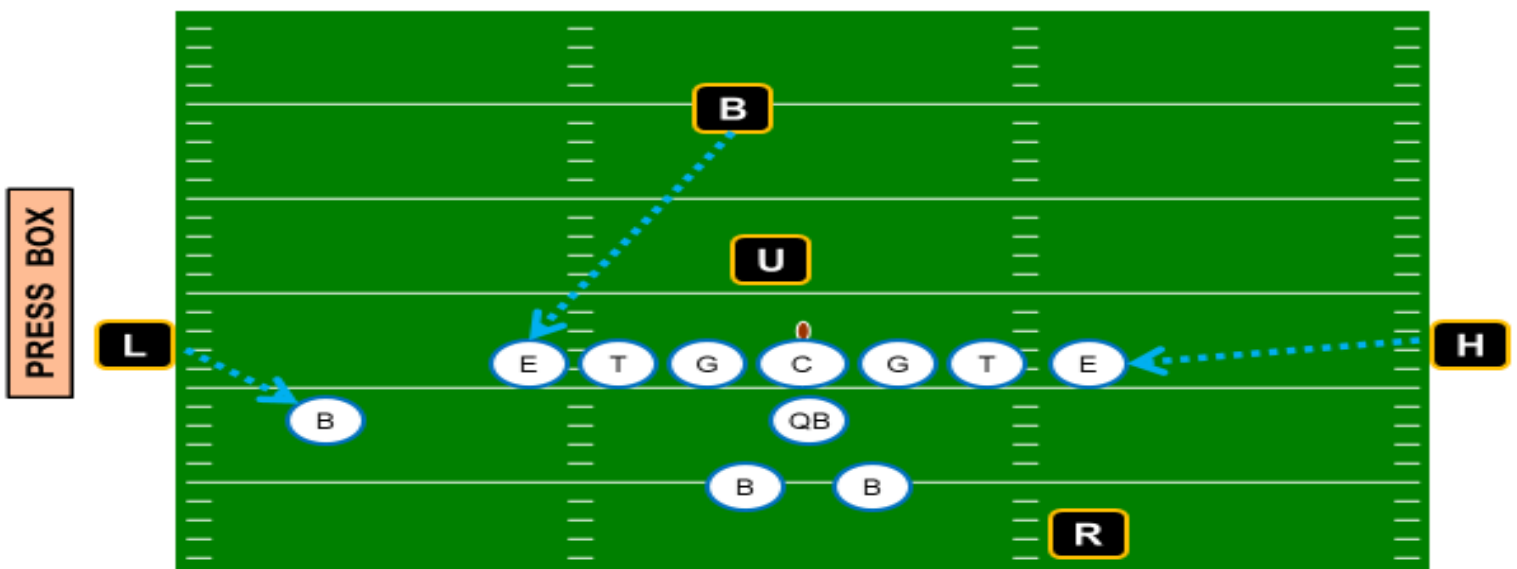
**Back Judge:** Initial key receiver is the tight end in normal formations, or the man in motion coming out of the backfield. In formations with two or more wide outs to the strong side of the field, key on the two interior receivers. If balanced, the Line Judge's side is the strong side.

Examples of the application of these receiver keys are illustrated on the following diagrams:

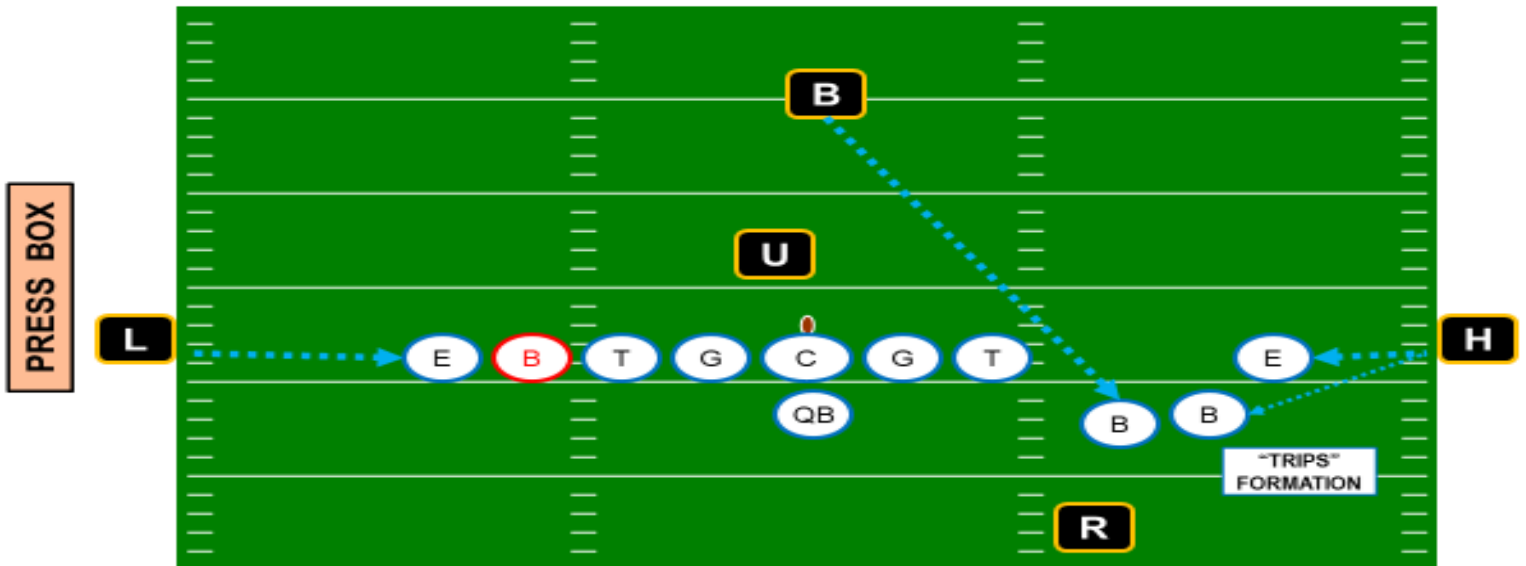
## OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #1



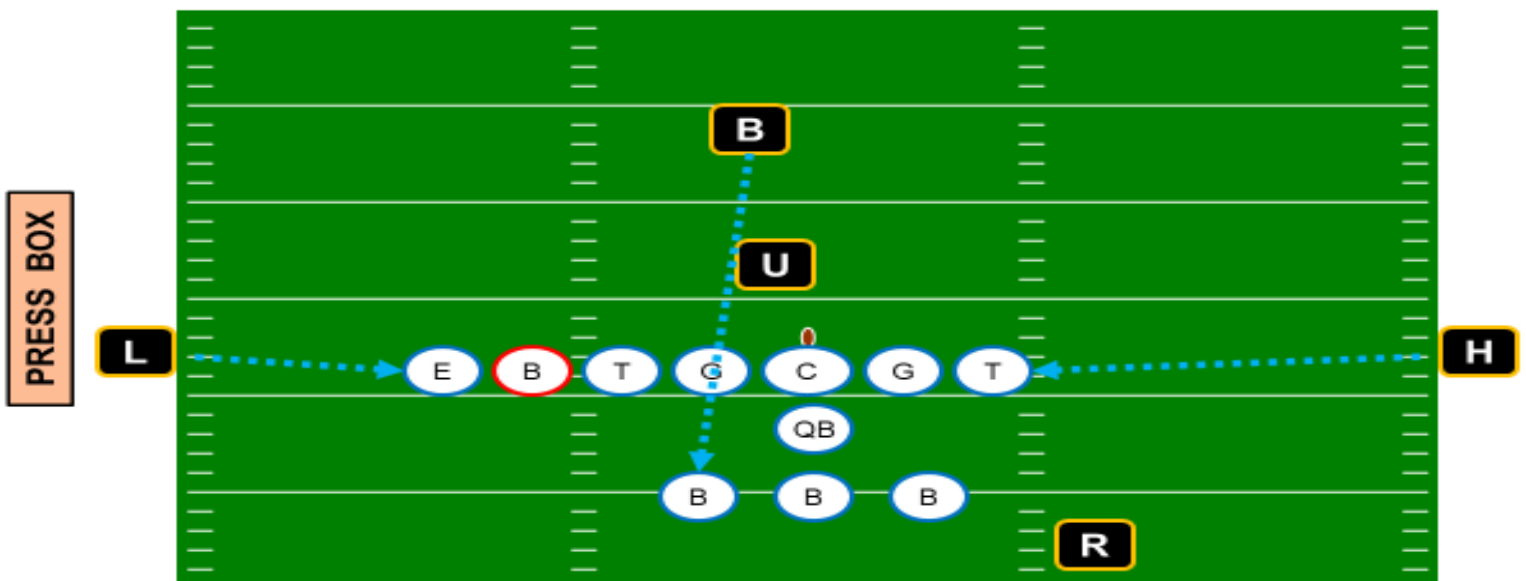
## OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #2



### OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #3

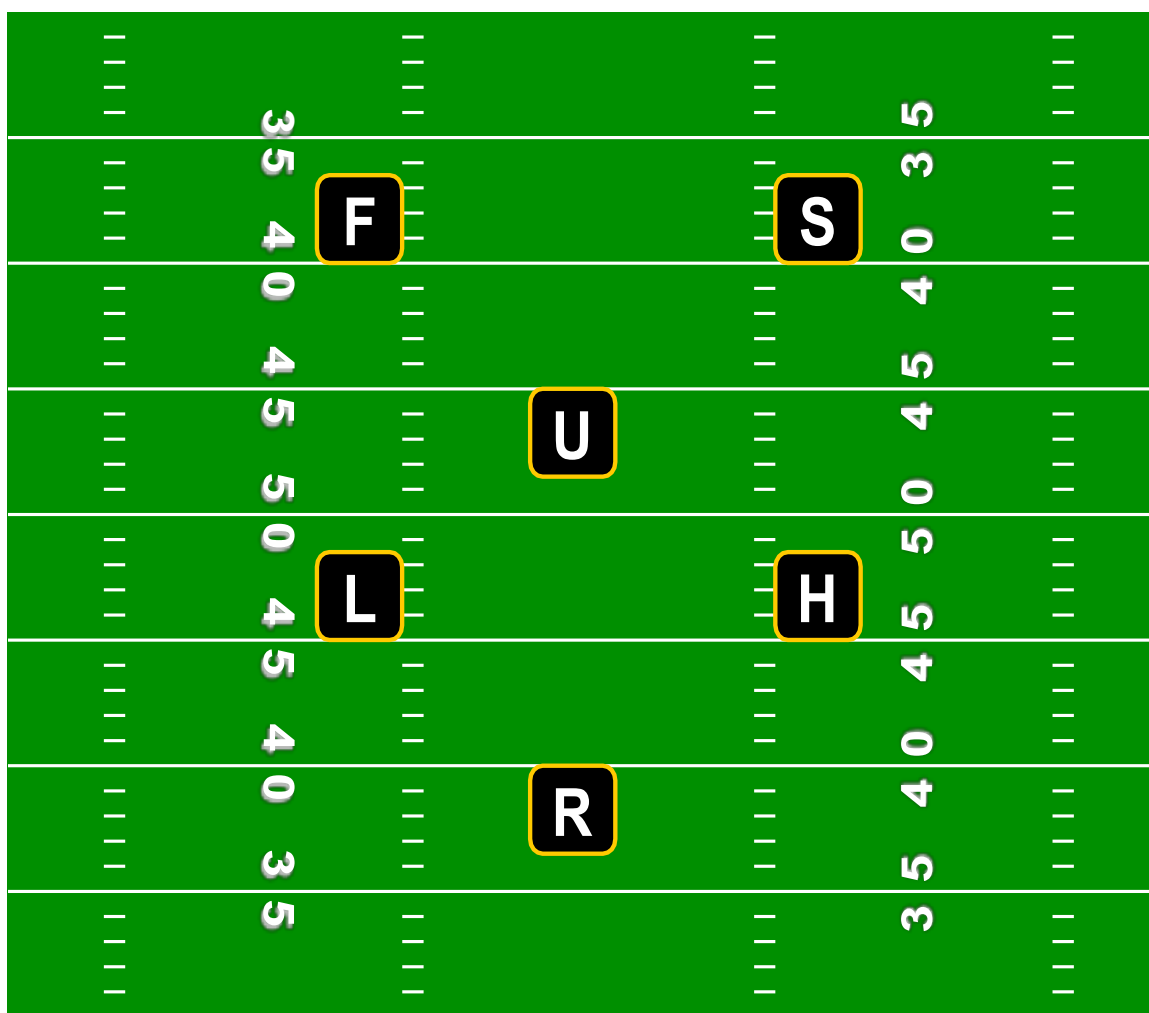


### OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #4





# CREW OF SIX OFFICIATING MECHANICS



## 2022 FOOTBALL SEASON

# MECHANICS CHANGES FOR 2022

## CHANGES FROM THE PREVIOUS MANUAL

### NORMAL FREE KICK MECHANICS

Clarified that the Referee may line up in the end zone when a receiver or the kick is likely to threaten the goal line, and that the Head Linesman and Line Judge are responsible for the goal line plane. Additionally, the Umpire will take a position on Team K's free kick line opposite the press box after handing the ball to the kicker, and the Side Judge will take a position on Team R's restraining line.....68—69

### SWINGING GATE MECHANICS

Added mechanics for when Team A or K present in a swinging gate formation ..... 84—85

# **LOUISIANA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL OFFICIALS MECHANICS FOR AN ON-FIELD CREW OF SIX**

Significant Changes From the Previous Manual are **Highlighted**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

These mechanics have been approved by the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (“LHSAA”) and the Louisiana High School Officials Association (“LHSOA”) after much research and discussion. They are intended to be easy to understand, allow for consistent use, and provide maximum field coverage for high school football. Unless written, specific authorization has been given otherwise, all local officiating associations are to apply these mechanics for use in all varsity football contests.

The on-field officiating crew of six includes a Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, Line Judge, Field Judge, and Side Judge. Unless stated otherwise, the Line Judge and Field Judge work on the press box sideline, and the Head Linesman and Side Judge work on the sideline opposite the press box.

## **II. PREPARATION LEADING UP TO GAME DAY**

### **A. Referee Contact With Home Management**

At least two days before a varsity contest, the Referee should contact the Home Team Athletic Director to verify logistical information about the game and matters pertaining to the officiating crew. The conversation should not involve plays or rule interpretations, as the head coaches from each team will have an opportunity to discuss those matters with the Referee at the game site. A sample outline of the conversation is in Part Four of this manual.

### **B. Individual and Crew Preparation**

All officials should take time during the week to prepare for the upcoming contest, because the limited crew pregame conference at the game site is never the time to begin getting ready. Review game film, continue studying the rules, and know the appropriate philosophies and mechanics in advance of the game. Follow any additional rules and instructions from your local association, your Regional Coordinator of Officials (“RCO”), and the LHSAA.

### **C. Crew Coordination**

The crew should discuss well in advance of the day of the game when and where the officials will meet for traveling to and arriving at the game site. Make sure to arrive at the designated location in ahead of the scheduled time.



## **D. Alcoholic Beverages and Drugs**

Alcoholic beverages and drugs that may hinder physical or mental capacity may not be consumed the day of any game at any level of play. Never purchase alcoholic beverages or enter an establishment that serves such beverages while wearing any part of a recognizable officiating uniform.

## **III. AFTER ARRIVAL AT GAME SITE**

### **A. Arrival and Pregame Conferences**

The entire crew, including clock operators, shall arrive at the game site at least 90 minutes before game time.

Upon arrival at the game site, the crew will conduct a pregame conference led by the Referee with all on-field officials and clock operators participating. A sample officials' pregame conference checklist is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

No later than 45 minutes remaining before game time, the Referee and Umpire will conduct the Pregame Administrative Conference ("PAC") with game day management, representatives of each team, security personnel, contracted and medical personnel from each team, and, if applicable, any broadcast production representatives. A sample checklist for the PAC is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

No later than 30 remaining before game time, the Referee and Umpire will conduct a conference with each Head Coach of each team, beginning with the home team. The Referee will discuss any necessary items with the Head Coach. The Umpire will obtain in writing each Head Coach's verification that all of his team's players are legally equipped and in compliance with all necessary requirements. A minimum, suggested pregame conference checklist is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

### **B. Individual Pregame and Auxiliary Game Duties**

After conferences are completed, officials should complete the following pregame duties:

**Referee:** Secure and approve the game balls, inspect the playing field and pylons, and order the removal of any hazards on or near the field.

**Umpire:** Check player equipment and rule on any questions regarding its legality.

**Head Linesman:** Secure and check the line-to-gain equipment and review with the chain crew members their duties and responsibilities. Sample instructions to give the chain crew are in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

**Line Judge:** Inspect the playing field and pylons, as well as the sideline and end line boundaries.

**Field Judge:** With the Side Judge, locate and instruct the team ball handlers on their duties. Observe the play clock while the Play Clock Operator is testing it. You are responsible for monitoring the play clock during the game. If there is no functional play clock that visibly displays both a 25- and 40-second count, time the play-clock interval yourself, raising your hand overhead when there are 10 seconds remaining. You are responsible for correct time and assisting in getting the game started on time. Time all time outs and intermissions during the game.

**Side Judge:** With the Field Judge, locate and instruct the team ball handlers on their duties. Observe the game clock while it is running and as the Game Clock Operator tests it. During the game, monitor the game clock and maintain official time remaining in absence of a game clock operator or in case of a clock malfunction.

**Clock Operators:** Become familiar with the operation of the game clock and the play clock. Test each clock before the game and immediately report any problems to the Referee. Operate only the clocks. Do not operate other scoreboard functions.

- ***Game Clock Operator:*** Have a back-up timing device (countdown timer) suitable for timing the game should the game clock become inoperative. If the game clock becomes inoperative, move to the field and continue to time the game from a location on the field approximately 15 to 20 yards behind the Referee. If wearing the crew uniform, your penalty flag and bean bag should not be visible. When the crew enters the field 30 minutes prior to game time, start a visible 30-minute countdown on the game clock.
- ***Play Clock Operator:*** Have a backup timing device suitable to time the 40- or 25-second intervals between plays and when the ball is ready for play. If you have been assigned to a game and there is no functioning play clock, report to the Referee. You may be needed to time the play clock intervals using your backup timer from a position either on the sideline or on the field behind the Back Judge. If the play clock operator is not an official, the Back Judge shall conduct a pregame conference with him to instruct him in his duties following the crew's pregame conference.

**Crew:** No later than 30 minutes remaining before game time, the entire crew should be on the field. When opposing teams are on the field, at least two members of the crew should be on the 50-yard line. Move around the field and observe teams as they warm up. Prior to getting teams for the coin toss, meet quickly off the field and discuss any last-minute matters.

#### **IV. COIN TOSS**

Before the coin toss, the Field Judge and Side Judge should escort the teams that

will be on their respective sidelines from the locker room to the sidelines according to the order stated at the PAC. Both teams should be on their respective sidelines no later than five minutes before the scheduled start of the game.

At four minutes before the scheduled start time, the Referee and Umpire should jog to the middle of the field from the press box sideline to conduct the coin toss. The Referee should enter from the right side of the press box, and the Umpire should enter from the left. The Line Judge and Head Linesman will obtain a game ball for the kickoff and line up on the sides of the non-speaking captains. The Field Judge and Side Judge will stand next to the speaking captains.

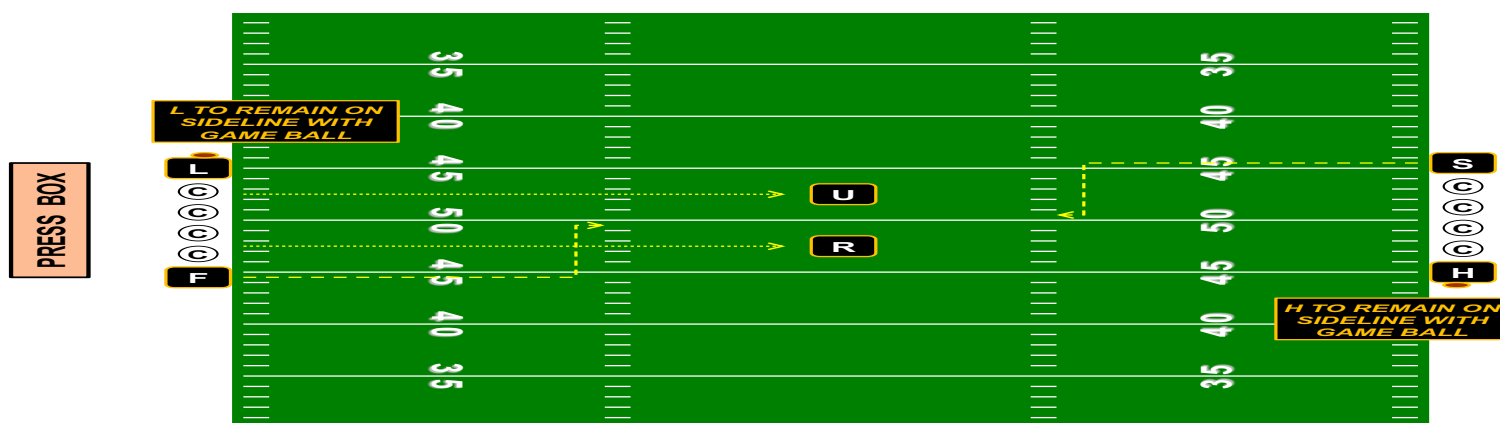
At the Referee's signal, the Field Judge and Side Judge will escort their respective captains on to the field. These officials will stop at the hash marks and send the captains to the Referee and Umpire. Other officials will remain on their sidelines. The captains will face each other with their backs to their own sidelines.

The visiting captain will call the toss. After, the Referee will toss the coin and then obtain each team's option. Officials will record the results and team choices. The Umpire will obtain the kicking team's ball for the kickoff.

If the National Anthem is played following the coin toss, all officials will stand at attention, facing the flag (or music source if there is no flag), with the cap held by the right hand over the left chest.

After, the crew will assemble at midfield for final instructions. Crewmembers will then break to their positions for the opening kickoff.

The officiating positions for the coin toss are illustrated in the following diagram:



## V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES

**Generally:** Signal to start the clock if you observe the kick being touched other than “first touching” in your area of responsibility. Mark a spot of “first touching” that you observe with your bean bag. If you observe the kick go out of bounds untouched by Team R, mark the spot the kick crossed the sideline with your penalty flag. The

Referee, Line Judge, and Head Linesman should be ready to bean bag any spot of momentum within the 5-yard line.

#### **A. Normal Free Kicks**

**Referee:** Starting position is on or behind Team R's goal line and laterally between the goal posts based on the kicker's position. When a receiver lines up inside Team R's 10-yard line, or when you anticipate that the kick will threaten the goal line, move deeper into the end zone. Count Team R players with the Line Judge and Head Linesman and signal. Be sure that all officials are in position. Once the Back Judge hands the ball to the kicker and takes position at the sideline, sound your whistle to signal that the ball is ready for play. You are responsible for the play clock and for knowing whether Team K has at least four players on each side of the kicker when the ball is kicked.

After the ball is kicked, move laterally based on the kick's direction to observe action setting up in front of the catch. Assist in observing the catch or recovery when in your area, but primarily observe action around and in front of the runner. Watch for illegal blocks, clips, forward handing, and other potential fouls. As the runner moves upfield into other officials' areas, observe action behind the runner and off-ball activity. You are not responsible for determining whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R's goal line.

**Umpire:** Align Team K on their restraining line and hand the ball to the kicker. Count Team K with the Field Judge and Side Judge, and never allow the kickoff to proceed without the proper number of players. Observe whether Team K has at least four players on each side of the kicker at the kick and whether all Team K players other than the kicker are within five yards of Team K's restraining line. Jog to a position on Team K's restraining line outside the sideline opposite the press box side of the field and signal the Referee when ready. Be alert for Team K encroachment and formation violations, short kicks, onside kicks, spots of first touching, and early blocking by Team K.

After the ball is kicked, initially observe action on the kicker while running onto the field at an angle toward the middle of the field and no more than 8 to 10 yards up field. Know whether the ball touched the ground and the initial flight of the ball. Watch for early blocks by Team K on surprise onside kicks. Assist with fair catch signals on short pooch kicks. Observe action mainly toward the center of the field to the sideline. As the return develops, work inside-out. Watch for holding, low blocks, illegal blindside blocks, targeting, and other fouls. Observe off-ball action in front of the runner as he approaches, working inside-out as on any running play. Move with the action and, but you do not have goal line responsibility.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is on Team R's goal line at the pylon on your sideline. Count Team R players and signal to the Referee.

Cover the receiver touching, catching, or recovering the kick when in your area. You are responsible for determining whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R's goal line and for winding the clock when the ball is touched in your area.

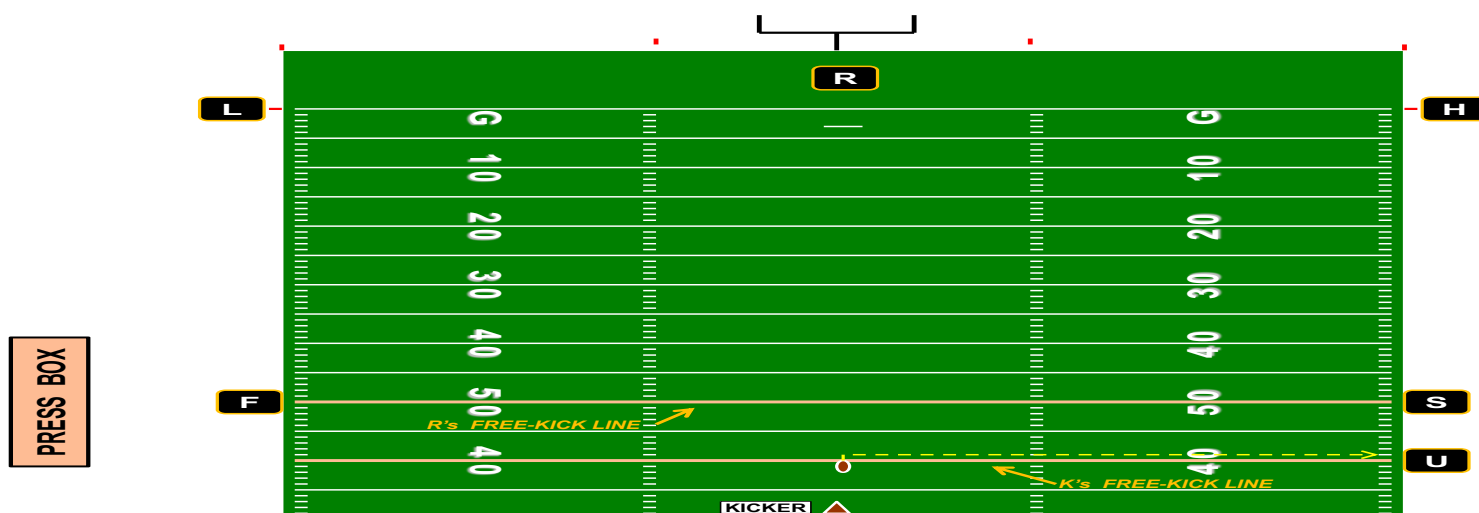
When the kick is deep and the goal line is threatened, stay near the pylon on the goal line to rule on a potential touchback. You must be on the goal line before the ball reaches the goal line. When it is obvious that the goal line is not threatened, or when the return begins, start moving down the sideline to cover the play. When not covering the action around the runner, look across the field for illegal blocks, holding clips, forward handing, off-ball action, and other potential fouls.

Be prepared to rule on kicks out of bounds on your sideline. You are responsible for forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Starting position is on Team R's restraining line on your sideline. Assist in aligning Team R, but it is not necessary to run on to the field to do so. Be aware of encroachment by Team R.

Observe the kick and know if it touched the ground initially. Be alert for an illegal pop-up kick. On a normal kick, move up field along the sideline toward Team R's goal line with a purpose but no more than 8 to 10 yards. On shorter kicks, assist in observing early blocking by Team K. As the return develops, maintain a cushion in advance of the run at all times. You are responsible for Team K's goal line and end line and for forward progress inside Team K's 2-yard line.

The normal free kick positions are illustrated in the following diagram:



## B. Anticipated Short Free Kicks.

When onside kick is likely, the Head Linesman moves to Team R's restraining line on or outside the sideline, and the Line Judge moves to Team K's restraining line on

**Referee:** You have the same primary duties as on a normal free kick, except that you are also responsible for Team R's goal line and end zone.

**Head Linesman and Field Judge:** Be alert for clear encroachment by Team R. Know if the kick touches the ground and breaks the plane of Team R's restraining line. Be aware of an illegal pop-up kick. Be alert for touching by either team, and assist with early illegal blocks by Team K. Be alert for fair catch signals by Team R. If the kick ends up being deep, move downfield to assist the Referee with coverage. If a long return develops, trail the play along the sideline. You have forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

The positions for an anticipated outside kick are illustrated in the following diagram:



### C. Free Kick Following Fair Catch

The positions for a free kick following a fair catch are illustrated in the following diagram:



## VI. PLAY RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Pre-Snap and General Duties

**Crew:** All officials should know the formation, their initial keys and areas of responsibility, and when to shift into zone coverage. Illustrations of initial keys are at Part XIV of this manual.

Before each play, complete all pre-snap duties. Know the down and distance and status of the clock. Count the players for the squads and teams that you are responsible for. Be aware that substitutions and offensive shifts may cause you to change your keys and recount the players.

All officials should also be aware of the need to properly signal the end of a play when it ends in their coverage area. Only the covering official's signal is needed. Generally, other officials should not mirror signals unless it is needed to assist the clock operators. Even then, an official should never mirror a scoring signal unless that official is in position to rule that a score occurred.

When a play ends in your area following a regular non-kicking scrimmage play with no administrative stoppage, the covering official should signal that the ball is dead and that the 40-second play clock should start by giving one of the following signals: (1) **Runner Down Inbounds:** Raise your hand straight above your head (Sig. 7), or, if needed, a wind-clock signal when down near a sideline (Sig. 2); (2) **Runner Out-Of-Bounds:** Stop-clock signal (Sig. 3); (3) **Incomplete Pass:** Incomplete pass signal (Sig. 10); (4) **First Down Awarded:** Stop-clock signal (Sig. 3).

When the ball is dead, accordion on to the field to help give a presence and assist with

dead-ball officiating. Always finish dead-ball officiating before moving the chains, relaying game ball, or moving on to the next play. When there is no pertinent dead-ball action, hustle back to your starting position so that the next snap may occur once the ball is ready for play without needing to reset the play clock.

When marking progress, square off from the sideline to give a spot. Use your up- field foot to give the spot of forward progress.

**Referee:** Signal and make sure of the correct down. Starting position is approximately 12 to 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage and at least as wide as the tight end on the passing-arm side of the quarterback. Be able to comfortably observe the set backs and quarterback for possible illegal motions and false starts.

Count Team A players along with the Umpire, and signal with a clenched fist when 11 are counted. Assist with spotting the ball when able to do so.

Following a scrimmage play that ends inbounds and results in a new series for Team A, be ready to start the game clock when required by giving a “silent wind” of your arm without sounding your whistle. Be aware of the 40-second play clock, and know when the ball is spotted and made ready for play. “Pump up” the play clock if needed.

Notify the Head Coach when his team has used its last timeout.

**Umpire:** Starting position is approximately 8 to 10 yards deep on Team B’s side of the line of scrimmage. Be able to observe the offensive interior line. Vary your starting position depending on the location of the ball and the formation, but keep the ball visible to rule on snap violations.

Count Team A players along with the Referee and signal with a clenched fist if 11 players are counted. Read the offensive alignment and make sure there are five players numbered 50 through 79 (or numbering exceptions) on the line at the snap.

Be alert for snap infractions, interference with the snap, false starts, encroachment with contact by Team B, and disconcerting words or acts by the defense.

Be aware of the lateral position of the ball for assistance in returning the ball to the previous spot and penalty enforcement. You are the primary official to spot the ball, but the Referee can assist.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is outside the sideline and on the line of scrimmage. Be alert for incoming and outgoing substitutes on your sidelines. Work to keep the restricted area of the sideline clear.

Know numbers of eligible pass receivers. Check positioning of the wingbacks, slot backs and split ends. Use hand to backfield signal when the closest offensive player is off the line, and hold this signal until the snap or until the closest offensive player is



no longer off the line. Know whether there are more than four Team A players in the backfield at the snap. Communicate with each other.

Read the offensive formation and be aware of your initial, eligible receiver keys and responsibilities. If they are not pressed, be ready to assist with action on your tackle following the snap.

You are responsible forward progress to Team B's 2-yard line. Assist each other with forward progress using cross-field mechanics when necessary.

Be alert for false starts and encroachment by either team and disconcertion by the defense. Sound your whistle, moving in quickly and shutting down all action immediately. If a player goes in motion, observe him while he is on your side of the ball to ensure the motion is legal. If that player is not on your side, you should still be ready to make an obvious call.

If a first down is obvious, stop the clock. If the spot is close, call the Referee over to rule.

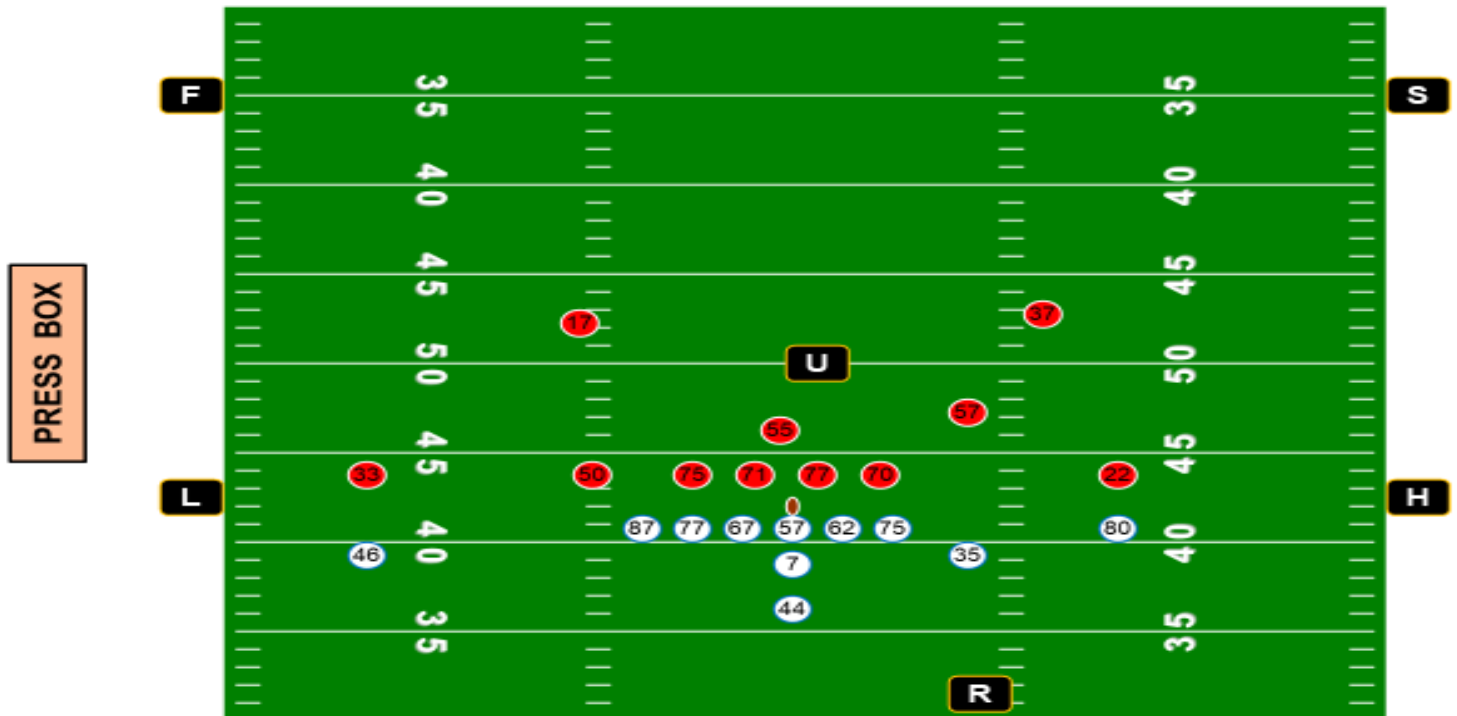
- ***Head Linesman – Additional Duties:*** Supervise the auxiliary chain crew consisting of the line-to-gain chains and the down box marker. You are primarily responsible for keeping the accurate down count, though all officials are responsible for this. Visually confirm the next down with the Referee using an appropriate hand signal. As a general rule, do not call for the chain crew to move until the Referee signals. For all first downs, the Head Linesman will mark the spot with his foot for the chain crew at the sideline. If the down box marker is not in place when the next snap is imminent, drop a bean bag at the line of scrimmage behind you on the sideline. When the goal line is the line to gain, only use the down box marker to mark the line of scrimmage, and have the chains removed from the area and placed on the ground.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Starting position is on your sideline 20 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. Count Team B players and signal to each other with a clenched fist when there are 11 players. Be alert for substitutions and “hideout” plays, and assist in keeping the restricted area of the sideline clear. Read the offensive formation and be aware of your initial, eligible receiver keys and responsibilities. Your initial keys are the widest receiver on your side of the field. Assist in relaying information to other officials and coaches. Except for goal line situations, the Field Judge and Side Judge have forward progress inside Team B's two-yard line.

- ***Field Judge – Additional Duties:*** You are responsible for monitoring the play clock and enforcing the 25- or 40-second intervals between plays. If there is no functioning, visible play clock, raise your hand overhead when there are 10 seconds remaining for the snap to occur.
- ***Side Judge – Additional Duties:*** You are responsible for monitoring the game

clock and maintaining official time remaining in the absence of a game clock operator or in the case of a clock malfunction.

The initial positions for scrimmage plays are illustrated in the following diagram:



## B. Running Plays

**Referee:** You are generally responsible for the football until it is beyond the line of scrimmage. While the ball is behind the line of scrimmage, focus on blocks in the area immediately around the point of attack, generally working from the inside-out. Once the runner moves beyond where a tight end or wingback would normally be positioned, begin covering the action behind the runner as he advances into clear space.

At the snap, move with a purpose and only if necessary. Delay moving immediately to avoid hindering reverse or delayed plays and to assure maximum vision of play. If needed, move backwards at an angle to keep the play in front.

If the play is wide, slowly move in that direction and watch for action around the runner to the neutral zone. On option plays, if the quarterback keeps the ball and turns up field, observe action on the trailing back until there is no longer a threat of a foul.

When the quarterback keeps the ball and runs into a side zone or out of bounds, follow him all the way including out of bounds. When runners other than the quarterback move into the side zone, move in that direction covering the play and action as normal, but it is not necessary to go beyond the hash mark.

Unless the runner was the quarterback or Team A is running a “hurry-up” offense, assist in spotting the ball at the hash mark when the ball is dead between the nine-yard marks and the sideline or out of bounds. For obvious first downs on long plays, or on short gains between the hash marks when you are not spotting the ball, there is no need to run to the line of scrimmage. Instead, move to your position to be ready for the next snap.

**Umpire:** Your coverage depends on whether the run is between or outside the tackles. If between the tackles, focus on the point of attack in front of and around the runner and action on or by the interior linemen. Be alert for holding, low blocks, and chop blocks. On run plays outside the tackles, slowly turn toward the flow of the play and focus on blocks and action in the area immediately behind and away from the runner as the runner moves forward. In addition to offensive holding, defensive holding, and chop block fouls, be alert for clipping fouls behind the play. Do not be restricted by the hash marks.

When the ball becomes dead in a side zone or out of bounds, move out and retrieve the ball. When the ball is dead between the nine-yard marks and the sideline or out of bounds, relay the ball to the Referee to spot the ball at the hash mark, unless the Referee is not in a position to assist with spotting. For obvious first downs and long gains, short gains between the hash marks, or balls that become dead within a few steps beyond the hash marks, retrieve and spot the ball getting forward progress from the wing official. In the last two minutes of each half, when a runner is down inbounds, move sideline to sideline after each play to retrieve the ball that was used in the previous play and place it at the succeeding spot for the next play without relaying the ball to any official.

When spotting the ball, hustle, but do not hurry. Maintain a consistent pace throughout the game when retrieving a ball and spotting it for the next play. When time is critical, increase your pace, but you should never move faster than a brisk jog. After the ball is spotted, make eye contact with the Referee, and be ready to move toward the line of scrimmage to prevent the snap if the Referee signals you to do so because the crew is not yet in position. Use your voice and presence to communicate to the snapper to hold up. It will not usually be necessary to step up exactly over the ball to hold the snap.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Observe actions by tackles, the nearest interior lineman, and inside receivers. Observe blocking action in front of the runner behind the line of scrimmage or in the neutral zone on runs to your side, generally working from the outside in. Maintain position on the line of scrimmage until the runner crosses it, allowing the play to develop in front of you. However, if your position is threatened, be ready to move down the sideline into the backfield and trail the play as the runner moves beyond the neutral zone. If a pass is possible, the Line Judge should back up and remain on the line of scrimmage when possible. If the play is away from you, observe cleanup action behind the Referee and Umpire while moving downfield with the play giving special attention to late action on the quarterback after he has

relinquished the ball.

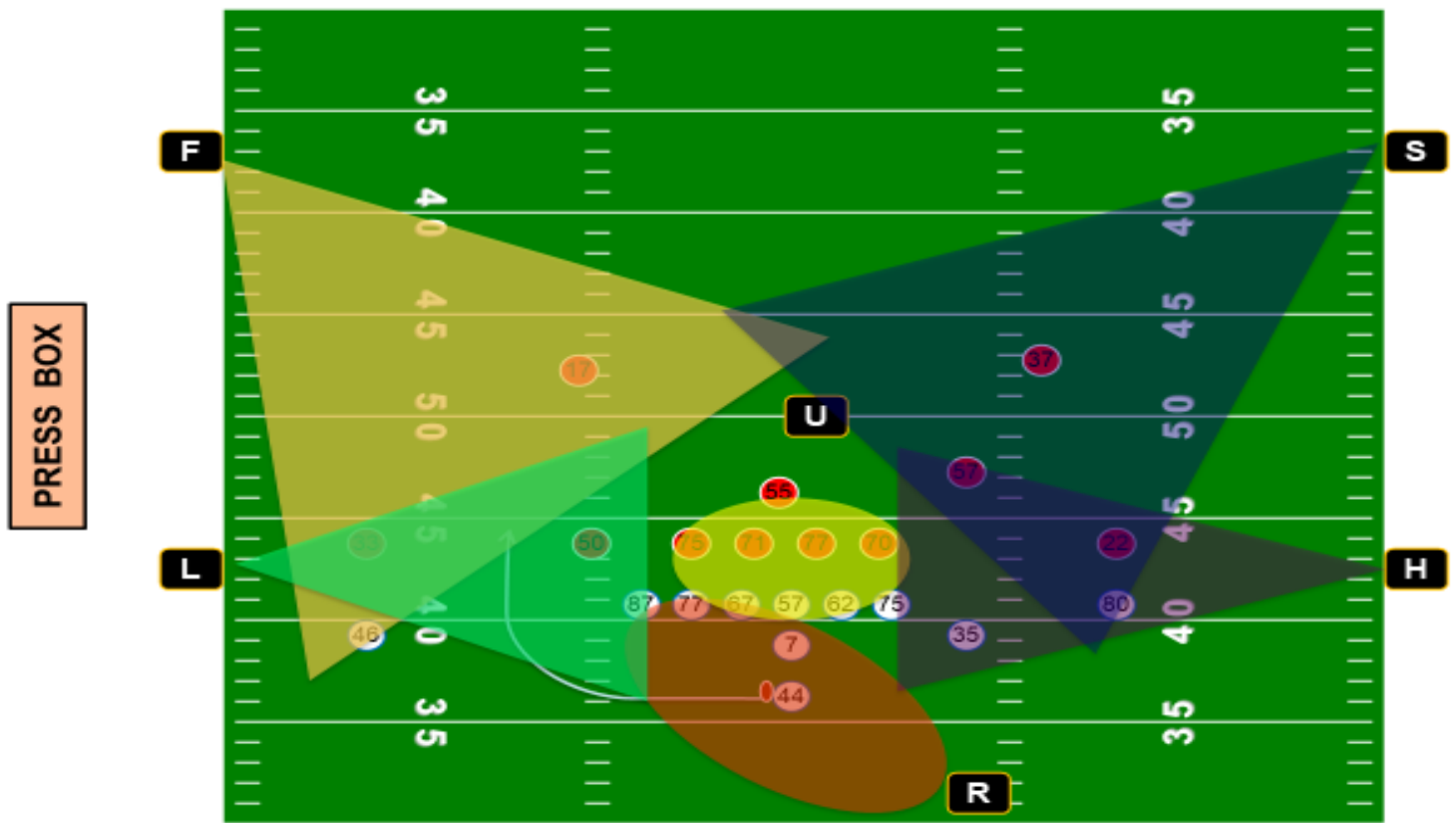
When the runner is down in your area, signal that the ball is dead and that the 40-second play clock should start by raising your hand straight above your head. Give an accurate forward progress spot, and hold the spot until the Referee or Umpire acknowledges it for spotting purposes. Use cross-field mechanics when needed to assist each other in marking forward progress. When the ball is dead, accorion on to the field to help give a presence and assist with dead-ball officiating. When there is no pertinent dead-ball action, hustle back to your starting position so that the next snap may occur once the ball is ready for play. When marking progress, come in by squaring off from the sideline and giving a spot. Use your up-field foot to give the spot of forward progress.

When the ball is dead inbounds near the sideline including when a runner is forced sideways or backwards out of bounds, give a winding signal to indicate that the game clock should continue running and that the 40-second play clock should start. If the ball goes out of bounds, hold the out of bounds spot and face the action out of bounds while either the Referee or deep wing official retrieves the ball. When getting the out of bounds spot, always keep your head up and observe the action. If a first down is obvious, give a signal to stop the game clock, which will also signal the 40-second play clock to start. If close, signal to and wait for the Referee to rule. The Line Judge will usually have the best view to initially advise the Referee on the ball's location relative to the line to gain.

Give an accurate forward progress spot on every play, and hold the spot until the Referee or Umpire acknowledges it for spotting. Use cross-field mechanics when needed to assist each other in marking forward progress.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Initially observe action involving the widest receiver. Be alert for illegal blocks, “crack back” blindside blocks, targeting, and holding. Assist with second-level blocks setting up in your area of the field, which is mostly your half of the field. Maintain a cushion in advance of the play, and assist with action on lead blockers. Be at the goal line before the runner crosses it. Take forward progress inside the 2-yard line. If the play goes out of bounds on your sideline, generally let the line of scrimmage official take the spot, and you proceed directly into the out of bounds area to observe, clean up action, and retrieve the ball and ball carrier. If the play is going away from you, assist in observing action behind the Umpire.

Areas of coverage for a running play are illustrated in the following diagram:



### C. Passing Plays

**Referee:** On passing downs, as the passer drops back within the tackles, retreat with him and stay outside of and deeper than him, moving backwards at an angle to maintain cushion. Observe drop back blockers in vision, especially the tackles and other linemen potentially holding. Be aware of action by the tackle opposite you initially (or the tackle on the side of the field with three or more receivers) and any offensive linemen that could potentially foul generally. Most importantly, be alert for any defensive player moving through the offensive line that presents as a possible threat to the passer, who is your primary responsibility until there is no longer a threat for a foul. After the pass is thrown, continue to observe action on and around the passer until there is no threat of a foul. Verbally alert defenders when the passer has released the ball. When not in goal line mechanics, you have secondary responsibility for whether a pass is forward or backward behind the line of scrimmage, and the Line Judge has primary responsibility.

You are the sole judge for calling intentional grounding, but you must first obtain information from other officials as to whether a forward pass was thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver or, if the passer was outside if the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone, whether the pass reached the neutral zone. Know whether the passer has been beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone in possession of the ball.

On a change of possession, be alert for action on the quarterback. Specifically, be alert for targeting fouls at all times and illegal blocks against him when he is clearly out of the play.

**Umpire:** Adjust your position to maintain a clear view of the center and two guards to avoid oncoming pass receivers. Be alert for holding or other illegal blocks by observing, but not tunneling on, the center and two guards. Be alert for ineligible receivers being down field early. Assist the Line Judge in determining whether the pass crossed the neutral zone.

Once the pass has been released, turn and assist in determining if there is a catch or incompleteness, but maintain coverage of your area of responsibility as long as there is a threat of action. After a catch, cover continuing action around the runner in the side zone.

When the ball is snapped inside Team B's 10-yard line, you are primarily responsible for determining whether a forward pass crossed the line of scrimmage and if the passer was beyond the neutral zone. Once the pass has been released, turn quickly to assist in determining if there is a catch or incomplete, but maintain coverage of your primary area of responsibility as long as there is a threat of action. After a catch, continue covering action around the runner in the side zone.

**Head Linesman:** Your initial, primary responsibility is for your eligible key receiver. Be prepared to drift downfield along the sideline up to five yards at a pace allowing him to maintain focus on his keys in the belt area (roughly from the line of scrimmage to 10 yards downfield). This could be quickly, slowly, or not at all depending on how the play develops and the pace and routes of the receivers. Any movement should be deliberate and with a purpose. Rarely will you drift more than five yards downfield, but you should adjust depending on the situation (end of half or game pass near end zone, fourth and long, third and seven, etc.). The drift should only take place if your key takes you downfield. If your key stays in to block, you should not move downfield. If your key does move downfield, do not advance beyond him. If your key receiver or the belt area is not threatened, assist with other blocking with the tackle on your side or other receivers that enter the belt area and become threatened.

When the pass is released deep downfield, move downfield with the pass. Cover receptions between you and the deep official. For shorter downfield passes, especially when the ball is thrown directly into your area, reducing movement while the ball is in the air will improve your ability to see the play more accurately. If the pass is not thrown in your area, observe off-ball action.

Provide information to the Referee on whether eligible receivers were in the area of a forward pass or if an incomplete pass reached the neutral zone in situations involving possible intentional grounding.

Assist with observing ineligible receivers being too far downfield before the pass is thrown, especially if the play is going away from you and you are the offside official.

**Line Judge:** Initially, your primary responsibility is your receiver or other receivers in the 0- to 10-yard belt area if they are threatened. Observe the blocking tackle and your eligible receiver, but, if the receiver is threatened or goes downfield, give him priority. You are primarily responsible for activity involving the line of scrimmage, including whether the passer goes beyond the line of scrimmage and whether a forward pass crosses the line of scrimmage. You are also primarily responsible for determining whether a pass behind the line is forward or backwards. Extend (“punch”) your arm toward the offensive side of the ball to indicate a backwards pass.

Assist with observing ineligible receivers being too far downfield before the pass is thrown, especially if the play is going away from you and you are the offside official.

When the pass is released deep downfield, move downfield with the pass. Cover receptions between you and the deep official. For shorter downfield passes, especially when the ball is thrown directly into your area, reducing movement while the ball is in the air will improve your ability to see the play more accurately. If the pass is not thrown in your area, observe off-ball action.

Provide information to the Referee on whether eligible receivers were in the area of a forward pass or if an incomplete pass reached the neutral zone in situations involving possible intentional grounding.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Move backwards to maintain cushion and assure maximum vision. Observe contact on key receivers and the defensive backs, and then other action behind the Umpire. Cover your sideline from the original position to the end line. When the ball is thrown into your area, cover the play and watch the defender’s action on the receiver. Be alert when a receiver flashes back toward the ball.

On plays originating between Team B’s 20- and 10-yard lines, your starting position should be on the goal line. Be prepared to move to the end line and make sure that no receiver or runner gets behind you. You have goal line and end line responsibility as needed.

## **D. Reverse Mechanics**

During a scrimmage kick return, or when Team B advances following a change of possession, officials should use reverse mechanics to cover the play.

**Referee:** Cautiously move backwards towards Team A or K’s goal line while maintaining coverage of the quarterback or kicker. Be alert for targeting fouls and illegal blocks against these players when they are out of the play, especially blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Work from the inside out to cover the play. Do not turn

your back on the Quarterback or Kicker while moving toward the goal line.

**Umpire:** Work as if covering any other play. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** When Team B or R begins its return, begin backing up along the sideline and officiating in front of the return, assisting with lead blockers. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Maintain a cushion in advance of the play and be on the goal line before the runner. Take forward progress between Team A or K's 2-yard line and goal line. The Field Judge and Side Judge will take forward progress otherwise.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Trail the play and cover action on and around the runner on your side. If you are not covering the runner, assist in off-ball coverage and cleanup action behind other officials. When not covering the runner, be alert for off-ball activity, especially blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Take forward progress up to Team A or K's 2-yard line. The Line Judge and Head Linesman will have forward progress inside Team A or K's 2-yard line.

## VII. SCRIMMAGE KICK (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES

**Referee:** Starting position is slightly behind and to the side of the kicker, outside the tight-end position, and on the right side of the field, in a position to look at approximately a 45-degree angle to the position where the kick will be made, so that you can see the snap, back blockers, and attacking defensive players. With the Umpire, count Team K players and signal accordingly when there are 11 players. Verbally alert Team R players when the kicker has kicked the ball. Observe action on and around the kicker, then clean up behind the kick action while cautiously drifting down field, opposite the side of the Umpire. If the ball goes out of bounds in flight, assist the sideline official in determining the out of bounds spot. If a return develops, use reverse mechanics to cover the play while staying alert to actions involving the kicker when he is out of the play. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

If the kick is blocked behind the line, box in the play with the line of scrimmage official on the other side of the loose ball.

**Umpire:** Starting position is approximately 10 yards off the line of scrimmage. Be in position to see the snap and rule on any contact with the snapper. Together with the Referee, count Team K players and give the signal accordingly when there are 11 players. Warn Team R players not to charge directly into the snapper. Locate ineligible receivers, remembering that Team A or K may use exceptions to the normal numbering requirement. Be alert for holding by either team. Once the kick has crossed the neutral zone and action in the line has cleared, turn and observe action on the return, being alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

If the ball is blocked behind the line of scrimmage and picked up by a member of the



receiving team, follow the play and cover action around and behind the runner.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position and pre-snap responsibilities are the same as for any scrimmage play. Communicate with each other, and observe whether there are more than four offensive players in the backfield. After the snap, hold your positions until the kicked ball crosses the neutral zone. Assist with blocking by and against any Team K protect players, and assist the Referee with ruling if the kick is tipped by a Team R player.

Be alert for errant snaps or blocked kicks. If a block occurs, and the loose ball is between you and the Referee, move into the backfield to help with coverage, boxing the play in with the Referee. If the ball is not between you and the Referee, maintain your position at the line of scrimmage and rule on any action involving the line of scrimmage.

After the kick has crossed the neutral zone, move purposefully downfield, generally no more than 10 yards. Once the return begins, use reverse mechanics and be in advance of the play. If the runner is in your area, cover action ahead of the runner. If the runner is not in your area, cover off-ball action, being alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls. You are responsible for Team K's goal line and have forward progress inside Team K's 2-yard line.

**Field Judge:** Starting position is on your sideline about 5 yards behind the deepest receiver. Count Team R's players along with the Side Judge and signal accordingly when Team R has 11 players. Quickly observe action by and on the gunner as he comes down, but be prepared to switch to coverage of the catch where necessary.

If the kick will clearly land on your side of the hash mark closest to you (your 1/3 of the field), signal the Side Judge by extended arm towards R's goal line that you will observe the ball. In this situation, you are responsible for fair catch, valid signal, interference, hand-offs, kicks out of bounds on his sideline, ruling on plays at the goal line. When the runner is in your area, officiate while moving down the sideline, and take the runner on the return until the runner enters another official's area of the field. You have forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

If the kick will land on the other side of the hash mark closest to you, cover the play around the receiver and be ready to take the runner if the return is to your side of the field. Be alert for low blocks, illegal blindside blocks, and targeting fouls.

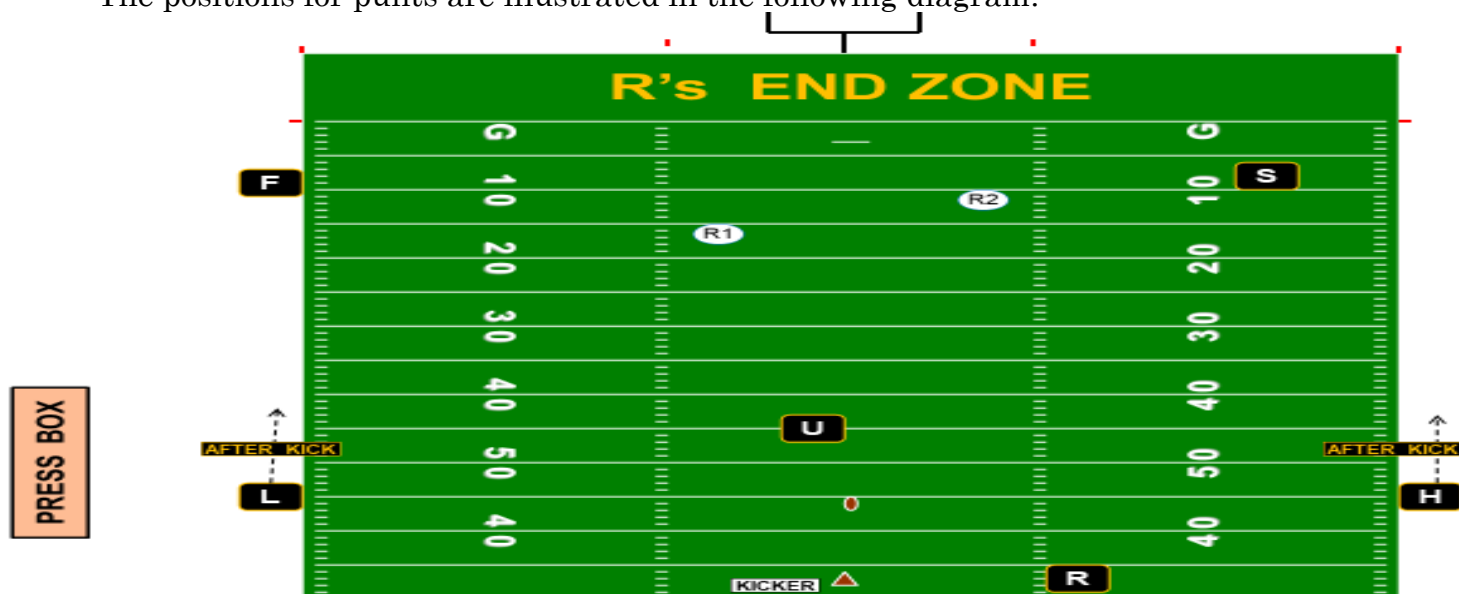
**Side Judge:** Starting position is on the field between your sideline and hash mark, approximately 5 yards behind the deepest receiver, and at least 4 to 5 yards towards the sideline from the deepest receiver. Count Team R's players along with the Field Judge and signal accordingly when Team R has 11 players. Initial coverage is the same as on any other play. Quickly observe action by and on the gunner as he comes down, but be prepared to switch to coverage of the catch where necessary.

You have primary responsibility for Team R's goal line, ruling on touchbacks, and batted balls near the goal line. Also, be ready to bean bag the end of the kick, any spot of first touching, and spots of momentum. Be alert for valid and invalid fair catch signals, and ruling on a valid fair catch.

If the kick will land on your side of the hash mark farthest from you (your 2/3 of field), be alert for fair catches, valid signals, interference, hand-offs, kicks out of bounds on his sideline, plays at the goal line, and taking the runner on the return until he enters another official's zone. As the runner moves toward you, move toward the sideline and officiate from the outside-in. You have forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

If the kick will land on the other side of the Field Judge's hash mark, cover action off-ball action until the runner comes to your side of the field.

The positions for punts are illustrated in the following diagram:



## VIII. FIELD GOAL TRIES AND TRY FOR POINT

### A. Normal Scoring Kick Formation

**Referee:** Starting position is about 10 yards wide on the side facing the front of the holder and about 2 to 3 yards deeper than the holder. Count Team K players along with the Umpire and give the appropriate signal when they have 11 players. After the snap, observe action by the holder, including a muff, fumble, or recovery. If a kick is made, observe action on and around the kicker and holder, and verbally alert Team R when the kick is made. Following the kick, and after all action around the kicker and holder is over, signal the result of the kick to the press box after receiving information from the covering officials. Be prepared to cover and move with the ball following an errant snap or if the play turns into a running or pass play.

**Umpire:** Starting position is about 5 to 7 yards from Team B's line of scrimmage. Prior to the snap, count Team K players along with the Referee and give the appropriate signal with 11 players or less. Locate ineligible receivers and be aware of any numbering exceptions. Be in a position to observe the snap and action against the snapper. Be alert for obvious hurdling, pull and shoots, and other personal fouls. If the play turns into a run or pass play, officiate as on any other scrimmage play.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is the same as any other scrimmage play. Communicate with each other, and observe whether there are more than four offensive players in the backfield. Be ready to cover action on your sideline from the line of scrimmage to the end line if necessary. Do not leave the line of scrimmage until the ball has crossed the line and it is necessary to move. If you do not need to move to cover downfield action, quickly close in to the line play after the kick and observe action.

If the play turns into a run or pass play, move to cover the play. Move along the sidelines to cover the goal line. If the ball is snapped outside Team R's 20-yard line, the deep wing official on your sideline will be assist with the goal line.

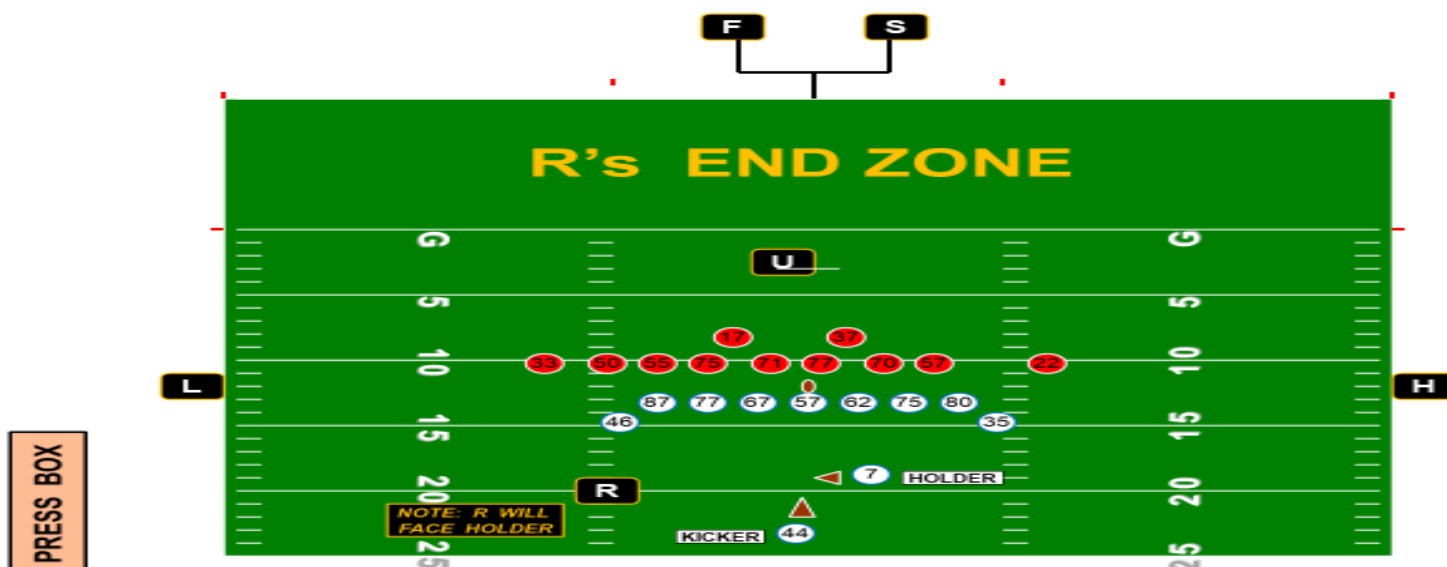
If a return develops, use reverse mechanics. You have goal line responsibility.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Starting position is behind the upright on your side of the field. Count Team R players and give the appropriate signal to each other when 11 players are present. When ruling on whether the kick is good, the Side Judge takes primary responsibility for his upright and the crossbar, and the Field Judge takes primary responsibility for his upright. The Side Judge may blow his whistle once the try is kicked or when the field goal attempt is over. After the kick ends, communicate the result to each other, then simultaneously signal the result of the play. Hold the signal long enough for the Referee to observe it.

If the play turns into a run or pass play, move to cover the play. If the ball is snapped inside Team R's 20-yard line, the Head Linesman and Line Judge have the goal line. Move along the end line toward sidelines, being ready to cover any play with the line of scrimmage official on your side. If the ball is snapped outside Team R's 20-yard line, move forward toward the goal line at an angle to your sideline to help cover the goal line.

If a return develops, use reverse mechanics, and cover the play from inside-out while moving toward the side zone. If the runner is in your area, move toward the sideline and be prepared to cover forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

The positions for field goal and scrimmage-kick try attempts are illustrated in the following drawing:



## B. Swinging Gate Formation

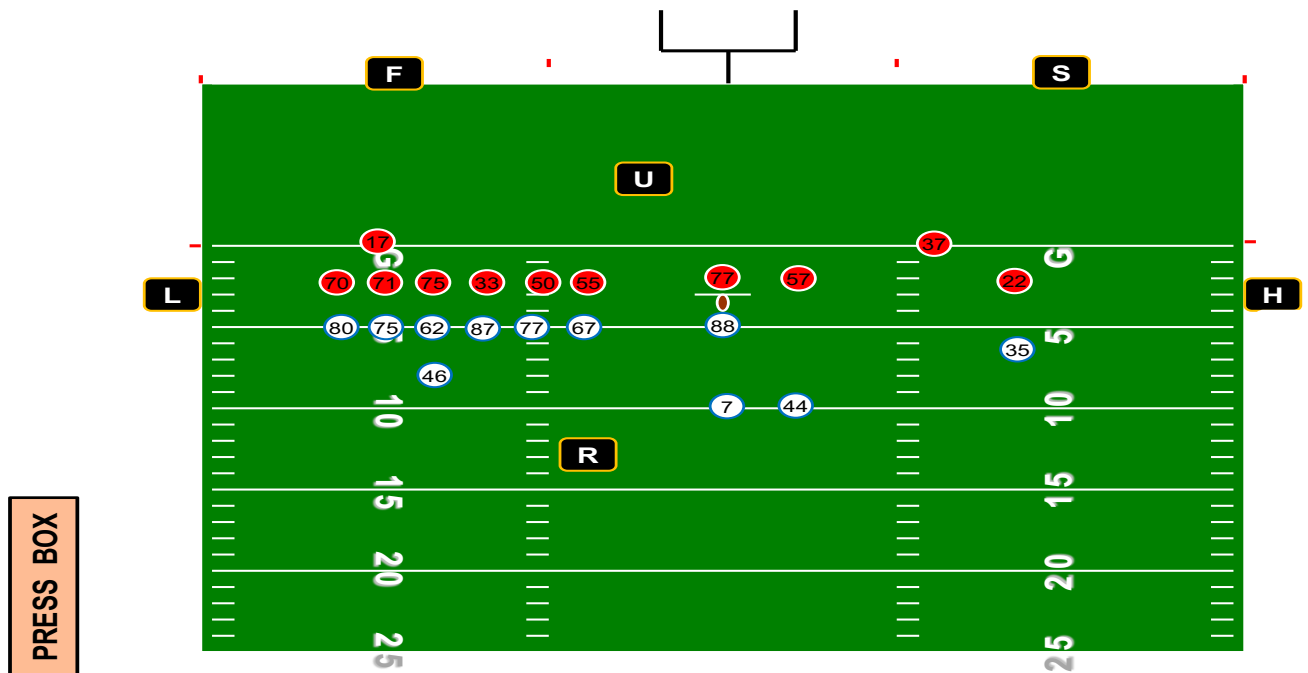
**Referee:** Take an initial position in the offensive backfield at your normal scrimmage-play depth and between the snapper and the gate, even if this puts you on the non-throwing arm side of the potential passer. Be aware of potential numbering exceptions and alignment by the offense. If the offense snaps from this formation, officiate the play as necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your normal kick position.

**Umpire:** Take an initial position between the snapper and the gate. Be slightly deeper than your usual depth on scrimmage-play formations. Be aware of potential numbering exceptions and alignment by the offense. If the offense snaps from this formation, be alert for illegal action against the snapper and officiate the play as necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your normal kick position.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Take your normal positions on the line of scrimmage. Observe the formation and identify eligible receivers. Officiate the neutral zone. If the offense snaps from this formation, apply goal line mechanics and officiate the play. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, officiate the play accordingly.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Take an initial position on the end line at the numbers. Identify eligible receivers on your side of the field. If you are lined up on the same side of the field as the gate, assist if possible in identifying potential numbering exceptions. If the offense snaps from this formation, officiate the play as needed, and box in the end zone with the line-of-scrimmage official on your side if the play comes to that area. You do not need to rush to the end line pylon, though you may widen out if necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your normal kick position.

The initial positions for swinging gate formations are illustrated in the following drawing:



## IX. MEASUREMENT FOR FIRST DOWN

When the ball is dead and forward progress is close to the line to gain, the covering official should alert the Referee, who will decide if the clock should be stopped to signal a first down or ask for a measurement.

If a measurement is needed, the Referee will take a position near the ball but on the side opposite the press box. The Field Judge will hold the ball in place on the ground from the downfield side while shading away from the press box.

The Head Linesman will go to the sideline and mark the front stake of the chains with the down box. He will then take the chain at the clip, and move the chains with the chain crew onto the field toward the ball.

The Line Judge will help the Head Linesman to align the chains on the field for measurement by giving him a spot on the yard line with the clip in line with, but on the press box side of, the ball.

Once the Head Linesman has the clip down and secure, the Umpire will take the front stake from the chain crewman and stretch the chains on the press box side of the ball so the Referee can rule on whether the front of the ball is beyond the line to gain.

The Side Judge will obtain a new ball and keep the area clear so that the press box can observe the measurement.

If a first down is indicated, the Head Linesman will release the chain crew to return to the sideline where he will give them a first down spot.

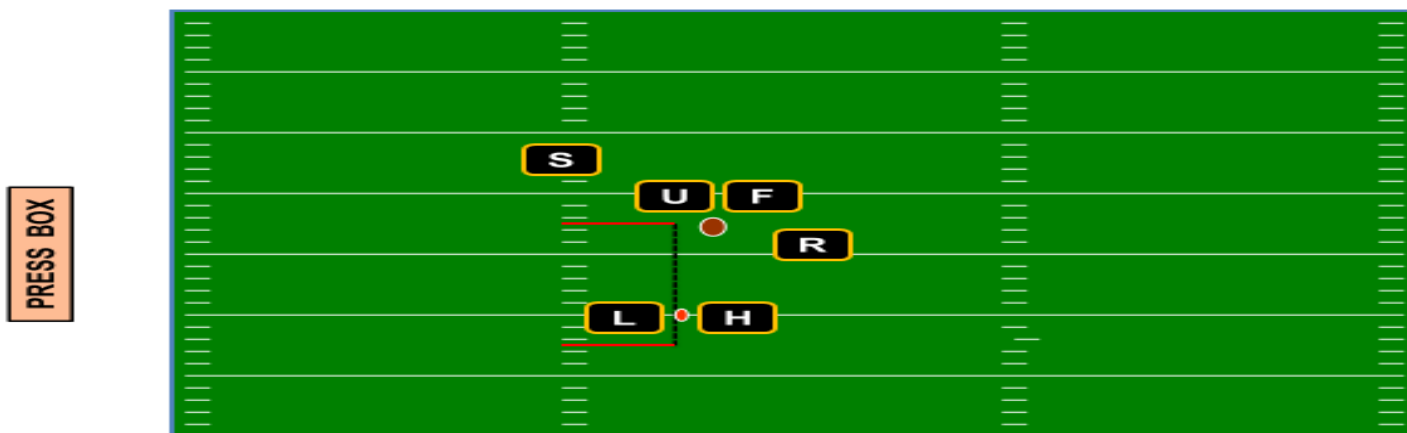
If the line to gain has not been reached and the ball is in between the hash marks, the Head Linesman will return to the sideline, re-spot the clip, and make sure the chain is stretched to place the chain in its original position. The ball will be kept in its spot on the ground for the next snap.

If the line to gain has not been reached and the ball is dead in a side zone, the Umpire will keep control of the front stake. The Referee, from the side of the ball opposite the press box, will use his hands to show how short of the line to gain the ball is. The Referee will then grasp the link of the chain in front of the ball. The Head Linesman will hold the clip, the Referee will hold the chain link, and the Umpire will hold the front stake. They will bring the chains to the hash mark and align them with assistance from the Line Judge.

Once the chains are aligned, the Referee will obtain the new ball from the Side Judge and spot it just inside the hash mark at the proper spot. While this process is occurring, the Field Judge will hold the dead ball in the side zone at its spot on the ground until the Referee has correctly spotted the new ball inside the hash mark and has released the chains back to the sideline. The Field Judge should then give the old ball to the ball handler. If the Referee happens to drop the chain, the new ball does not line up clearly with the old ball, or some other event occurs causing a problem with the process, return the chains to the old ball and start over.

The positions for a measurement are illustrated in the following drawing:

**MEASUREMENT**



## **X. PLAYS NEAR THE GOAL LINE**

### **A. Ball Outside Team B's 7-Yard Line**

When the ball is snapped outside of Team B's 7-yard line for plays near the goal line, the Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, and Line Judge will assume their normal

positions. The Field Judge and Side Judge will position themselves on the goal line outside the pylon and will maintain this position as Team A moves toward the goal line unless the runners or receivers force them to move to the end line. The Line Judge and Head Linesman must be ready to move to the goal line if the Field Judge and Side Judge are forced to the end line.

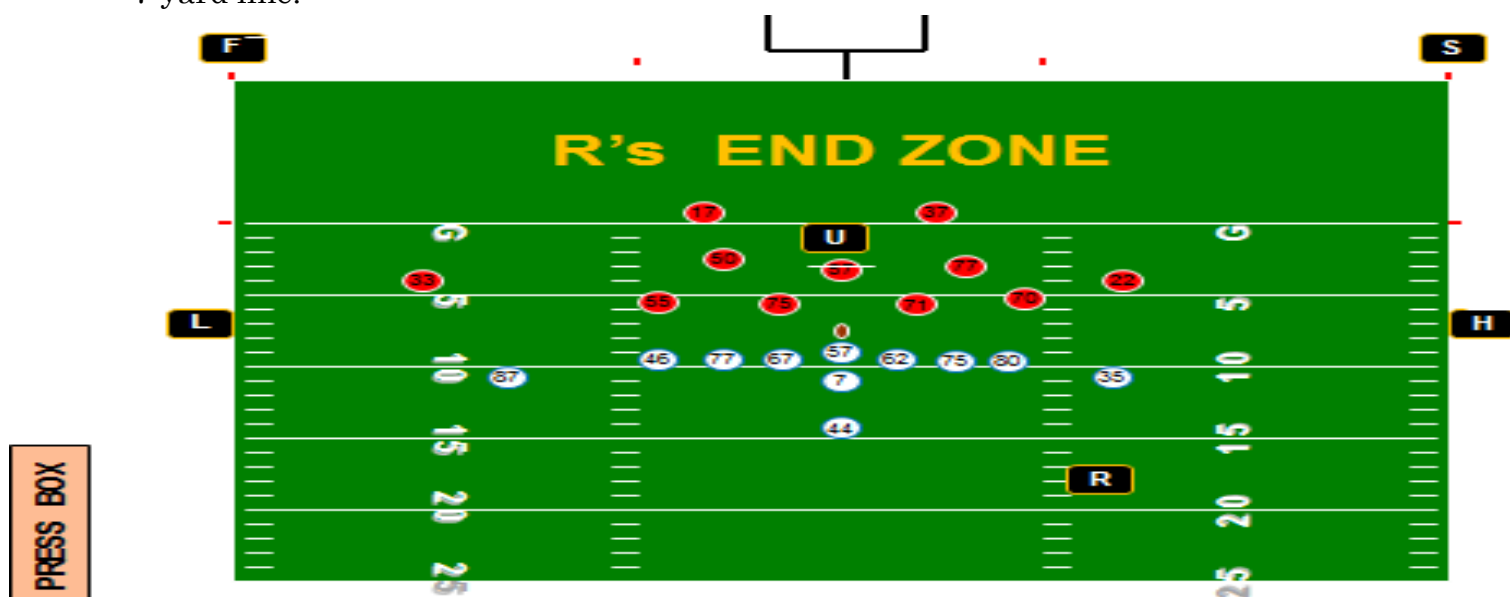
## B. Ball On and Inside Team B's 7-Yard Line

When the ball is snapped at or inside Team B's 7-yard line, the Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, and Line Judge will assume their normal positions. The Field Judge and Side Judge will position themselves at the end line where it intersects with the sideline. At the snap, the Head Linesman and Line Judge will move to the goal line outside the pylon and officiate from there. They should be on the goal line when the ball crosses it. The Referee will rule on passes behind the line of scrimmage. The Umpire will rule on whether the pass or passer crossed the line of scrimmage.

When game situations dictate, and the ball is near Team B's 7-yard line or in short yardage situations, the Field Judge and Side Judge will position themselves on the goal line. The Head Linesman will make this determination.

All officials should communicate with each other between each down about positioning and goal line coverage whenever the ball is to be snapped on or inside team B's 20-yard line and especially when nearing the goal line.

The following diagram shows the positions for plays starting on and inside Team B's 7-yard line.



## C. Goal Line Coming Out

When Team A snaps the ball on or inside its own 3-yard line, the Head Linesman and Line Judge should immediately move to the goal line. When Team A snaps the

ball between the 3 and 10-yard lines, the Line Judge holds the line of scrimmage, and the Head Linesman reads the play and retreats to the goal line if necessary. All other officials should officiate the play as normal.

## **XI. END OF A PERIOD**

When time expires for after any period, the Referee will hold the ball in one hand over his head to signal the official end of the period after pausing momentarily to make sure that no foul, obvious timing error, request for a coach-official conference, or other irregularity has occurred.

### **A. After the First and Third Quarters**

Once the period officially ends, the Referee, Umpire, and Field Judge will meet at the ball and agree and record possession, next down to be played, and the yard line where the ball is located. All officials will record the same information, and the Head Linesman will record the position of the clip. The Head Linesman will stay on his sideline and record all of the above and also the yard line where the clip is located. The Line Judge and Field Judge will at all times observe the teams, and help each team get turned around and located at the correct yard line. The Referee and Umpire will move to the location of the ball at the new spot.

Prior to moving the chains, the Side Judge will proceed to the sideline and confirm the information with the Head Linesman and note the yard line where the clip is located. The Side Judge will observe the chains being turned around and then go to the opposite end of the field and make certain the clip is placed in the correct location.

The Change of Quarters procedure should take no more than one minute, which is timed by the Field Judge. With 15 seconds remaining in the time out, the Field Judge should signal the Referee, and sideline officials should get the teams back onto the field. After checking that all officials are in proper position and that the clock has been reset and that there is no other delay, the Referee will mark the ball ready for play.

### **B. After the End of the First Half**

The Game Clock Operator will put the length of the half time period on the Game Clock and wait for the Referee's signal. When all players and coaches have cleared the field, the Referee will signal the Game Clock Operator to start the Game Clock totime the half time period.

All officials will exit the field together and should neither avoid nor seek out coaches during the exit from the field. The Side Judge monitor the duration of half time, and the time will start when both teams have cleared the playing area. If there are any discussions between officials and coaches, the Referee will be the spokesman for the crew.



Five minutes prior to the end of half time, the Field Judge and Side Judge will separately make contact with the head coaches for the teams on their sidelines and notify them of the time remaining in the half time. These officials will remain with their respective teams and make sure the teams return to the field in time for the mandatory warm-up period. These officials will obtain choices from the head coaches concerning receiving, kicking, and defending a goal.

## **XII. OVERTIME PROCEDURES**

All varsity non-Jamboree games must play an overtime period if, at the end of regulation time, the score is tied.

The overtime procedure to be used is the National Federation of State High School Association's 10-yard line overtime procedure specified in the Football Rules Book along with any additional procedures of the LHSAA. These procedures should be part of the pregame.

When the score is tied at the end of regulation, all field officials will meet at the center of the field to review overtime procedures for three minutes. The Game Clock Operator will come down to the field. The Play Clock Operator will continue to operate the play clock. After this three-minute intermission, the Head Linesman and Side Judge will go to the sideline opposite the press box, and the Line Judge and Field Judge will go to the press box sideline to inform the coaches of any special penalties that will be enforced, and that each team has one time out per team per overtime period.

Prior to the overtime coin toss, the Referee and Umpire will take a position in the center of the field. The Field Judge and Side Judge will escort their respective team captains to the center of the field. The Head Linesman and Line Judge will obtain a game ball from their respective teams. When the coin toss is completed, the Referee will indicate which team will go on offense first by having them face the goal line they will be attacking and giving a first down signal. The Umpire will place the offensive team's game ball on the appropriate yard line to begin the overtime. The crew will briefly meet at the 10-yard line with the Game Clock Operator to discuss any last-minute matters. The Game Clock Operator will shadow the down box on the Line Judge's side of the field and will hold his position until the ball has been snapped on the succeeding down.

Beginning with the third overtime, if a team scores a touchdown, it must attempt a two-point try.

## **XIII. END OF THE GAME**

The jurisdiction of the officials ends when the Referee declares the score final by holding the ball over his head. Unless the score is tied and there will be overtime played, there cannot be a dead ball foul following the end of regulation time. Any noteworthy event happening after the end of the game should be reported immediately

to the RCO. All officials will immediately exit the field but will wait for the Clock Operators, who will join the crew as soon as possible at the crew meeting spot. Do not make any public statements about the game. All officials should give their foul information to the Referee so he can submit the foul information online at [www.foulreports.com](http://www.foulreports.com). The Referee should report any flagrant irregularity, player disqualification or coach disqualification to the RCO as soon as possible following the game.

#### **XIV. INITIAL KEYS**

For complete coverage, all officials must know their assigned receiver keys at the snap. Keys are numbered from the sideline going in toward the center of the field. The widest receiver is 1, the next widest is 2, etc. Your keys are determined by the position at the snap, so be ready to switch to different keys following an offensive shift when necessary.

Remember that keys are part of your initial responsibility. As the play develops, you may need to leave a key and be officiating other players and other areas of responsibilities.

**Referee:** Initial keys are the set backs and quarterback. Be aware of the tackle opposite you, and be ready to officiate action involving both tackles when necessary, such as when the offensive formation includes trips or an empty backfield. Maintain responsibility for the quarterback until and unless he advances beyond the neutral zone and another official picks him up. Officiate action at the point of attack on run plays. Be alert for defensive threats to your quarterback on passing plays.

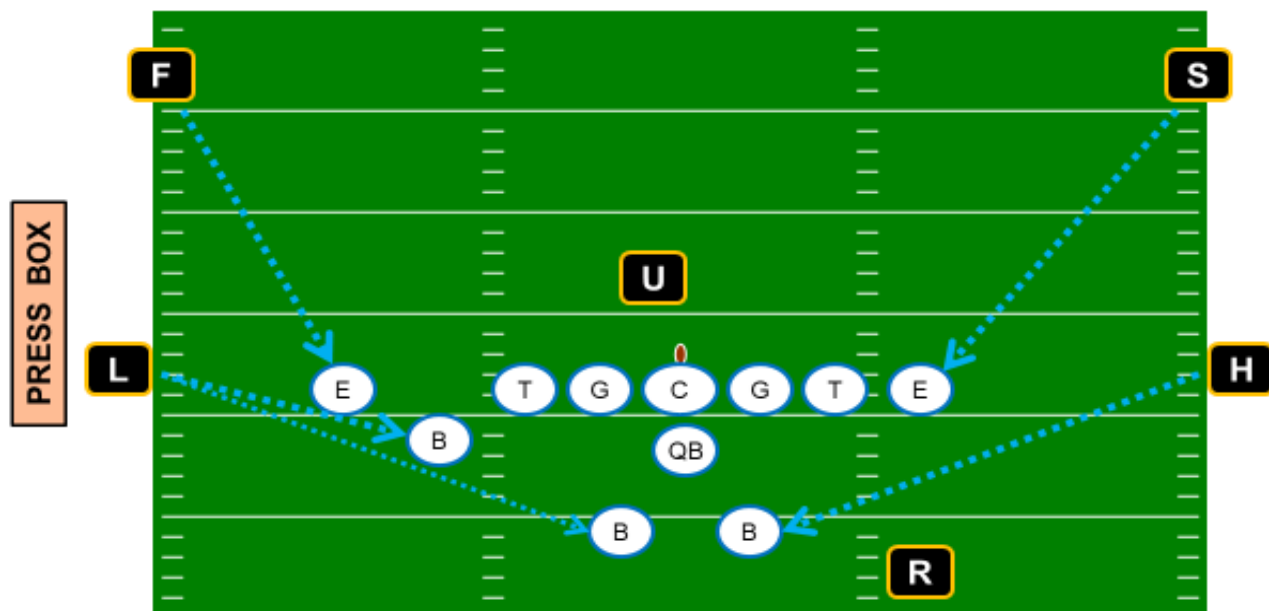
**Umpire:** Observe the snap. Initial, primary responsibility for the center and both guards and action on or by them. Officiate at and behind the point of attack.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Initial key is either the second or third receiver (often a back) that the Back Judge does not have. If trips are present, key on the second receiver. When receiver keys are not pressed, watch action by tackle at snap. When your key is not pressed, assist with action by the tackle on your side.

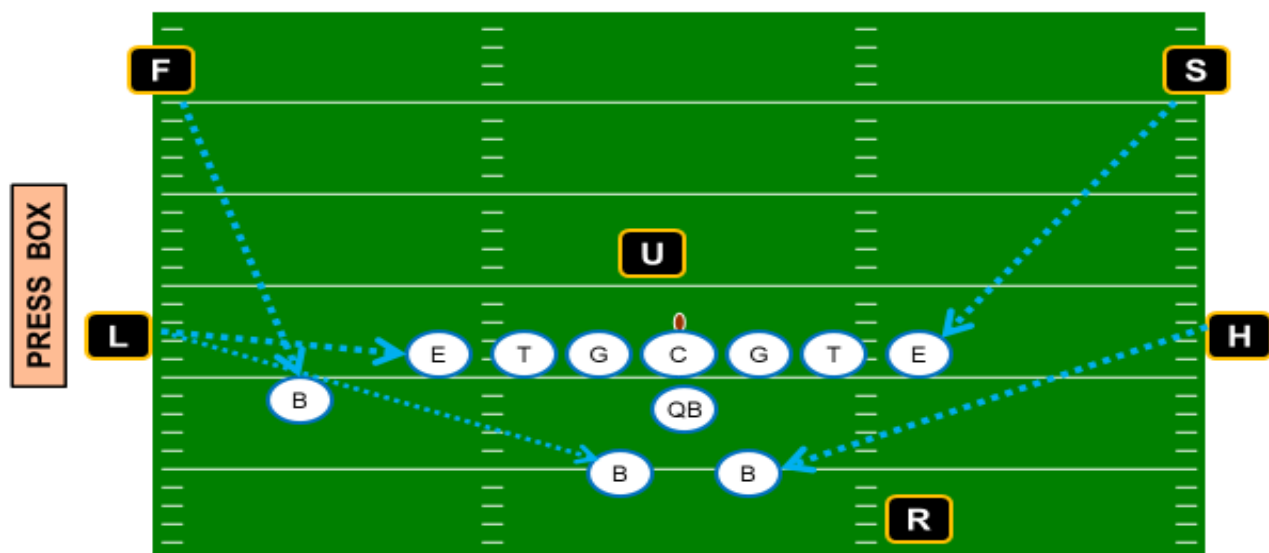
**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Initial key is always the widest receiver.

Examples of the application of these receiver keys are illustrated on the following diagrams:

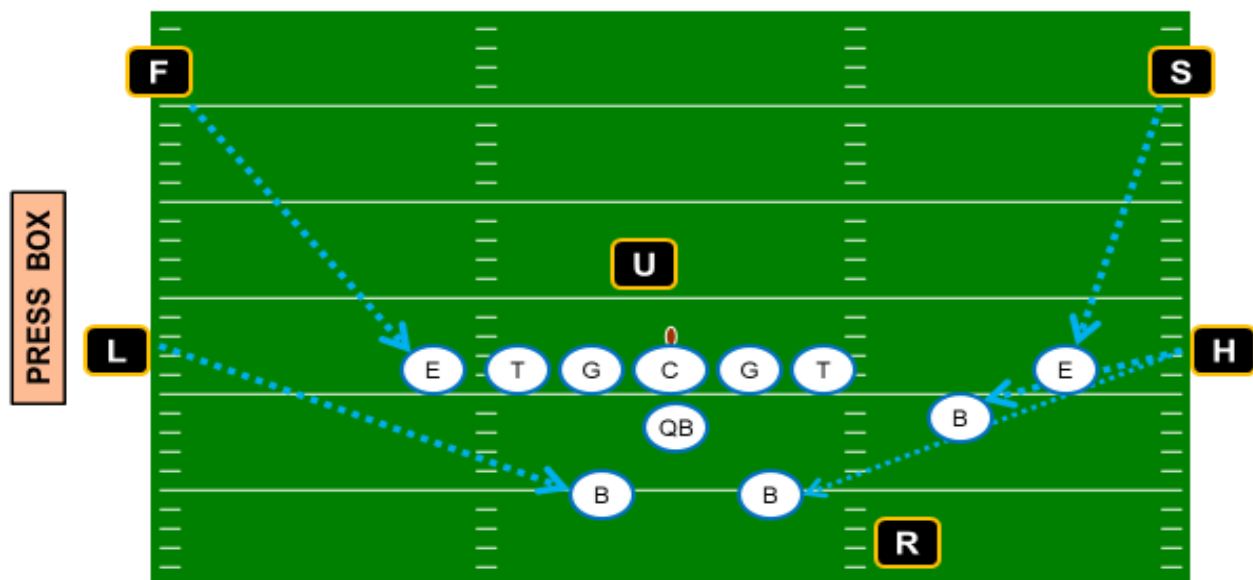
### OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #1



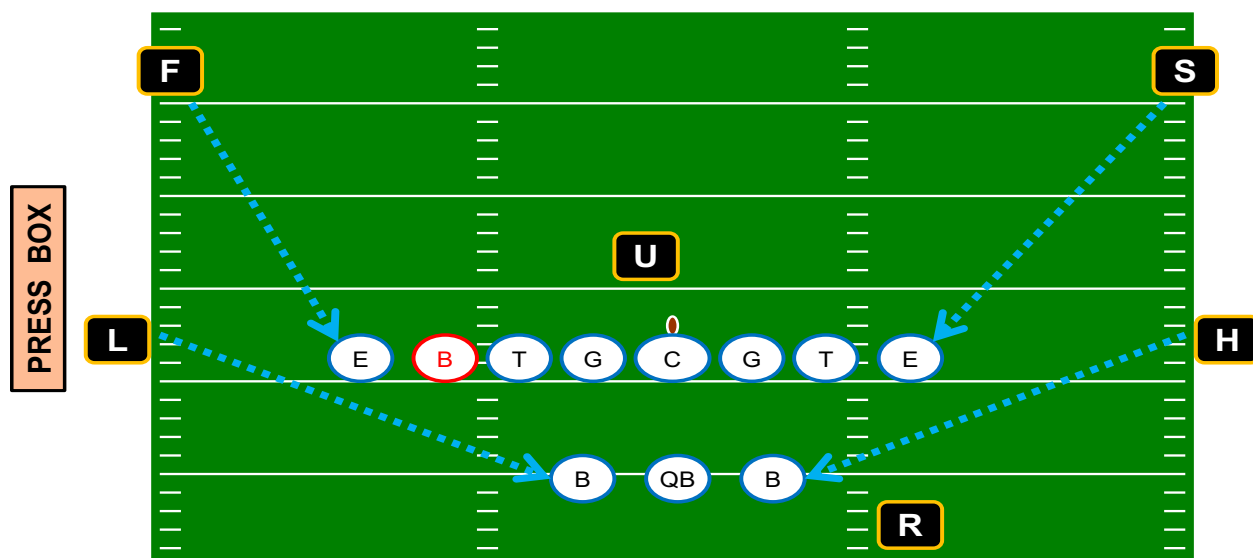
### OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #2



### OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #3

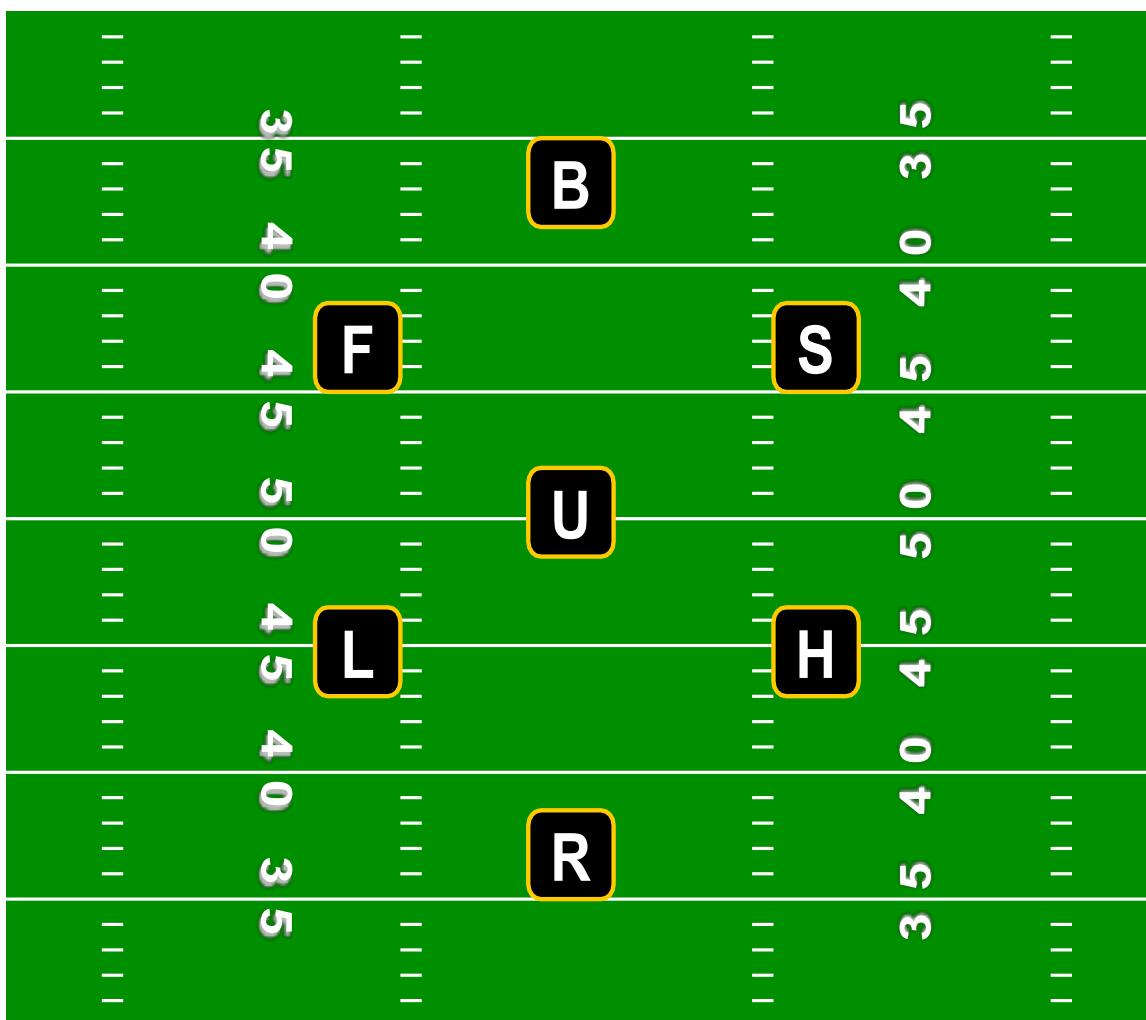


### OFFICIATING KEYS AT THE SNAP: Scenario #4





# CREW OF SEVEN OFFICIATING MECHANICS



## 2022 FOOTBALL SEASON

# MECHANICS CHANGES FOR 2022

## CHANGES FROM THE PREVIOUS MANUAL

### NORMAL FREE KICK MECHANICS

Clarified that the Referee may line up in the end zone when a receiver or the kick is likely to threaten the goal line, and that the Head Linesman and Line Judge are responsible for the goal line plane..... 100—102

### SWINGING GATE MECHANICS

Added mechanics for when Team A or K present in a swinging gate formation ..... 118—119

# **LOUISIANA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL OFFICIALS MECHANICS FOR AN ON-FIELD CREW OF SEVEN**

Significant Changes From the Previous Manual are **Highlighted**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

These mechanics have been approved by the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (“LHSAA”) and the Louisiana High School Officials Association (“LHSOA”) after much research and discussion. They are intended to be easy to understand, allow for consistent use, and provide maximum field coverage for high school football. Unless written, specific authorization has been given otherwise, all local officiating associations are to apply these mechanics for use in all varsity football contests.

The on-field officiating crew of seven includes a Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, Line Judge, Field Judge, Side Judge, and Back Judge. Unless stated otherwise, the Line Judge and Field Judge work on the press box sideline, and the Head Linesman and Side Judge work on the sideline opposite the press box.

## **II. PREPARATION LEADING UP TO GAME DAY**

### **A. Referee Contact With Home Management**

At least two days before a varsity contest, the Referee should contact the Home Team Athletic Director to verify logistical information about the game and matters pertaining to the officiating crew. The conversation should not involve plays or rule interpretations, as the head coaches from each team will have an opportunity to discuss those matters with the Referee at the game site. A sample outline of the conversation is in Part Four of this manual.

### **B. Individual and Crew Preparation**

All officials should take time during the week to prepare for the upcoming contest, because the limited crew pregame conference at the game site is never the time to begin getting ready. Review game film, continue studying the rules, and know the appropriate philosophies and mechanics in advance of the game. Follow any additional rules and instructions from your local association, your Regional Coordinator of Officials (“RCO”), and the LHSAA.

### **C. Crew Coordination**

The crew should discuss well in advance of the day of the game when and where the officials will meet for traveling to and arriving at the game site. Make sure to arrive at the designated location in ahead of the scheduled time.

## **D. Alcoholic Beverages and Drugs**

Alcoholic beverages and drugs that may hinder physical or mental capacity may not be consumed the day of any game at any level of play. Never purchase alcoholic beverages or enter an establishment that serves such beverages while wearing any part of a recognizable officiating uniform.

## **III. AFTER ARRIVAL AT GAME SITE**

### **A. Arrival and Pregame Conferences**

The entire crew, including clock operators, shall arrive at the game site at least 90 minutes before game time.

Upon arrival at the game site, the crew will conduct a pregame conference led by the Referee with all on-field officials and clock operators participating. A sample officials' pregame conference checklist is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

No later than 45 minutes remaining before game time, the Referee and Umpire will conduct the Pregame Administrative Conference ("PAC") with game day management, representatives of each team, security personnel, contracted and medical personnel from each team, and, if applicable, any broadcast production representatives. A sample checklist for the PAC is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

No later than 30 remaining before game time, the Referee and Umpire will conduct a conference with each Head Coach of each team, beginning with the home team. The Referee will discuss any necessary items with the Head Coach. The Umpire will obtain in writing each Head Coach's verification that all of his team's players are legally equipped and in compliance with all necessary requirements. A minimum, suggested pregame conference checklist is in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

### **B. Individual Pregame and Auxiliary Game Duties**

After conferences are completed, officials should complete the following pregame duties:

**Referee:** Secure and approve the game balls, inspect the playing field and pylons, and order the removal of any hazards on or near the field.

**Umpire:** Check player equipment and rule on any questions regarding its legality.

**Head Linesman:** Secure and check the line-to-gain equipment and review with the chain crew members their duties and responsibilities. Sample instructions to give the chain crew are in Part Four of the Officiating Manual.

**Line Judge:** With the Back Judge, inspect the playing field and pylons, as well as



the sideline and end line boundaries.

**Field Judge:** With the Side Judge, locate and instruct the team ball handlers on their duties.

**Side Judge:** With the Field Judge, locate and instruct the team ball handlers on their duties. Observe the game clock while it is running and as the Game Clock Operator tests it. During the game, monitor the game clock and maintain official time remaining in the absence of a game clock operator or in the case of a clock malfunction.

**Back Judge:** With the Line Judge, inspect the playing field and pylons, as well as the sideline and end line boundaries. Observe the play clock while the Play Clock Operator is testing it. You are responsible for monitoring the play clock during the game. If there is no functional play clock that visibly displays both a 25- and 40-second count, time the play-clock interval yourself, raising your hand overhead when there are 10 seconds remaining. You are responsible for correct time and assisting in getting the game started on time. Time all time outs and intermissions during the game.

**Clock Operators:** Become familiar with the operation of the game clock and the play clock. Test each clock before the game and immediately report any problems to the Referee. Operate only the clocks. Do not operate other scoreboard functions.

- ***Game Clock Operator:*** Have a back-up timing device (countdown timer) suitable for timing the game should the game clock become inoperative. If the game clock becomes inoperative, move to the field and continue to time the game from a location on the field approximately 15 to 20 yards behind the Referee. If wearing the crew uniform, your penalty flag and bean bag should not be visible. When the crew enters the field 30 minutes prior to game time, start a visible 30-minute countdown on the game clock.
- ***Play Clock Operator:*** Have a backup timing device suitable to time the 40- or 25-second intervals between plays and when the ball is ready for play. If you have been assigned to a game and there is no functioning play clock, report to the Referee. You may be needed to time the play clock intervals using your backup timer from a position either on the sideline or on the field behind the Back Judge. If the play clock operator is not an official, the Back Judge shall conduct a pregame conference with him to instruct him in his duties following the crew's pregame conference.

**Crew:** No later than 30 minutes remaining before game time, the entire crew should be on the field. When opposing teams are on the field, at least two members of the crew should be on the 50-yard line. Move around the field and observe teams as they warm up. Prior to getting teams for the coin toss, meet quickly off of the field and discuss any last-minute matters.

#### IV. COIN TOSS

Before the coin toss, the Field Judge and Side Judge should escort the teams that will be on their respective sidelines from the locker room to the sidelines according to the order stated at the PAC. Both teams should be on their respective sidelines no later than five minutes before the scheduled start of the game.

At four minutes before the scheduled start time, the Referee and Umpire should jog to the middle of the field from the press box sideline to conduct the coin toss. The Referee should enter from the right side of the press box, and the Umpire should enter from the left. The Line Judge and Head Linesman will obtain a game ball for the kickoff and line up on the sides of the non-speaking captains. The Field Judge and Side Judge will stand next to the speaking captains.

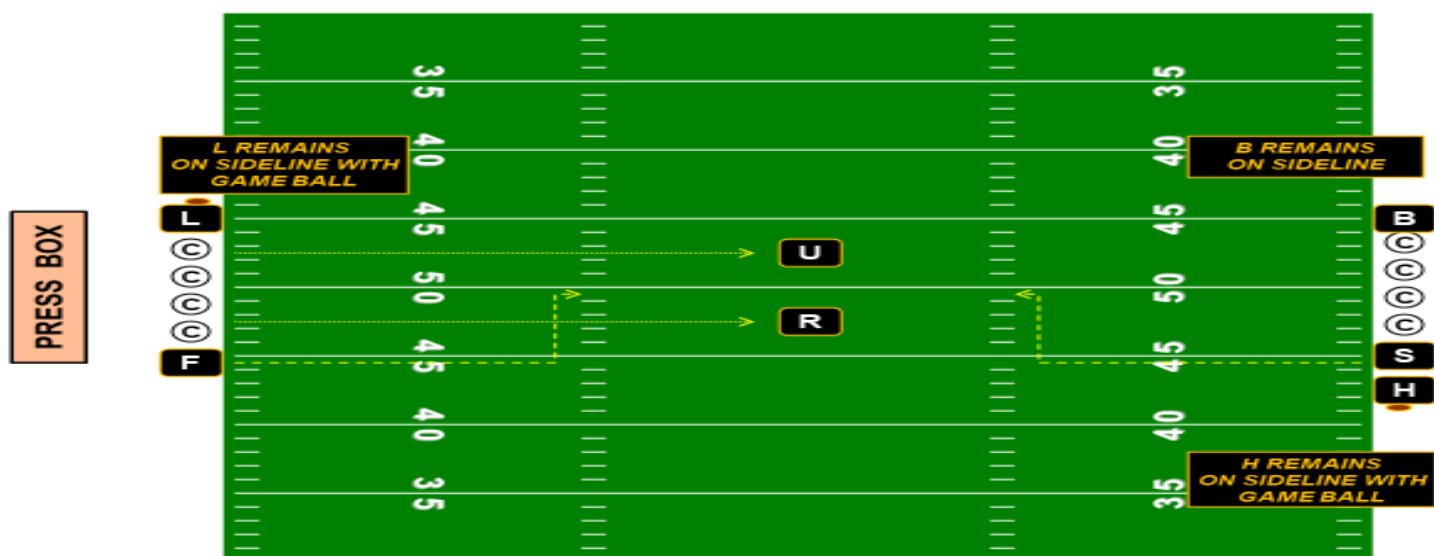
At the Referee's signal, the Field Judge and Side Judge will escort their respective captains on to the field. These officials will stop at the hash marks and send the captains to the Referee and Umpire. Other officials will remain on their sidelines. The captains will face each other with their backs to their own sidelines.

The visiting captain will call the toss. After, the Referee will toss the coin and then obtain each team's option. Officials will record the results and team choices. The Back Judge will obtain the kicking team's ball for the kickoff.

If the National Anthem is played following the coin toss, all officials will stand at attention, facing the flag (or music source if there is no flag), with the cap held by the right hand over the left chest.

After, the crew will assemble at midfield for final instructions. Crewmembers will then break to their positions for the opening kickoff.

The positions for the coin toss are illustrated in the following diagram:



## V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES

**Generally:** Signal to start the clock if you observe the kick being touched other than “first touching” in your area of responsibility. Mark a spot of “first touching” that you observe with your bean bag. If you observe the kick go out of bounds untouched by Team R, mark the spot the kick crossed the sideline with your penalty flag. The Referee, Line Judge, and Head Linesman should be ready to bean bag any spot of momentum within the 5-yard line.

### A. Normal Free Kicks

**Referee:** Starting position is on or behind Team R’s goal line and laterally between the goal posts based on the kicker’s position. When a receiver lines up inside Team R’s 10-yard line, or when you anticipate that the kick will threaten the goal line, move deeper into the end zone. Count Team R players with the Line Judge and Head Linesman and signal. Be sure that all officials are in position. Once the Back Judge hands the ball to the kicker and takes position at the sideline, sound your whistle to signal that the ball is ready for play. You are responsible for the play clock and for knowing whether Team K has at least four players on each side of the kicker when the ball is kicked.

After the ball is kicked, move laterally based on the kick’s direction to observe action setting up in front of the catch. Assist in observing the catch or recovery when in your area, but primarily observe action around and in front of the runner. Watch for illegal blocks, clips, forward handing, and other potential fouls. As the runner moves upfield into other officials’ areas, observe action behind the runner and off-ball activity. You are not responsible for determining whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R’s goal line.

**Umpire:** Starting position is on Team K’s free kick line outside the sideline opposite the press box. Count Team K’s players with the Back Judge, Field Judge, and Side Judge, and never allow the kickoff to proceed without the proper number of players. Be alert for encroachment by Team K players, short kicks, or “onside kicks,” and the spot of first touching. Assist in observing illegal early blocking by Team K.

After the ball is kicked, initially be aware of action involving the kicker. Run onto the field at an angle to a spot near the hash marks and no more than 8 to 10 yards up field. Observe action mainly toward the center of the field, and watch for illegal blocks. Observe off-ball action in front of the runner as he approaches, working inside-out as on any running play. Move with the action to cover the play, but you do not have goal line responsibility.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is on Team R’s goalline at the pylon on your sideline. Count Team R players and signal to the Referee.

Cover the receiver touching, catching, or recovering the kick when in your area. You

are responsible for determining whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R's goal line and for winding the clock when the ball is touched in your area.

When the kick is deep and the goal line is threatened, stay near the pylon on the goal line to rule on a potential touchback. You must be on the goal line before the ball reaches the goal line. When it is obvious that the goal line is not threatened, or when the return begins, start moving down the sideline to cover the play. When not covering the action around the runner, look across the field for illegal blocks, holding clips, forward handing, off-ball action, and other potential fouls.

Be prepared to rule on kicks out of bounds on your sideline. You are responsible for forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

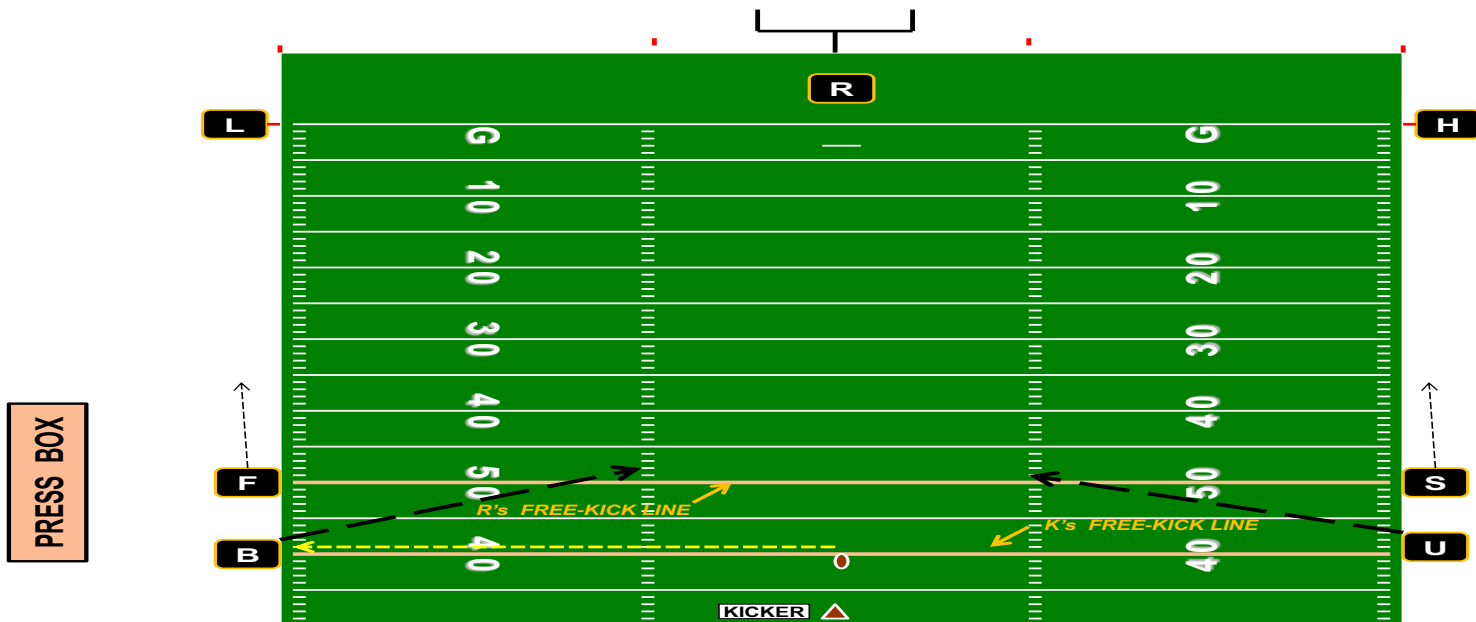
**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Starting position is on Team R's restraining line on the sideline. Assist in aligning Team R, but it is not necessary to run on to the field to do so. Count Team K's players together with the Umpire. Be aware of encroachment by Team R.

Observe the kick and know if it touched the ground initially. Be alert for an illegal pop-up kick. On a normal kick, move up field along the sideline toward Team R's goal line with a purpose but no more than 8 to 10 yards. On shorter kicks, assist in observing early blocking by Team K. As the return develops, maintain a cushion in advance of the run at all times. You are responsible for Team K's goal line and end line, and for forward progress inside Team K's 2-yard line.

**Back Judge:** Align Team K on their restraining line and hand the ball to the Kicker. Count Team K with the Umpire, and never allow the kickoff to proceed without the proper number of players. On the first kickoff, point out the Referee to the Kicker and explain kicking procedures to him. Make sure that all Team K players other than the kicker are within 5 yards of Team K's restraining line. Jog to a position on Team K's restraining line outside the sideline on the press box side of the field and signal the Referee when ready. Be alert for encroachment by Team K players, short kicks, onside kicks, and spots of first touching. Assist in observing illegal early blocking by Team K.

After the kick, run onto the field at an angle to a spot near the hash marks and no more than 8 to 10 yards up field. Observe action mainly toward the center of the field including off-ball action. As the return develops, work inside-out as on any running play, staying alert for holding, illegal blocks, clips, and other potential fouls. Maintain a cushion, be in advance of the run at all times, and be on the goal line before the runner crosses it to rule on a possible touchdown.

The normal free kick positions are illustrated in the following diagram:



## B. Anticipated Short Free Kicks

When an onside kick is likely, the Head Linesman and Line Judge move midway between the two free kick lines on or outside their sidelines. Other officials maintain their normal free kick positions, except that the Referee may move forward.

**Referee:** You have the same primary duties as on a normal free kick, except that you are also responsible for Team R's goal line and end zone.

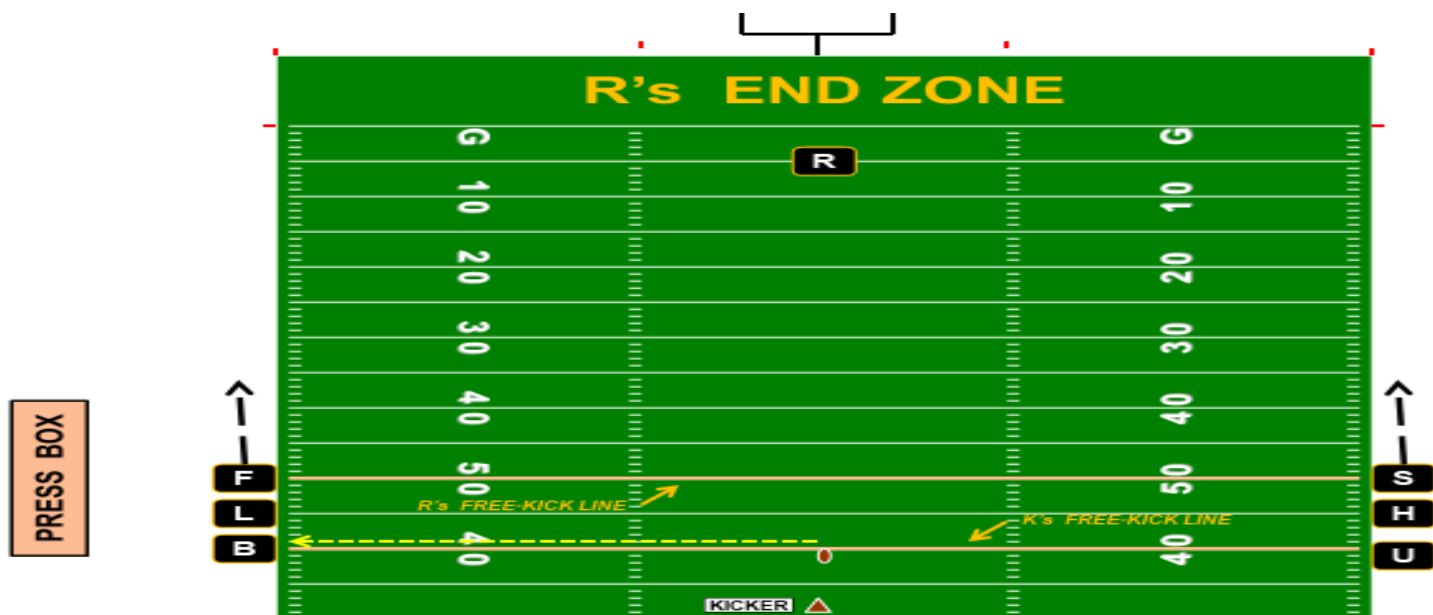
**Umpire and Back Judge:** You have the same duties as on a normal free kick. Be alert for encroachment by Team K, treating the free kick line as a plane. If the kick is toward you, be aware of touching of the kick. If the kick is away from you, observe blocking by both teams. If the kick is short, stay on the sideline, and be prepared to cover the play if Team R gains possession and advances. If the kick is deep, move on to the field at a 45 degree angle and officiate as normal.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Observe the kick to see if it touched the ground. Be alert for an illegal pop-up kick. Observe blocking by both teams. Be alert for fair catch signals by Team R. Be prepared to cover the play if Team R gains possession and advances. If the kick is deep downfield, move downfield about five to ten yards and officiate the play, being alert for blocking and holding in front of the runner. If a return develops, maintain a sufficient cushion in front of the play and be on the goal line before a runner crosses it.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Be alert for clear encroachment by Team R. Observe the kick to see if it touched the ground. Be alert for an illegal pop-up kick. Know if the kick breaks the plane of Team R's free-kick line. Be alert for touching of the kick by either team, and assist with early illegal blocks by Team K. Be alert for fair catch signals by Team R. If the kick ends up being a deep kick down the field, move

downfield to assist with downfield coverage. If a long return develops, trail the play take forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

The positions for an anticipated outside kick are illustrated in the following diagram:



### C. Free Kick Following Fair Catch

The positions for a free kick following a fair catch is illustrated in the following diagram:



## VI. PLAY RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Pre-Snap and General Duties

**Crew:** All officials should know the formation, their initial keys and areas of responsibility, and when to shift into zone coverage. Illustrations of initial keys are show in Part XIV.

Before each play, complete all pre-snap duties. Know the down and distance and status of the clock. Count the players for the squads and teams that you are responsible for. Be aware that substitutions and offensive shifts may cause you to change your keys and recount players.

All officials should also be aware of the need to properly signal the end of a play when it ends in their coverage area. Only the covering official's signal is needed. Generally, other officials should not mirror signals unless it is needed to assist the clock operators. Even then, an official should never mirror a scoring signal unless that official is in position to rule and is positive that a score occurred.

When a play ends in your area following a regular non-kicking scrimmage play with no administrative stoppage, the covering official should signal that the ball is dead and that the 40-second play clock should start by giving one of the following signals: (1) **Runner Down Inbounds:** Raise your hand straight above your head (Sig. 7), or, if needed, a wind-clock signal when down near a sideline (Sig. 2); (2) **Runner Out-Of-Bounds:** Stop-clock signal (Sig. 3); (3) **Incomplete Pass:** Incomplete pass signal (Sig. 10); (4) **First Down Awarded:** Stop-clock signal (Sig. 3).

When the ball is dead, accordion on to the field to give a presence and assist with dead-ball officiating. Always finish dead-ball officiating before moving the chains, relaying game ball, or moving on to the next play. When there is no pertinent dead-ball action, hustle back to your starting position so that the next snap may occur once the ball is ready for play without needing to reset the play clock.

When marking progress, square off from the sideline to give a spot. Use your forward foot to give the spot of forward progress.

**Referee:** Signal and make sure of the correct down. Starting position is approximately 12 to 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage and at least as wide as the tight end on the passing-arm side of the quarterback. Be able to comfortably observe the set backs and quarterback for possible illegal motions and false starts.

Count Team A players along with the Umpire, and signal with a clenched fist when 11 are counted. Assist with spotting the ball when able to do so.

Following a scrimmage play that ends inbounds and results in a new series for Team A, be ready to start the game clock when required by giving a "silent wind" of your arm without sounding your whistle. Be aware of the 40-second play clock, and know when the ball is spotted and made ready for play. "Pump up" the play clock if needed.

Notify the Head Coach when his team has used its last timeout.

**Umpire:** Starting position is approximately 8 to 10 yards deep on Team B's side of the line of scrimmage. Be able to observe the offensive interior line. Vary your starting position depending on the location of the ball and the formation, but keep the ball visible to rule on snap violations.

Count Team A players along with the Referee and signal with a clenched fist if 11 players are counted. Read the offensive alignment and make sure there are five players numbered 50 through 79 (or numbering exceptions) on the line at the snap.

Be alert for snap infractions, interference with the snap, false starts, encroachment with contact by Team B, and disconcerting words or acts by the defense.

Be aware of the lateral position of the ball for assistance in returning the ball to the previous spot and penalty enforcement. You are the primary official to spot the ball, but the Referee can assist.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is outside the sideline and on the line of scrimmage. Be alert for incoming and outgoing substitutes on your sidelines. Work to keep the restricted area of the sideline clear.

Know numbers of eligible pass receivers. Check positioning of the wingbacks, slot backs and split ends. Use hand to backfield signal when the closest offensive player is off the line, and hold this signal until the snap or until the closest offensive player is no longer off the line. Know whether there are more than four Team A players in the backfield at the snap. Communicate with each other.

Read the offensive formation and be aware of your initial, eligible receiver keys and responsibilities. If they are not pressed, be ready to assist with action on your tackle following the snap.

You are responsible forward progress to Team B's 2-yard line. Assist each other with forward progress using cross-field mechanics when necessary.

Be alert for false starts and encroachment by either team and disconcertion by the defense. Sound your whistle, moving in quickly, and shutting down all action immediately. If a player goes in motion, observe him while he is on your side of the ball to ensure the motion is legal. If that player is not on your side, you should still be ready to make an obvious call.

If a first down is obvious, stop the clock. If the spot is close, call the Referee over to rule.

- ***Head Linesman – Additional Duties:*** Supervise the auxiliary chain crew consisting of the line-to-gain chains and the down box marker. You are primarily responsible for keeping the accurate down count, though all officials are responsible for this. Visually confirm the next down with the Referee using an appropriate hand signal. As a general rule, do not call for the chain crew to move until the Referee signals. For all first downs, the Head Linesman will mark the spot with his foot for the chain crew at the sideline. If the down box marker is not in place when the next snap is imminent, drop a bean bag at the line of scrimmage behind you on the sideline. When the goal line is the



line to gain, only use the down box marker to mark the line of scrimmage, and have the chains removed from the area and placed on the ground.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Starting position is on your sideline 20 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. With the Back Judge, count Team B players and signal to each other when there are 11 players. Be alert for substitutions and “hideout” plays, and assist in keeping the restricted area of the sideline clear. Read the offensive formation and be aware of your initial, eligible receiver keys and responsibilities. Your initial keys are the widest receiver on your side of the field. Assist in relaying information to other officials and coaches. Except for goal line situations, the Field Judge and Side Judge have forward progress inside Team B’s two-yard line.

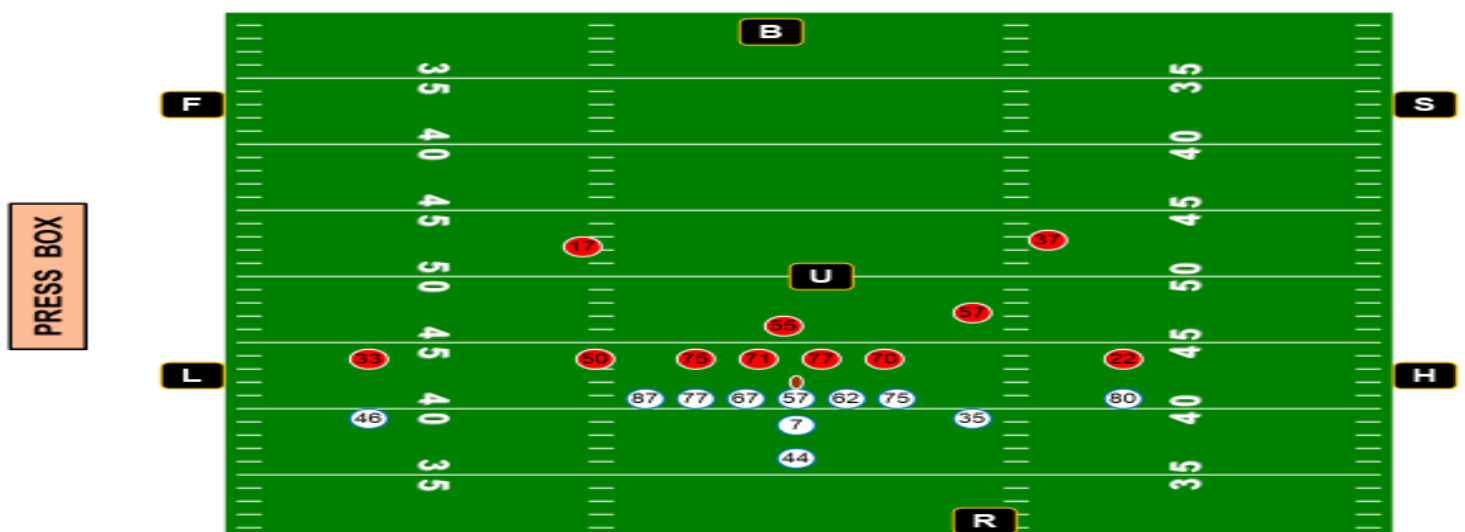
**Back Judge:** Starting position is 25 yards beyond the line of scrimmage and always deeper than the deepest defensive back. Line up approximately in the center of the field, though you may favor the strong side of the formation. When the snap is from on or inside Team B’s 25-yard line, start on the end line. Count Team B players along with the Field Judge and Side Judge and signal them with a clenched fist when there are 11 players.

You are responsible for monitoring the play-clock and ruling whether Team A snapped in time. If there is no functioning play clock visibly capable of displaying both a 25- and 40-second count, keep the play clock and raise his hand overhead with 10 seconds remaining.

Be alert for incoming substitutions, and assist in relaying messages to the sideline officials, especially penalty information.

Officiate working from the inside-out. Read the offensive formation and be aware of your initial, eligible receiver keys and responsibilities.

The initial positions for scrimmage plays are illustrated in the following diagram:



## **B. Running Plays**

**Referee:** You are generally responsible for the football until it is beyond the line of scrimmage. While the ball is behind the line of scrimmage, focus on blocks in the area immediately around the point of attack, generally working from the inside-out. Once the runner moves beyond where a tight end or wingback would normally be positioned, begin covering the action behind the runner as he advances into clear space.

At the snap, move with a purpose and only if necessary. Delay moving immediately to avoid hindering reverse or delayed plays and to assure maximum vision of play. If needed, move backwards at an angle to keep the play in front.

If the play is wide, slowly move in that direction and watch for action around the runner to the neutral zone. On option plays, if the quarterback keeps the ball and turns up field, observe action on the trailing back until there is no longer a threat of a foul.

When the quarterback keeps the ball and runs into a side zone or out of bounds, follow him all the way including out of bounds. When runners other than the quarterback move into the side zone, move in that direction covering the play and action as normal, but it is not necessary to go beyond the hash mark.

Unless the runner was the quarterback or Team A is running a “hurry-up” offense, assist in spotting the ball at the hash mark when the ball is dead between the nine-yard marks and the sideline or out of bounds. For obvious first downs on long plays, or on short gains between the hash marks when you are not spotting the ball, there is no need to run to the line of scrimmage. Instead, move to your position to be ready for the next snap.

**Umpire:** Your coverage depends on whether the run is between or outside the tackles. If between the tackles, focus on the point of attack in front of and around the runner and action on or by the interior linemen. Be alert for holding, low blocks, and chop blocks. On run plays outside the tackles, slowly turn toward the flow of the play and focus on blocks and action in the area immediately behind and away from the runner as the runner moves forward. In addition to offensive holding, defensive holding, and chop block fouls, be alert for clipping fouls behind the play. Do not be restricted by the hash marks.

When the ball becomes dead in a side zone or out of bounds, move out and retrieve the ball. When the ball is dead between the nine-yard marks and the sideline or out of bounds, relay the ball to the Referee to spot the ball at the hash mark, unless the Referee is not in a position to assist with spotting. For obvious first downs and long gains, short gains between the hash marks, or balls that become dead within a few steps beyond the hash marks, retrieve and spot the ball getting forward progress from the wing official. In the last two minutes of each half, when a runner is down inbounds, move sideline to sideline after each play to retrieve the ball that was used in the previous play and place it at the succeeding spot for the next play without relaying the

ball to any official.

When spotting the ball, hustle, but do not hurry. Maintain a consistent pace throughout the game when retrieving a ball and spotting it for the next play. When time is critical, increase your pace, but you should never move faster than a brisk jog. After the ball is spotted, make eye contact with the Referee, and be ready to move toward the line of scrimmage to prevent the snap if the Referee signals you to do so because the crew is not yet in position. Use your voice and presence to communicate to the snapper to hold up. It will not usually be necessary to step up exactly over the ball to hold the snap.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Observe actions by tackles, the nearest interior lineman, and inside receivers. Observe blocking action in front of the runner behind the line of scrimmage or in the neutral zone on runs to your side, generally working from the outside in. Maintain position on the line of scrimmage until the runner crosses it, allowing the play to develop in front of you. However, if your position is threatened, be ready to move down the sideline into the backfield and trail the play as the runner moves beyond the neutral zone. If the play is away from you, observe cleanup action behind the Referee and Umpire while moving downfield with the play giving special attention to late action on the Quarterback after he has relinquished the ball.

When the runner is down in your area, signal that the ball is dead and that the 40-second play clock should start by raising your hand straight above your head. Give an accurate forward progress spot, and hold the spot until the Referee or Umpire acknowledges it for spotting purposes. Use cross-field mechanics when needed to assist each other in marking forward progress. When the ball is dead, accordion on to the field to help give a presence and assist with dead-ball officiating. When there is no pertinent dead-ball action, hustle back to your starting position so that the next snap may occur once the ball is ready for play. When marking progress, come in by squaring off from the sideline and giving a spot. Use your up-field foot to give the spot of forward progress.

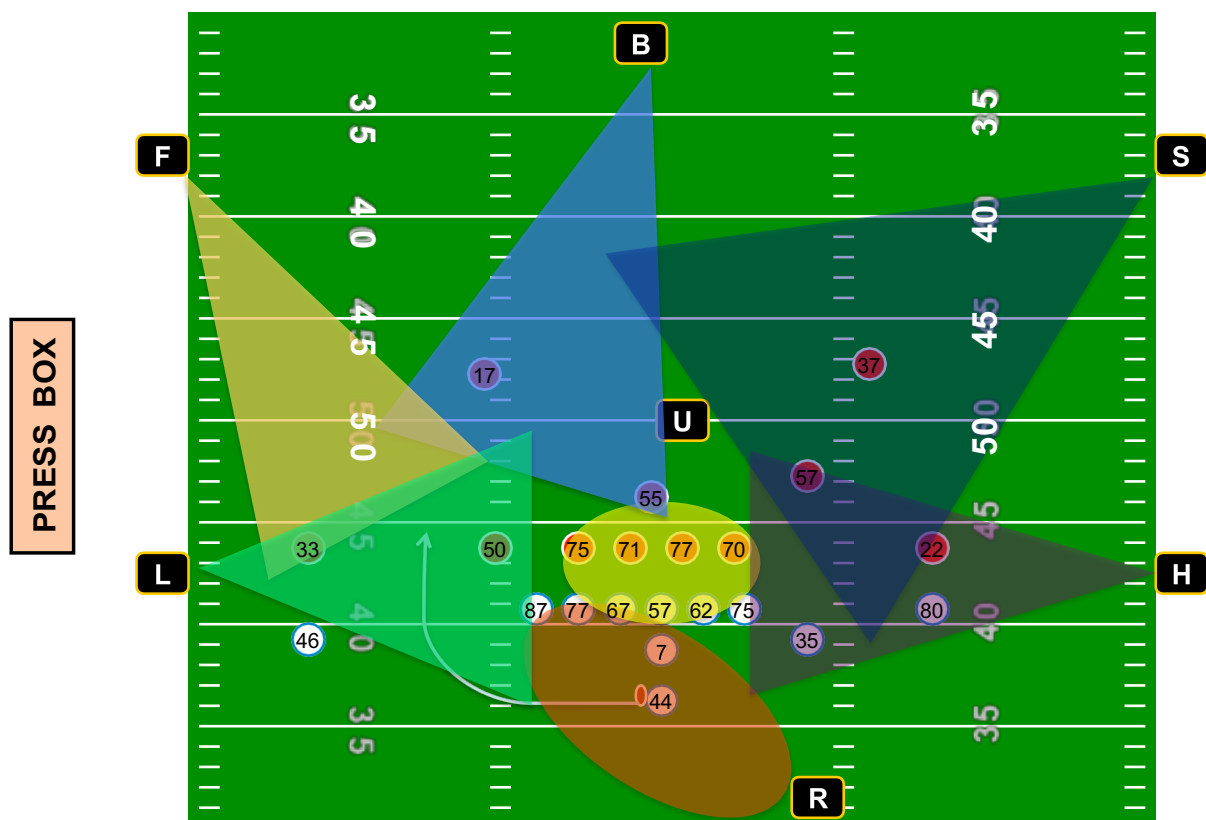
When the ball is dead inbounds near the sideline including when a runner is forced sideways or backwards out of bounds, give a winding signal to indicate that the game clock should continue running and the 40-second play clock should start. If the ball goes out of bounds, hold the out of bounds spot and face the action out of bounds while either the Referee or deep wing official retrieves the ball. When getting the out of bounds spot, always keep your head up and observe the action. If a first down is obvious, give a signal to stop the game clock, which will also signal the 40-second play clock to start. If close, signal to and wait for the Referee to rule. The Line Judge will usually have the best view to let the Referee know the ball's location near the line to gain.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Observe action involving the widest receiver. Be alert for illegal blocks, especially blindside blocks and targeting. When the run is to your area, box in the widest player and work from outside in to observe blocks setting up

in front of the runner. Assist with second-level blocks setting up in your area. Maintain a cushion in advance of the play and assist with action on lead blockers. Be at the goal line before the runner crosses it. Take forward progress inside the two-yard line. If the play goes out of bounds on your sideline, generally let the line of scrimmage official take the spot, and you proceed directly into the out of bounds area to observe, clean up any action, and retrieve the ball and ball carrier. If the play is going away from you, assist in observing action behind the Umpire.

**Back Judge:** Initially observe action on or by his key eligible receiver. Move laterally and backwards to observe the action of players behind the Umpire and ahead of the runner. As the play develops, progress with the flow of the play, working from the inside out. Assist with observing second-level blocks. Delay moving forward during the play. Be ready to move quickly on cutback and breakaway runs, and be on the goal line ahead of the runner to rule on a touchdown and to assist with forward progress near the goal line. When a runner crosses the goal line after running closely down the sideline, check with the covering sideline official to see whether the runner stayed in bounds before giving a touchdown signal. Help in observing dead-ball action. On plays into the side zones and out of bounds, cover action around and in front of the runner. When the ball becomes dead in between the hash marks, accordion in while observing dead ball action. Be mindful of off-ball activity, especially in wide-open plays.

Areas of coverage for a running play is illustrated in the following diagram:



## C. Passing Plays

**Referee:** On passing downs, as the passer drops back within the tackles, retreat with him and stay outside of and deeper than him, moving backwards at an angle to maintain cushion. Observe drop back blockers in vision, especially the Tackles and other linemen potentially holding. Be aware of action by the tackle opposite you initially (or the tackle on the side of the field with three or more receivers) and any offensive linemen that could potentially foul generally. Most importantly, be alert for any defensive player moving through the offensive line that presents as a possible threat to the passer, who is your primary responsibility until there is no longer a threat for a foul. After the pass is thrown, continue to observe action on and around the passer until there is no threat of a foul. Verbally alert defenders when the passer has released the ball. When not in goal line mechanics, you have secondary responsibility for whether a pass is forward or backward behind the line of scrimmage, and the Line Judge has primary responsibility.

You are the sole judge for calling intentional grounding, but you must first obtain information from other officials as to whether a forward pass was thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver or, if the passer was outside if the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone, whether the pass reached the neutral zone. Know whether the passer has been beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone in possession of the ball.

On a change of possession, be alert for action on the quarterback. Specifically, be alert for targeting fouls at all times and illegal blocks against him when he is clearly out of the play.

**Umpire:** Adjust your position to maintain a clear view of the center and two guards to avoid oncoming pass receivers. Be alert for holding or other illegal blocks by observing, but not tunneling on, the center and two guards. Be alert for ineligible receivers being down field early. Assist the Line Judge in determining whether the pass crossed the neutral zone.

Once the pass has been released, turn and assist in determining if there is a catch or incompleteness, but maintain coverage of his area of responsibility as long as there is a threat of action. After a catch, cover continuing action around the runner in the side zone.

When the ball is snapped inside Team B's 5-yard line, he is primarily responsible for determining whether a forward pass crossed the line of scrimmage and if the passer was beyond the neutral zone.

**Head Linesman:** Your initial, primary responsibility is for your eligible key receiver. Be prepared to drift downfield along the sideline up to five yards at a pace allowing him to maintain focus on his keys in the belt area (roughly from the line of scrimmage to 10 yards downfield). This could be quickly, slowly, or not at all depending on how the play develops and the pace and routes of the receivers. Any movement should be

deliberate and with a purpose. Rarely will the Head Linesman drift more than five yards downfield but adjust depending on the situation (end of half or game pass near end zone, fourth and long, third and seven, etc.). The drift should only take place if your key takes you downfield. If your key stays in to block, you should not move downfield. If your key does move downfield, do not advance beyond him. If your key receiver or the belt area is not threatened, assist with other blocking with the tackle on his side or other receivers that enter the belt area and become threatened.

When the pass is released deep downfield, move downfield with the pass. Cover receptions between you and the deep official. For shorter downfield passes, especially when the ball is thrown directly into your area, reducing movement while the ball is in the air will improve your ability to see the play more accurately. If the pass is not thrown in your area, observe off-ball action.

Provide information to the Referee on whether eligible receivers were in the area of a forward pass or if an incomplete pass reached the neutral zone in situations involving possible intentional grounding.

Assist with observing ineligible receivers being too far downfield before the pass is thrown, especially if the play is going away from you and you are the offside official.

**Line Judge:** Initially, your primary responsibility is your receiver or other receivers in the 0- to 10-yard belt area if they are threatened. Observe the blocking tackle and your eligible receiver, but, if the receiver is threatened or goes downfield, give him priority. You are primarily responsible for activity involving the line of scrimmage, including whether the passer goes beyond the line of scrimmage and whether a forward pass crosses the line of scrimmage. You are also primarily responsible for determining whether a pass behind the line is forward or backwards. Extend (“punch”) your arm toward the offensive side of the ball to indicate a backwards pass.

Assist with observing ineligible receivers being too far downfield before the pass is thrown, especially if the play is going away from you and you are the offside official.

When the pass is released deep downfield, move downfield with the pass. Cover receptions between you and the deep official. For shorter downfield passes, especially when the ball is thrown directly into your area, reducing movement while the ball is in the air will improve your ability to see the play more accurately. If the pass is not thrown in your area, observe off-ball action.

Provide information to the Referee on whether eligible receivers were in the area of a forward pass or if an incomplete pass reached the neutral zone in situations involving possible intentional grounding.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Move backwards to maintain cushion and assure maximum vision. Observe contact on key receivers and the defensive backs. Cover your sideline from the original position to the end line. When the ball is thrown into your area, cover the play and watch the defender’s action on the receiver. Be alert

when a receiver flashes back toward the ball.

**Back Judge:** Move backwards to maintain cushion and assure maximum vision. You are responsible for action on your key receiver from the time the ball is snapped until it becomes necessary to release him in order to cover action in your zone involving other receivers.

On plays originating outside Team B's 25-yard line, your starting position should be 25 yards on Team B's side of the neutral zone but no further than the goal line. Be prepared to move to the end line and make sure that no receiver or runner should ever get behind you. You have end line responsibility.

#### **D. Reverse Mechanics**

During a scrimmage kick return, or when Team B advances following a change of possession, officials should use reverse mechanics to cover the play.

**Referee:** Cautiously move backwards towards Team A or K's goal line while maintaining coverage of the Quarterback or Kicker. Be alert for targeting fouls and illegal blocks against these players when they are out of the play, especially blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Work from the inside out to cover the play. Do not turn your back on the Quarterback or Kicker while moving toward the goal line.

**Umpire:** Work as if covering any other play. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** When Team B or R begins its return, begin backing up along the sideline and officiating in front of the return, assisting with lead blockers. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Maintain a cushion in advance of the play and be on the goal line before the runner. Take forward progress between Team A or K's two-yard line and goal line. The Field Judge and Side Judge will take forward progress otherwise.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Trail the play and cover action on and around the runner on your side. If you are not covering of the runner will assist in off-ball coverage and cleanup action behind other officials. When not covering the runner, be alert for off-ball activity, especially blindside blocks and targeting fouls. Take forward progress up to Team A or K's two-yard line. The Line Judge and Head Linesman will have forward progress inside Team A or K's two-yard line.

**Back Judge:** Trail the play and observe action behind the runner. As the play develops, move downfield and cover action behind the play being alert for off-ball activity, especially blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

## VII. SCRIMMAGE KICK (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES

**Referee:** Starting position is slightly behind and to the side of the kicker, outside the tight-end position, and on the right side of the field, in a position to look at approximately a 45-degree angle to the position where the kick will be made, so that you can see the snap, back blockers, and attacking defensive players. With the Umpire, count Team K players and signal accordingly when there are 11 players. Verbally alert Team R players when the kicker has kicked the ball. Observe action on and around the kicker, then clean up behind the kick action while cautiously drifting down field, opposite the side of the Umpire. If the ball goes out of bounds in flight, assist the sideline official in determining the out of bounds spot. If a return develops, use reverse mechanics to cover the play while staying alert to actions involving the kicker when he is out of the play. Be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

If the kick is blocked behind the line, box in the play with the line of scrimmage official on the other side of the loose ball.

**Umpire:** Starting position is approximately 10 yards off the line of scrimmage. Be in position to see the snap and rule on any contact with the snapper. Together with the Referee, count Team K players and give the signal accordingly when there are 11 players. Warn Team R players not to charge directly into the snapper. Locate ineligible receivers, remembering that Team A or K may use exceptions to the normal numbering requirement. Be alert for holding by either team. Once the kick has crossed the neutral zone and action in the line has cleared, turn and observe action on the return, being alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

If the ball is blocked behind the line of scrimmage and picked up by a member of the receiving team, follow the play and cover action around and behind the runner.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position and pre-snap responsibilities are the same as for any scrimmage play. Communicate with each other, and observe whether there are more than four offensive players in the backfield. After the snap, hold your position until the kicked ball crosses the neutral zone. Assist with blocking by and against any Team K protect players, and assist the Referee with ruling if the kick is tipped by a Team R player.

Be alert for errant snaps or blocked kicks. If a block occurs, and the loose ball is between you and the Referee, move into the backfield to help with coverage, boxing the play in with the Referee. If the ball is not between you and the Referee, maintain your position at the line of scrimmage and rule on any action involving the line of scrimmage.

After the kick has crossed the neutral zone, move purposefully downfield, generally no more than 10 yards. Once the return begins, use reverse mechanics and be in advance of the play. If the runner is in your area, cover action ahead of the runner. If the runner is not in your area, cover off-ball action, being alert for blindside blocks



and targeting fouls.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Starting position is on your sideline, even with the Back Judge, and about five yards behind the deepest receiver. When the snap is on or inside Team R's 40-yard line, take a position on the goal line pylon and be prepared to rule on whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R's goal line. Count Team R's players along with the Back Judge and signal accordingly when Team R has 11 players.

Initial key coverage is the same on any other scrimmage play. Observe actions on and by the gunners running downfield. Remain in the lateral position while the kick is in flight and cover action in front of the receiver and around the runner. If the return is to your side, observe action around the runner as soon as he starts to advance the ball. If the return is not to your side, cover action behind and around the runner. Being alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls. You have forward progress to Team K's 2-yard line.

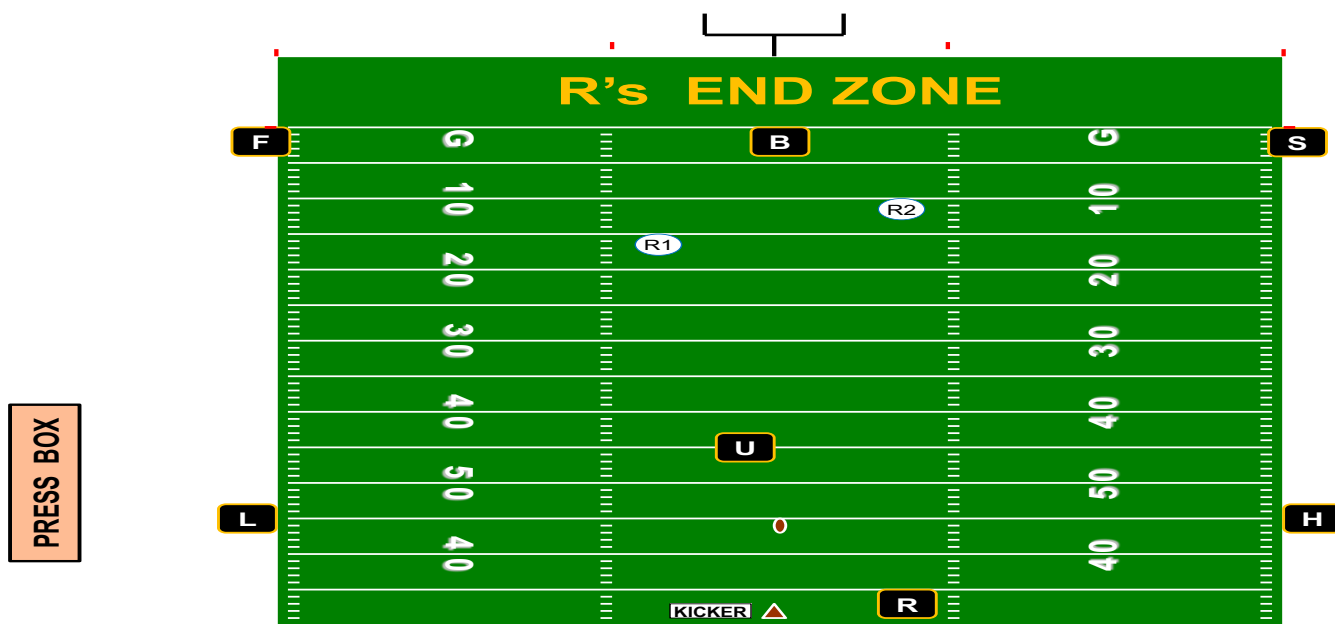
Be alert for fair catch signals and the actions of players when a signal is given. Be prepared to rule on possible kick catching interference and the legality of handoffs on the return. Also, be alert for first touching by Team K.

If the kick goes out of bounds on your sideline, mark the spot. If it goes out of bounds in flight, the Referee will assist you on determining the spot.

**Back Judge:** Starting position is 5 yards behind and to the side of the deepest receiver favoring the wide side of the field, even with the Field Judge and Side Judge. When the snap is on or inside Team R's 40-yard line, line up on the goal line or deeper if necessary to get a better position and angle. Prior to the snap, instruct the receivers on making a fair catch. Count Team R players along with the Field Judge and Side Judge and signal accordingly when Team R has 11 players.

You are responsible for all catches made by the deep receiver, so take a good angle from behind to observe the catch. Be alert for fair catch signals and kick catching interference. If the kick is not fielded, be prepared to rule on the status of the ball, including whether it breaks the plane of the goal line. Be alert for any touching by Team R or Team K players, and be ready to mark a spot of first touching. Drop your bean bag to mark the spot where the kick ends (the "post scrimmage kick spot"). If the kick is obviously going out of bounds or into a side zone, cover the play in front of the runner after the catch is made. Use reverse mechanics in covering the play. On a return, be alert for blindside blocks and targeting fouls.

The positions for punts are illustrated in the following diagram:



## VIII. FIELD GOAL AND TRY KICK PLAYS

### A. Field Goal Attempts Snapped On or Inside The R-7 and Try Kicks

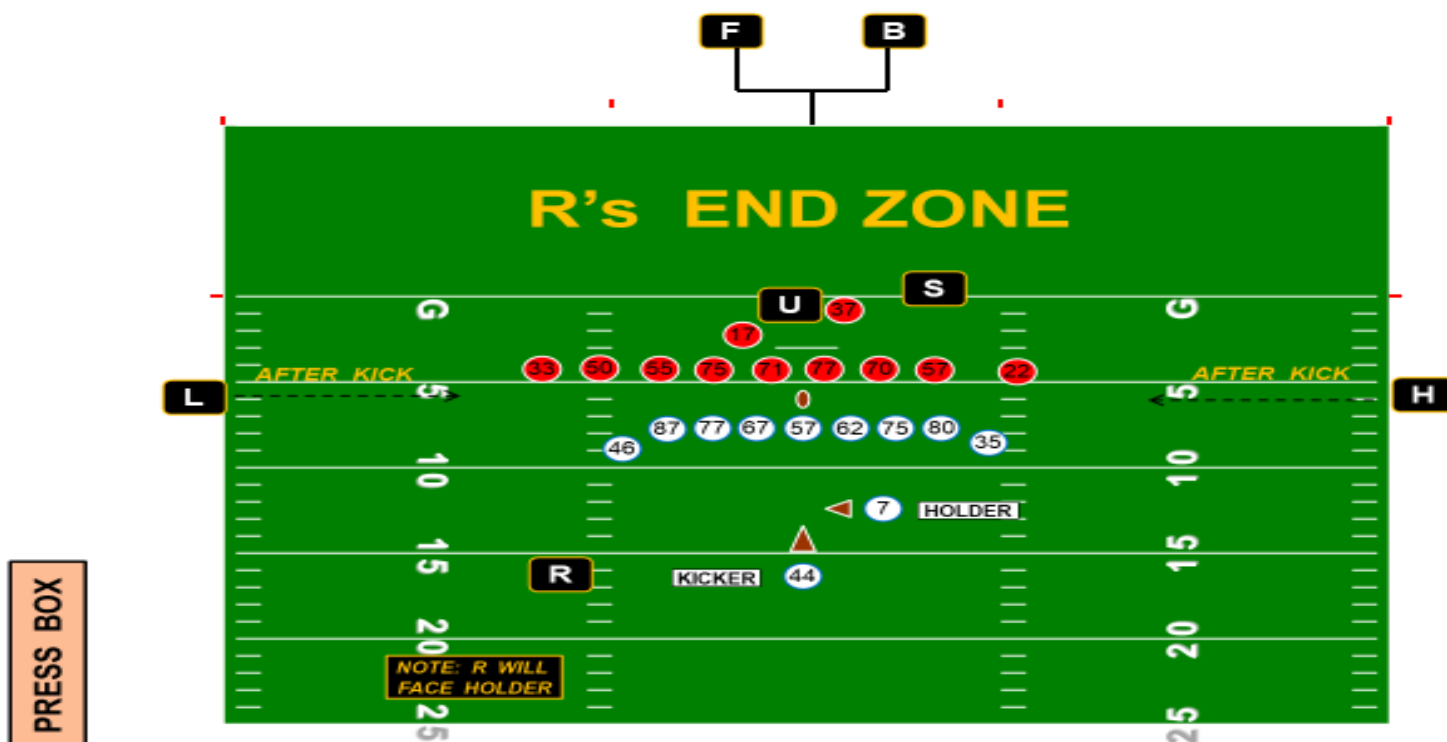
**Referee:** Starting position is about 10 yards wide on the side facing the front of the holder and about 2 to 3 yards deeper than the holder. Count Team K players along with the Umpire and give the appropriate signal when they have 11 players. After the snap, observe action by the holder, including a muff, fumble, or recovery. If a kick is made, observe action on and around the kicker and holder, and verbally alert Team R when the kick is made. Following the kick, and after all action around the kicker and holder is over, signal the result of the kick to the press box after receiving information from the covering officials. Be prepared to cover and move with the ball following an errant snap or if the play turns into a running or pass play.

**Umpire and Side Judge:** Starting position is about 5 to 7 yards from Team B's line of scrimmage. Prior to the snap, the Umpire will count Team K players along with the Referee and give the appropriate signal with 11 players or less. The Umpire should be in a position to observe the snap. The Side Judge should line up on the side opposite the press box and may position nearer the goal line to help determine whether the scrimmage kick (on a non-Try play) breaks the plane of Team R's goal line and becomes dead by rule. Both should observe line play. The Umpire will primarily observe action against the snapper. The Side Judge should observe action on and against the tackle and tight end on his side of the formation. Both officials should be alert for obvious hurdling, pull and shoots, and other personal fouls. If the field goal or kick turns into a run or pass play toward the sideline without any covering official, officiate from the inside out. If Team R possesses the ball and makes a return (on a non-Try play), use reverse mechanics. The Side Judge should move toward his sideline for coverage.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is the same as any other scrimmage play. Communicate with each other, and observe whether there are more than four offensive players in the backfield. Be ready to cover action on your sideline from the line of scrimmage to the end line if necessary. Do not leave the line of scrimmage until the ball has crossed the line and it is necessary to move. If you do not need to cover downfield action, quickly close in and observe line play after the kick.

**Back Judge and Field Judge:** Starting position for the Back Judge is behind the upright on the side opposite the press box. Starting position for the Field Judge is behind the upright on the side closest to the press box. Count Team R players and give the appropriate signal when 11 players are present. When ruling on whether the kick is good, the Back Judge takes primary responsibility for his upright and the crossbar, and the Field Judge takes primary responsibility for his upright. The Back Judge may sound the whistle once the try is kicked or when the field goal attempt is over. After the kick ends, communicate the result to each other, then signal the result of the play. Hold the signal long enough for the Referee to observe it.

The positions for field goal and from on or inside the R-7 yard line and all Try kicks are illustrated in the following drawing:



#### B. Field Goal Attempts (Non-Try) Snapped Beyond the R-7 Yard Line

**Referee:** Same position and duties as in Part A.

**Umpire:** Same position and duties as in Part A, but be aware of action involving

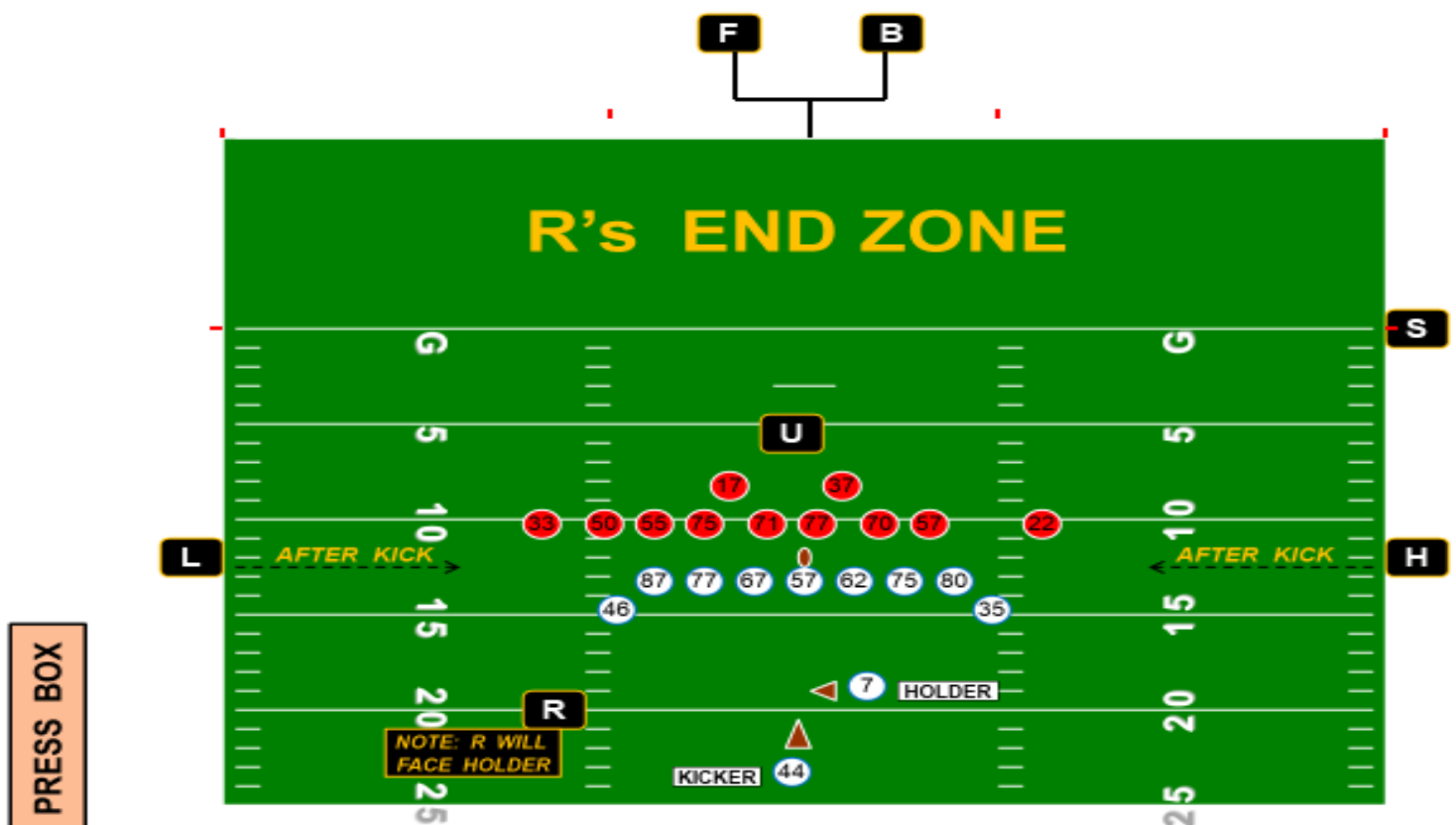
other interior linemen.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Same position and duties as in Part A.

**Side Judge:** Starting position is on the goal line pylon on your sideline. You are primarily responsible for ruling whether the kick breaks the plane of Team R's goal line and becomes dead by rule. Prior to the snap and when a ruling on the goal line plane will be obvious, focus on action and illegal or unnecessary contact on your side of the ball and neutral zone.

**Field Judge and Back Judge:** Same position and duties as in Part A. When it is obvious that the kick is well short of the goal line, be prepared to move forward to officiate the play. When an obviously short kick is heading toward the press box side of the field, the Field Judge should move quickly toward that goal line pylon to assist in ruling whether the kick went out of bounds in the field of play.

The positions for field goal attempts when snapped beyond the R-7 yard line are illustrated in the following drawing:



### C. Fake Kicks or Plays Turning Into a Run or Pass

As a general rule, when the ball is snapped inside Team R's 20-yard line, the Head Linesman and Line Judge have the goal line, and the Back Judge and Field Judge should move along the end line toward their respective sidelines. When the ball is

snapped outside Team R's 20-yard line, the Back Judge and Field Judge should move toward their goal line pylons and cover the goal line.

#### **D. Swinging Gate Formations**

**Referee:** Take an initial position in the offensive backfield at your normal scrimmage-play depth and between the snapper and the gate, even if this puts you on the non-throwing arm side of the potential passer. Be aware of potential numbering exceptions and alignment by the offense. If the offense snaps from this formation, officiate the play as necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your normal kick position.

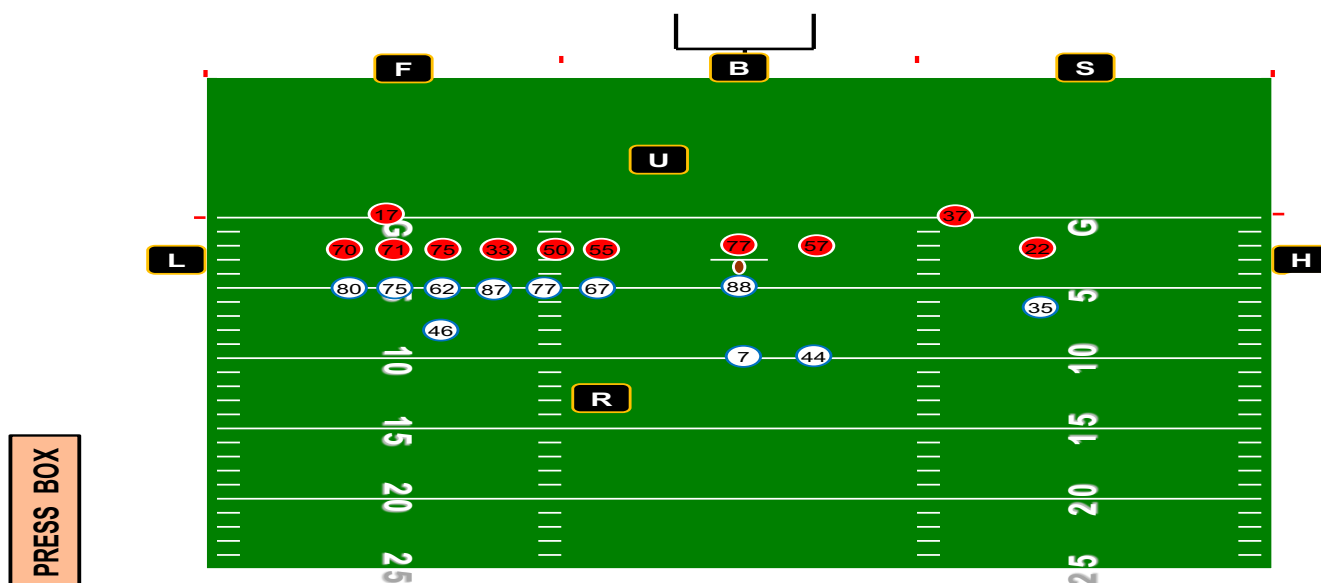
**Umpire:** Take an initial position between the snapper and the gate. Be slightly deeper than your usual depth on scrimmage-play formations. Be aware of potential numbering exceptions and alignment by the offense. If the offense snaps from this formation, be alert for illegal action against the snapper and officiate the play as necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your normal kick position.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Take your normal positions on the line of scrimmage. Observe the formation and identify eligible receivers. Officiate the neutral zone. If the offense snaps from this formation, apply goal line mechanics and officiate the play. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, officiate the play accordingly.

**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Take an initial position on the end line at the numbers. Identify eligible receivers on your side of the field. If you are lined up on the same side of the field as the gate, assist if possible in identifying potential numbering exceptions. If the offense snaps from this formation, officiate the play as needed, and box in the end zone with the line-of-scrimmage official on your side if the play comes to that area. You do not need to rush to the end line pylon, though you may widen out if necessary. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your normal kick position.

**Back Judge:** Take an initial position on the end line around the middle of the field. Identify eligible receivers. If the offense snaps from this formation, officiate the play. If the offense shifts to a traditional scoring kick formation, shift to your kick position.

The initial positions for swinging gate formations are illustrated in the following drawing:



#### E. Returns

If Team R gains possession and starts a return, the crew should use reverse mechanics. The Head Linesman and Line Judge will cover Team K's goal line. The Field Judge should fan out to the press box side of the field during the return.

### IX. MEASUREMENT FOR FIRST DOWN

When the ball is dead and forward progress is close to the line to gain, the covering official should alert the Referee, who will decide if the clock should be stopped to signal a first down or ask for a measurement.

If a measurement is needed, the Referee will take a position near the ball but on the side opposite the press box. The Back Judge will hold the ball in place on the ground from the downfield side while shading away from the press box.

The Side Judge and The Head Linesman will go to the sideline with the chains. The Side Judge will mark and hold the front stake with the down box. The Head Linesman will take the chain at the clip and direct the chain crew to take the chains onto the field toward the ball.

The Line Judge will help the Head Linesman to align the chains on the field for measurement by giving him a spot on the yard line with the clip in line with, but on the press box side of, the ball.

Once the Head Linesman has the clip down and secure, the Umpire will take the front stake from the chain crewman and stretch the chains on the press box side of the ball so the Referee can rule on whether the front of the ball is beyond the line to gain.

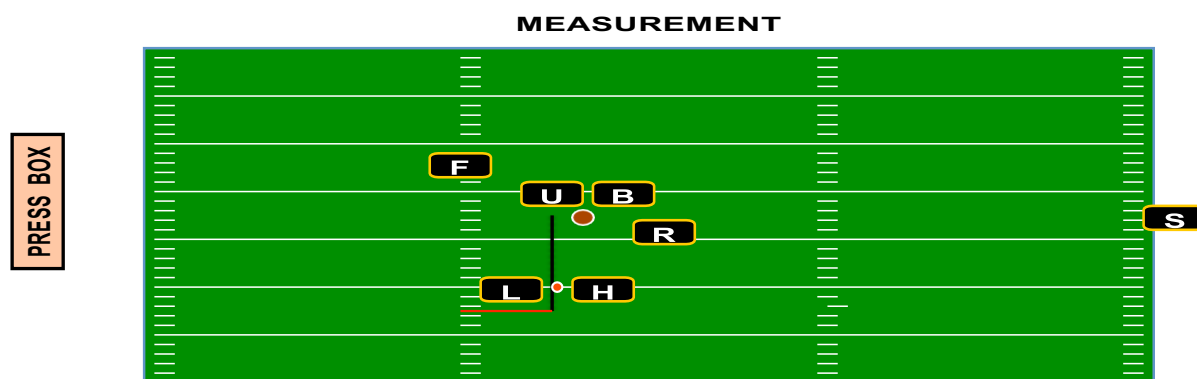
The Field Judge will keep the area clear so that the press box can observe the measurement.

If a first down is indicated, the Head Linesman will release the chain crew to return to the sideline where he will give them a first down spot.

If the line to gain has not been reached and the ball is in between the hash marks, the Head Linesman will return to the sideline, re-spot the clip, and make sure the chain is stretched to place the chain in its original position. The ball will be kept in its spot on the ground for the next snap.

If the line to gain has not been reached and the ball is dead in a side zone, the Umpire will keep control of the front stake. The Referee, from the side of the ball opposite the press box, will use his hands to show how short of the line to gain the ball is. The Referee will then grasp the link of the chain in front of the ball. The Head Linesman will hold the clip, the Referee will hold the chain link, and the Umpire will hold the front stake. They will bring the chains to the hash mark and align them with assistance from the Line Judge. Once the chains are aligned, the Referee will spot the new ball just inside the hash mark at the proper spot with a new ball that the Field Judge obtains. While this process is occurring, the Back Judge will hold the dead ball in the side zone at its spot on the ground until the Referee has correctly spotted the new ball inside the hash mark and has released the chains back to the sideline. The Back Judge should then give the old ball to the ball handler. If the Referee happens to drop the chain, the new ball does not line up clearly with the old ball, or some other event occurs causing a problem with the process, return the chains to the old ball and start over.

The proper officiating positions for a measurement are illustrated in the following drawing:



## **X. PLAYS NEAR THE GOAL LINE**

### **A. Ball Outside Team B's 7-Yard Line**

The Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, and Line Judge will assume their normal positions. The Field Judge and Side Judge will position themselves on the goal line

outside the pylon and will maintain this position as Team A moves toward the goal line. The Back Judge will begin positioning himself on the end line once the snap is on Team B's 25-yard line.

### **B. Ball On and Inside Team B's 7-Yard Line**

The Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, and Line Judge will assume their normal positions. The Field Judge and Side Judge will position themselves on the end line where it intersects with the sideline. The Back Judge will be on the end line. At the snap, the Head Linesman and Line Judge should move to the goal line outside the pylon and officiate from there. They should be on the goal line when the ball crosses it. The Referee will rule on whether passes behind the line of scrimmage are forward or backward. The Umpire will rule on whether the pass or passer crossed the line of scrimmage. When game situations dictate, such as when the ball is near Team B's 7-yard line or in short-yardage situations, the Field Judge and Side Judge may stay on the goal line. The Head Linesman will make this determination.

All officials should communicate with each other between each down about positioning and goal line coverage whenever the ball is to be snapped on or inside team B's 20-yard line and especially when nearing the goal line.

### **C. Goal Line Coming Out**

When Team A snaps the ball on or inside its own 3-yard line, the Head Linesman and Line Judge should immediately retreat to the goal line. When Team A snaps the ball between the 3 and 10-yard lines, the Line Judge holds the line of scrimmage, and the Head Linesman reads the play and retreats to the goal line if necessary. All other officials should officiate the play as normal.

## **XI. END OF A PERIOD**

When time expires for after any period, the Referee will hold the ball in one hand over his head to signal the official end of the period after pausing momentarily to make sure that no foul, obvious timing error, request for a coach-official conference, or other irregularity has occurred.

### **A. After the First and Third Quarters**

Once the period officially ends, the Referee, Umpire, and Back Judge will meet at the ball and agree and record possession, next down to be played, and the yard line where the ball is located. All officials will record the same information, and the Head Linesman will record the position of the clip. The Head Linesman will stay on his sideline and record the above and the yard line where the clip is located. The Line Judge and Field Judge will observe the teams, and help each team get turned around and located at the correct yard line. The Referee, Umpire, and Back Judge shall move to the location of the ball at the new spot.



Prior to moving the chains, the Side Judge will proceed to the sideline and confirm the information with the Head Linesman and note the yard line where the clip is located. The Side Judge will observe the chains being turned around and then go to the opposite end of the field and make certain the clip is placed in the correct location.

The Change of Quarters procedure should take no more than one minute and is timed by the Back Judge. With 15 seconds remaining in the time out, the Back Judge should signal the Referee, and sideline officials should get the teams back onto the field. After checking that all officials are in proper position and that the clock has been reset and that there is no other delay, the Referee will mark the ball ready for play.

### **B. After the End of the First Half**

The Game Clock Operator will put the length of the half time period on the Game Clock and wait for the Referee's signal. When all players and coaches have cleared the field, the Referee will signal the Game Clock Operator to start the Game Clock to time the half time period.

All officials will exit the field together and should neither avoid nor seek out coaches during the exit from the field. The Side Judge monitors the duration of half time, and the time will start when both teams have cleared the playing area. If there are any discussions between officials and coaches, the Referee will be the spokesman for the crew.

Five minutes prior to the end of half time, the Field Judge and Side Judge will separately make contact with the Head Coaches for the teams on their respective sidelines and notify them of the time remaining in the half time. These officials will remain with their respective teams and make sure the teams return to the field in time for the mandatory warm-up period. These officials will obtain choices from the Head Coaches concerning receiving, kicking, and defending a goal.

## **XII. OVERTIME PROCEDURES**

All varsity non-Jamboree games must play an overtime period if, at the end of regulation time, the score is tied.

The overtime procedure to be used is the National Federation of State High School Association's 10-yard line overtime procedure specified in the Football Rules Book along with any additional procedures of the LHSAA. These procedures should be part of the pregame.

When the score is tied at the end of regulation, all field officials will meet at the center of the field to review overtime procedures for three minutes. The Game Clock Operator will come down to the field. The Play Clock Operator will continue to operate the play clock. After this three-minute intermission, the Head Linesman, Side Judge, and Back Judge will go to the sideline opposite the press box, and the Line Judge and Field Judge will go to the press box sideline to inform the coaches of

any special penalties that will be enforced, and that each team has one time out per team per overtime period.

Prior to the overtime coin toss, the Referee and Umpire will take a position in the center of the field. The Field Judge and Side Judge will escort their respective Team Captains to the center of the field. The Head Linesman and Line Judge will obtain a game ball from their respective teams. When the coin toss is completed, the Umpire will place the offensive team's game ball on the appropriate yard line to begin the overtime. The crew will briefly meet at the 10-yard line with the Game Clock Operator to discuss any last-minute matters. The Game Clock Operator will shadow the down box on the Line Judge's side of the field and will hold position until the ball has been snapped on the succeeding down.

Beginning with the third overtime, if a team scores a touchdown, it must attempt a two-point try.

### **XIII. END OF THE GAME**

The jurisdiction of the officials ends when the Referee declares the score final by holding the ball over his head. Unless the score is tied and there will be overtime played, there cannot be a dead ball foul following the end of regulation time. Any noteworthy event happening after the end of the game should be reported immediately to the RCO. All officials will immediately exit the field but will wait for the Clock Operators, who will join the crew as soon as possible at the crew meeting spot. Do not make any public statements about the game. All officials should give their foul information to the Referee so he can submit the foul information online at [www.foulreports.com](http://www.foulreports.com). The Referee should report any flagrant irregularity, player disqualification or coach disqualification to the RCO as soon as possible following the game.

### **XIV. INITIAL KEYS AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

For complete coverage, all officials must know their assigned receiver keys based on player positions **at the snap**. Keys are numbered from the sideline going in toward the center of the field. The widest receiver is 1, the next widest is 2, etc. Your keys are determined by the position at the snap, so be ready to switch to different keys following an offensive shift when necessary.

Remember that keys are part of your initial responsibility. As the play develops, you may need to leave a key and be officiating other players and other areas of responsibilities.

**Referee:** Initial keys are the set backs and quarterback. Be aware of the tackle opposite you, and be ready to officiate action involving both tackles when necessary, such as when the offensive formation includes trips or an empty backfield. Maintain responsibility for the quarterback until and unless he advances beyond the neutral zone and another official picks him up. Officiate action at the point of attack on run

plays. Be alert for defensive threats to your quarterback on passing plays.

**Umpire:** Observe the snap. Initial, primary responsibility for the center and both guards and action on or by them. Officiate at and behind the point of attack.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Initial key is either the second or third receiver (often a back) that the Back Judge does not have. When three receivers are outside the tackle and the third receiver is either a tight end or just behind where a tight end would be, key on the third receiver. When three receivers are outside the tackle and none are a tight end or just behind where a tight end would be, key on the second receiver. When receiver keys are not pressed, watch action by tackle at snap. When your key is not pressed, assist with action by the tackle on your side.

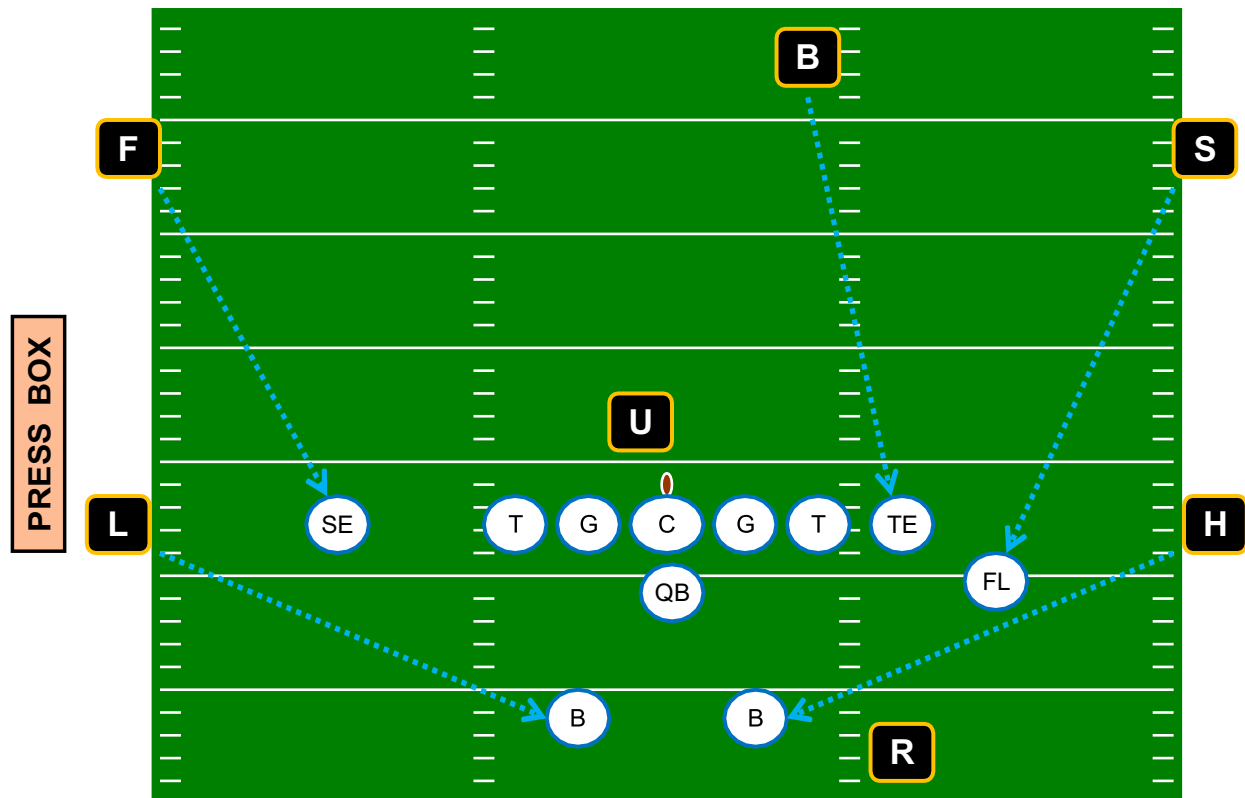
**Field Judge and Side Judge:** Initial key is always the widest receiver.

**Back Judge:** Your initial key is second receiver on the strong side. If balanced, the Line Judge's side is the strong side. When three receivers are outside the tackle and the third receiver is either a tight end or just behind where a tight end would be, key on the second receiver. When three receivers are outside the tackle and none are a tight end or just behind where a tight end would be, key on the inside third receiver. If your key stays in and blocks, be prepared to switch to another area.

**Unusual Formations:** When no formal keys are obvious due to unusual formations, such as in a four-receiver stacked set let the receivers "declare" based on their movements after the snap and adjust coverage accordingly.

Examples of the application of these receiver keys are illustrated on the following diagrams:

## PRO SET > STRENGTH TO HEAD LINESMAN's SIDE



**Head Linesman:** Third eligible receiver from the sideline to your side of the formation. In this case, the back on your side of the field if he leaves the backfield.

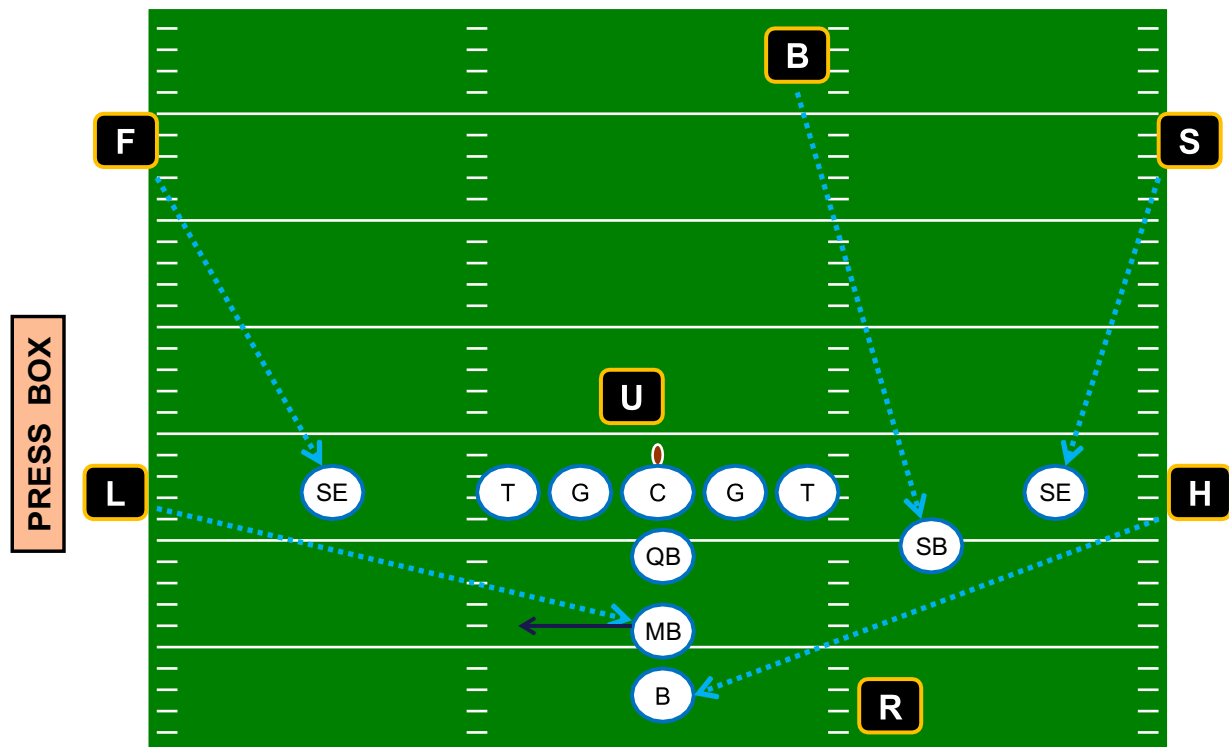
**Side judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the flanker.

**Line judge:** Your key is the inside receiver, which is the back on your side of the field.

**Field judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Back judge:** Inside eligible receiver outside the tackle on the strong side of the field. In this case, the tight end.

## MOTION MAN INSIDE TACKLE AT SNAP



**Head Linesman:** When the motion man goes away, take the remaining back.

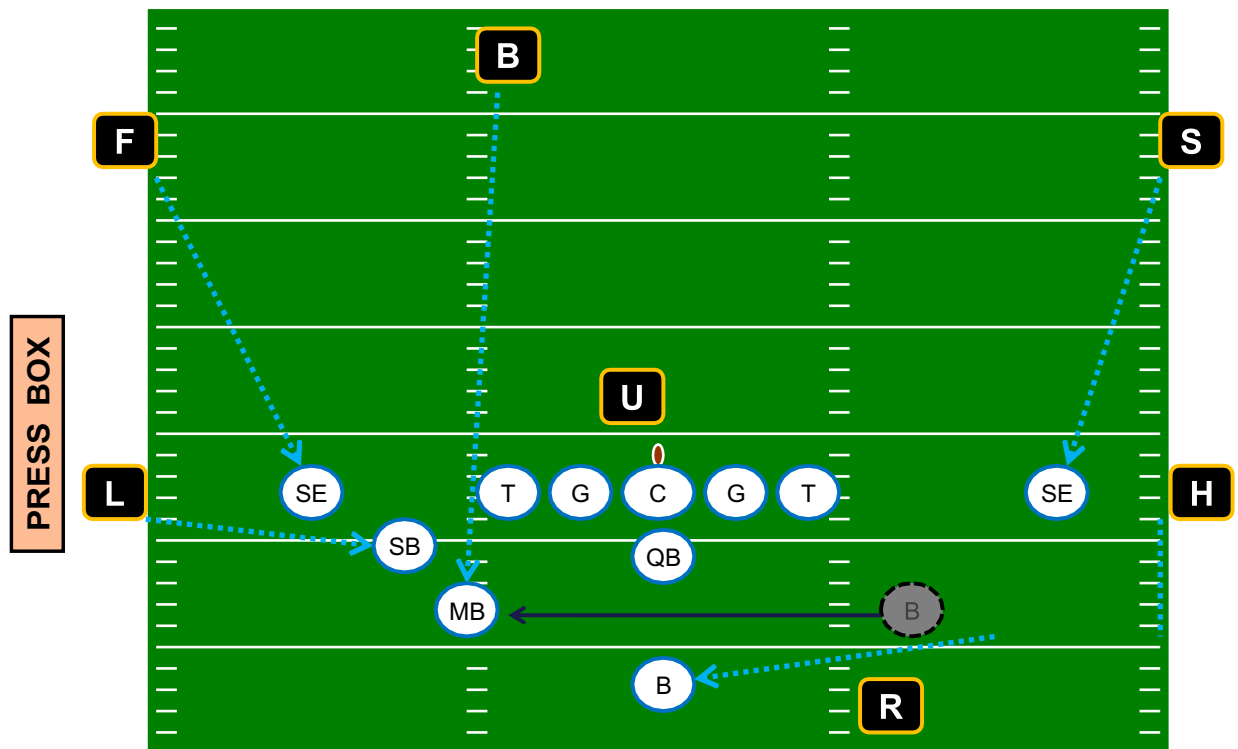
**Side Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Line Judge:** Your key is the inside receiver. In this case, that's the motion man coming to you while he stays inside the tackle.

**Field Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Back Judge:** The second eligible receiver on the strong side. In this case, that's the slot back. If

## MOTION MAN OUTSIDE TACKLE AT SNAP



**Head Linesman:** Initially the motion man until he crosses the opposite tackle. Afterwards, the back not in motion.

**Side Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Line Judge:** Second eligible receiver from the sideline to your side of the formation because there are now three receivers outside the tackle and the third receiver is not a tight end or player just behind where a tight end would be.

**Field Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Back Judge:** The third eligible receiver on the strong side because there are now three receivers outside the tackle and the third receiver is not a tight end or player just behind where a tight end would be. In this case, your key is the man in motion outside the tackle.

The diagram shows a football pitch with the following player positions and movement arrows:

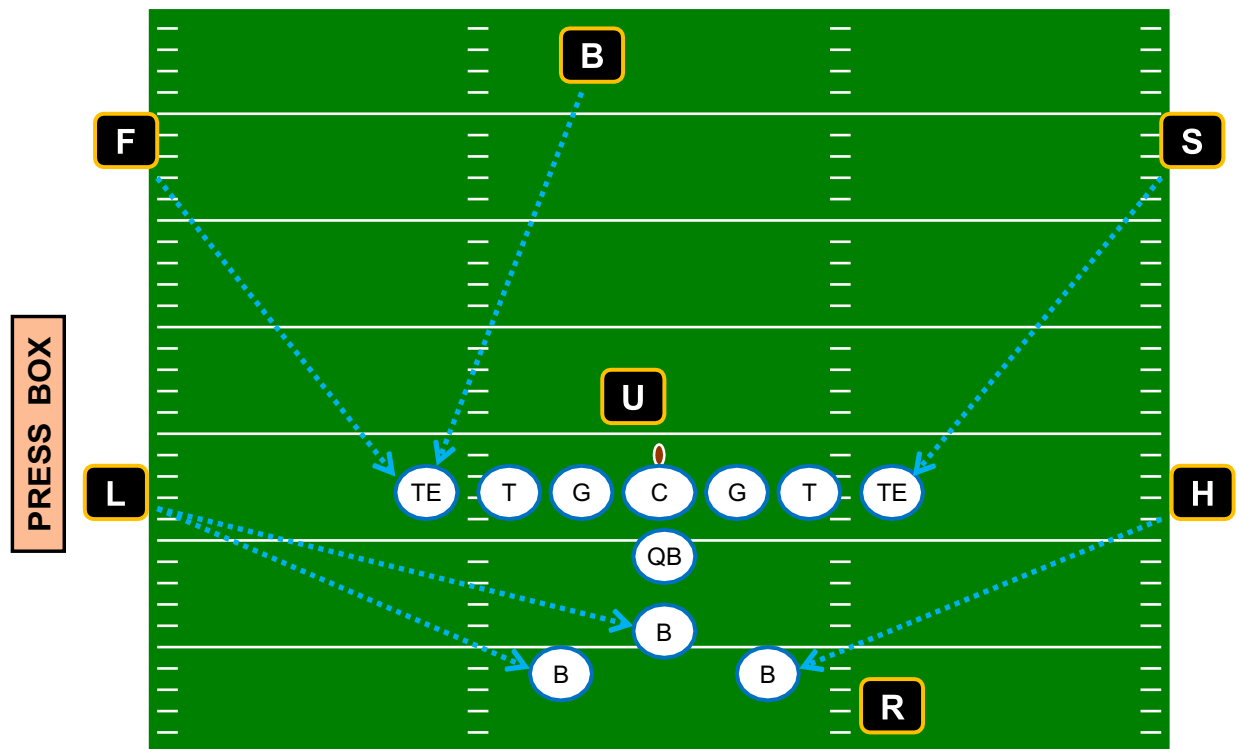
- Goalkeepers:** MB (left), SE (right).
- Defenders:** WB (left), QB (right).
- Midfielders:** TE (left), T (center), G (center), C (center), G (center), T (right).
- Forwards:** B (left), B (right).
- Other:** U (center), R (bottom right).

Arrows indicate movement:

- From F to MB.
- From B to TE.
- From L to WB.
- From U to C.
- From SE to B.
- From H to B.
- From B to MB.

**Back Judge:** The second eligible receiver on the strong side because there are now three receivers outside the tackle and the third receiver is a tight end.

## DOUBLE TIGHT END > BALANCED FORMATION



**Head Linesman:** Your key is the inside receiver. In this case, that's the back on your side of the field.

**Side Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the tight end.

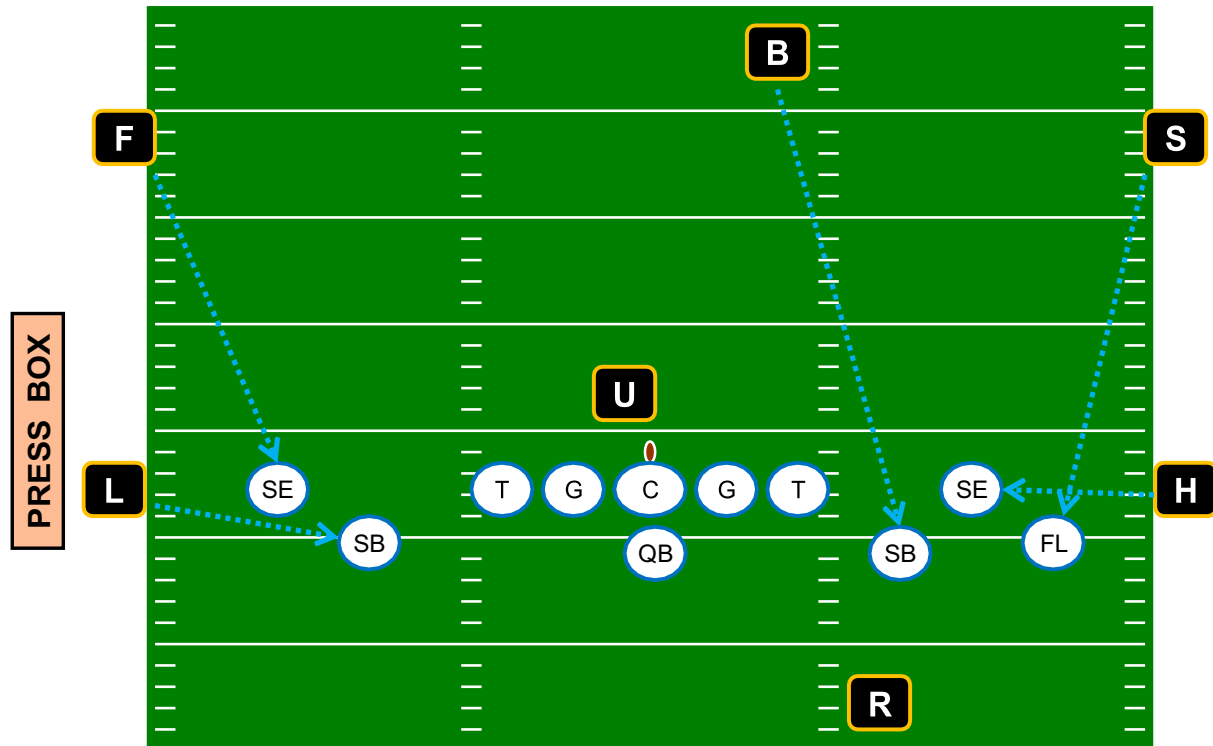
**Line Judge:** The widest backs on his side. In this case, the running back and the fullback.

**Field Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the tight end.

**Back Judge:** The back judge assists to the Line Judge's side when the formation is balanced. He has the widest receiver on the Line Judge's side. In this case, that's the tight end. Then key on first back out backfield.



## TRIPS > EMPTY BACKFIELD



**Head Linesman:** Second eligible receiver from the sideline to your side of the formation because there are three receivers outside the tackle and the third receiver is not a tight end or immediately behind where a tight end would be. In this case, the inside split end.

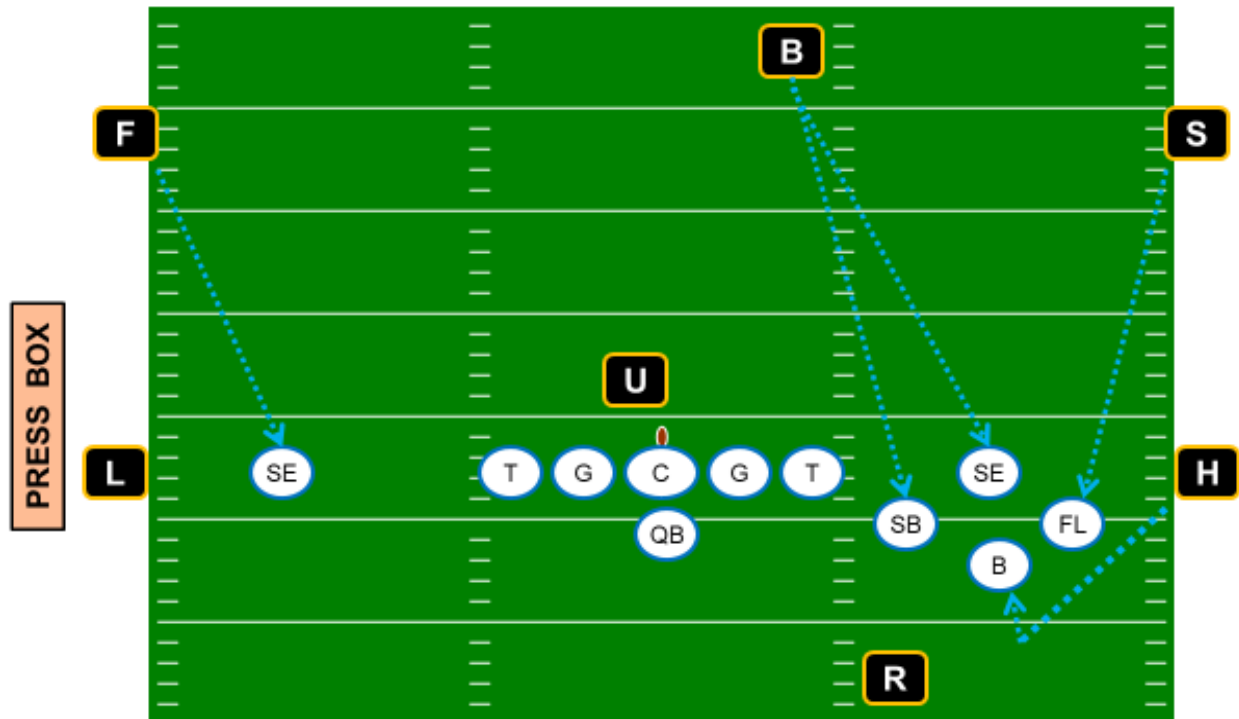
**Side Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the outside flanker.

**Line Judge:** Your key is the inside receiver. In this case, that's the slot back on your side of the field.

**Field Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Back Judge:** The third eligible receiver on the strong side because there are three receivers outside the tackle and the third receiver is not a tight end or immediately behind where a tight end would be. In this case, the slot back.

## FOUR RECEIVERS > UNALIGNED



**Head Linesman:** Second eligible receivers from the sideline to your side of the formation.

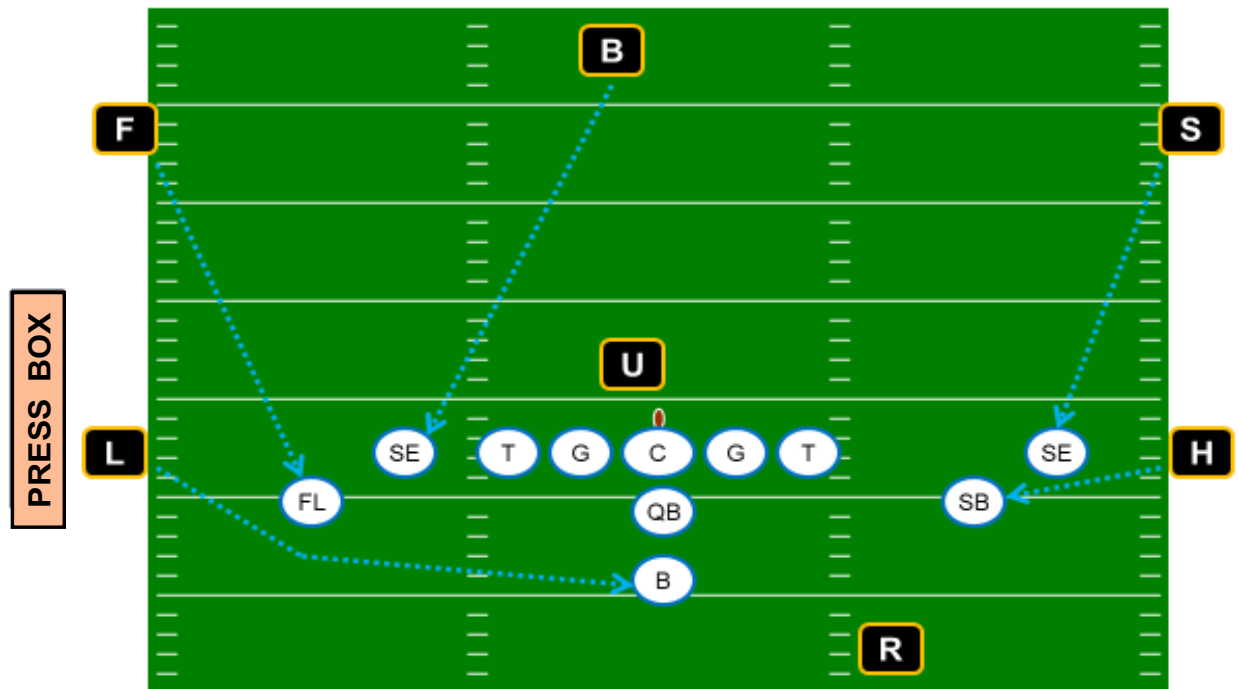
**Side judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the outside flanker.

**Line judge:** No formal key. Observe tackle and blocking.

**Field judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Back judge:** The third and fourth eligible receiver on the strong side.

## DOUBLE WING > BALANCED FORMATION



**Head Linesman:** Your key is the inside receiver. In this case, that's the slot back.

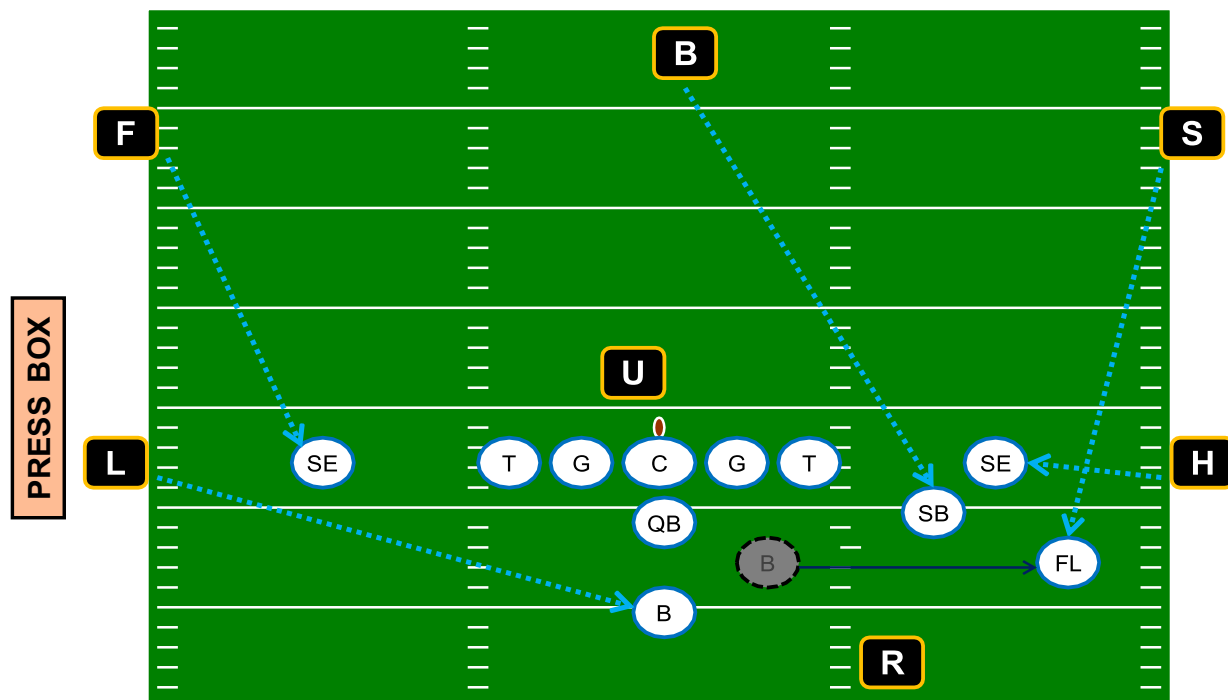
**Side Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Line Judge:** The third eligible receiver from the sideline to your side of the formation. In this case, that's the running back.

**Field Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the flanker.

**Back Judge:** In a balanced formation, strength is declared to the Line Judge's side. Your key is the second eligible receiver on the strong side. In this case, the split end.

## MOTION INTO TRIPS



**Head Linesman:** Original key was the back who went in motion. When motion changed the formation, your key became the second eligible receiver on your side because of the trips formation and the third receiver is not a tight end or immediately behind where a tight end would be. In this case, that's the split end.

**Side Judge:** Original key was the split end. When motion changed the formation to trips, your key became the widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, that's the motion man who is now the wide flanker.

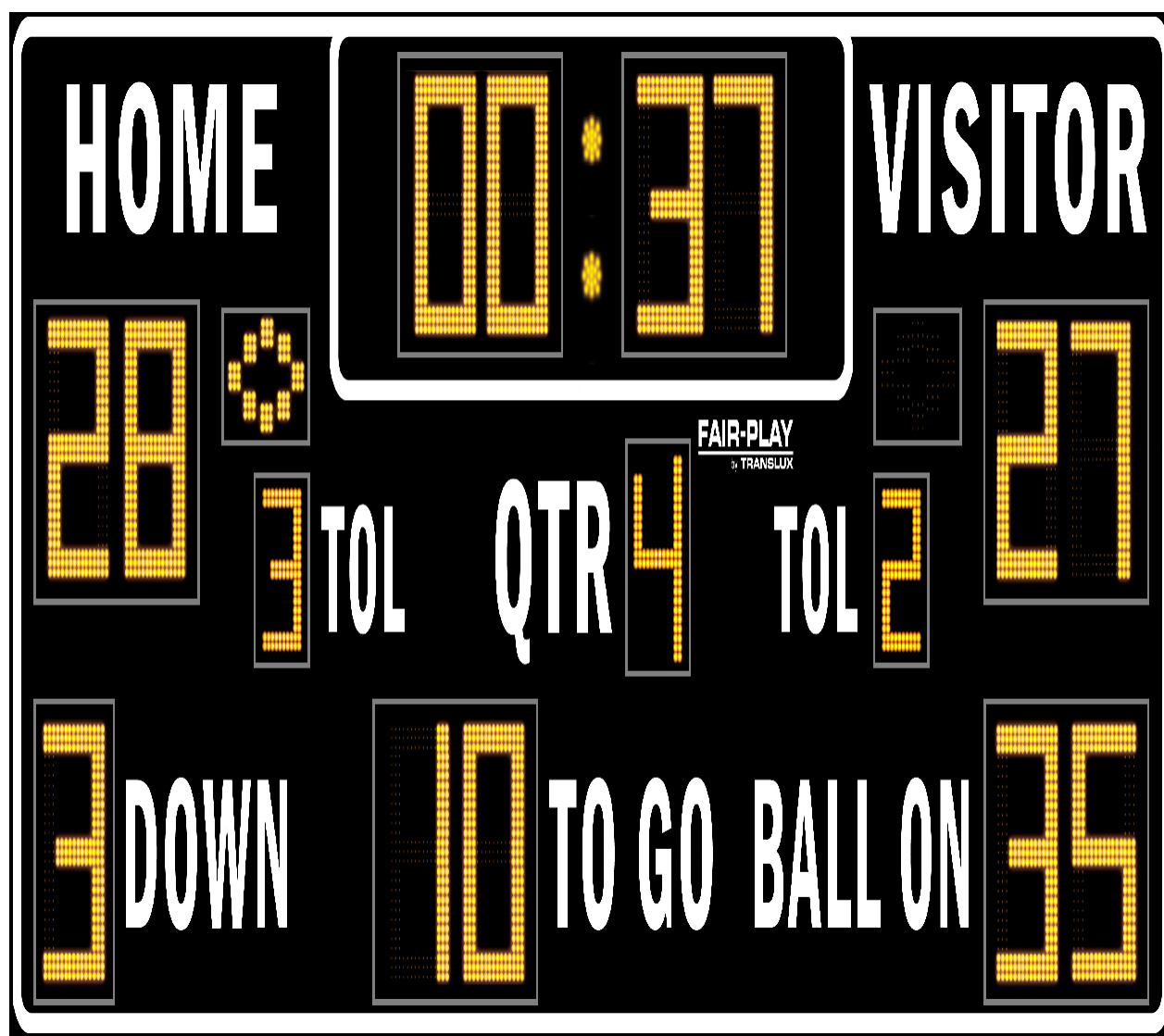
**Line Judge:** Original key was the third eligible receiver on your side, the running back. Motion changed the formation to trips on the opposite side. With only two eligibles on your side, your key is the inside receiver. In this case, that's still the running back.

**Field Judge:** Widest eligible receiver in the formation on your side of the field. In this case, the split end.

**Back Judge:** Original key was the slot back (number two receiver) on the Line Judge's side. When motion changed the strength of the formation, your key remained the slot back (number three eligible receiver) because of the trips formation and the third receiver is not a tight end or immediately behind where a tight end would be.



# CLOCK OPERATOR MECHANICS



## 2022 FOOTBALL SEASON

# **CLOCK OPERATOR MECHANICS**

Clock operators are an indispensable part of officiating a football game. As a clock operator, your job is no less important than those of the on-field officials, and you are no less a part of the officiating crew. The success or failure of a crew may often depend on the success or failure of the clock operators. Just as the on-field officials have mechanics to help them officiate the game, so do clock operators. The items below are meant to help you be able to perform your clock operator functions as well as possible.

## **GAME CLOCK OPERATOR**

1. Always report timely to your game and in the proper attire. Bring a full on-field uniform with accessories. Be ready to replace a field official if needed. Have a stopwatch or countdown clock that you can use should the visible clock become inoperable. Participate in the pregame conference, and ask any questions you have. After the pregame conference with the officials, locate the clock. Familiarize yourself with the operation of the clock, and be sure it is working properly. If you have any problems, report them to the Referee immediately.
2. Your job is to operate the clock only. Do not operate other scoreboard functions. Be in a position to see the whole field and all the field officials. Never talk to the announcer, the press, broadcasters, a player, or coach about a play or penalty enforcement. Never criticize a call made by a field official. Never discuss a play by any player or team.
3. When the crew assumes jurisdiction at 30 minutes before kickoff, set the game clock to 30:00 and start it.
4. Always observe and follow the signals given by the officials on the field, even if their signals are incorrect according to rule.
5. For a kickoff, the game clock will start when the kick is touched other than first touching and the officials on the field give the winding signal. The clock is stopped when the covering official gives the stop signal.
6. For scrimmage plays, if the clock is stopped, it will start on the snap. The clock will run until the officials signal to stop the clock for some reason, such as an incomplete pass, the runner going out of bounds, or a score. Unless the play ends in a score, the clock will start on the next snap.
7. If a time out is called, the officials will stop the clock. If it is a charged team time out, the clock will next start on the snap. If it is an official's time out, it

may start either on the snap or the Referee's signal, depending on what caused the clock to stop. Always watch the Referee closely in this situation.

8. If a touchdown is scored, the clock will be stopped when the covering official gives the touchdown signal. It will not run during the Try. It will next start on the next kickoff when the ball is touched after the kickoff other than first touching, and the officials signal to start the clock.
9. If a player is injured on the field, the covering official will stop the clock. Watch the Referee for starting the clock. If the Referee doesn't give you a signal, start the clock on the snap.
10. At the end of a quarter, the clock will stop when time expires, even if a play is in progress. Unless the next play is a kickoff, the clock will start on the snap for the first play of the second and fourth quarters.
11. When the first half ends, put the appropriate time on the clock for halftime, and start the clock on the Referee's signal.
12. When halftime is over, set the clock to 3:00 for the mandatory warm-up period, and start it immediately. When the warm-up period is over, set the clock to 12:00 for the start of the third quarter.
13. If at any time during the game the clock malfunctions, get the attention of the field officials as soon as possible. Know how much time was on the clock when it malfunctioned. If necessary, get the announcer to get the attention of the field officials.
14. If the clock malfunctions, keep time on your backup stopwatch. Stay several feet off the sideline. When there are approximately five minutes left in the half, notify the Referee. Take a position on the field about 15 to 20 yards behind the Referee. Drift from sideline to sideline notifying both Coaches of time remaining. Do not enter into any conference with the field officials unless instructed to do so by the Referee.
15. If overtime is to be played, turn the clock off during this period and report to the sideline. Shadow the down box on the press box side of the field.

## **PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR**

1. Always report timely to your game and in proper attire. You may need to officiate on the field in the event of an injury. Familiarize yourself with the game clock operator's duties in the event that you have to go onto the field

because of an injury. Fully participate in the pregame conference, and ask questions if you are not completely sure of your responsibilities.

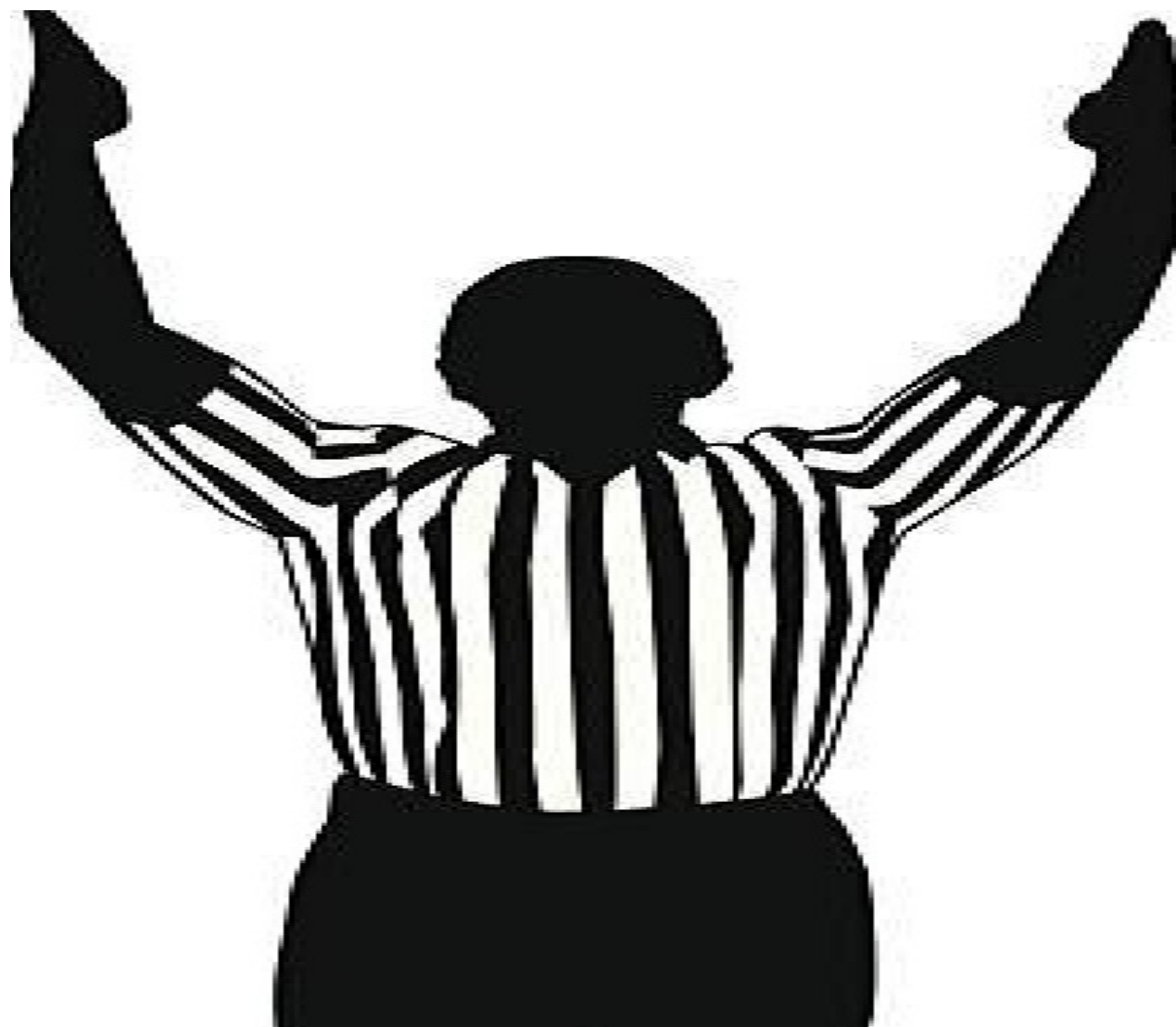
2. Your job is to operate the play clock only. Do not operate any other scoreboard function. Be in position to see the whole field and all the field officials. Never talk to the announcer, the press, broadcasters, a player, or coach about a play or penalty enforcement. Never criticize a call made by a field official. Never discuss a play by any player or team.
3. After the pregame conference with the crew, go to the press box or the site from which the play clock is operated as directed by the Referee and familiarize yourself with the way in which the clock operates.
4. Before and after a kickoff, touchdown, Try, and any other administrative stoppage, set the play clock to 25 seconds, and start it when the Referee “marks” the ball ready for play by chopping his hand in a downward motion. The play clock runs regardless of whether the game clock is running. The Referee may signal with one hand pumping above his head to reset the play clock to 25 seconds or two hands to reset it to 40 seconds. After an administrative stoppage, set the play clock to 25 seconds unless the Referee signals for 40 seconds, but do not start it until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
5. Generally, after any scrimmage play, the play clock is set to 40 seconds. The covering official’s signal will designate when to start the play clock. When the ball is declared dead in field of play following: ***a play from scrimmage***—the play clock starts when covering official raises his arm above his head, gives a wind signal when the runner is down near the sideline, or stops the game clock to award the offense a new series; ***an incomplete pass***—the playclock starts when covering official signals incomplete pass; ***the ball going out of bounds***—the play clock starts when covering official signals to stop the game clock. The play clock runs in these situations regardless of whether the game clock is running.
6. If the play clock is running, there is no administrative stoppage, and the Referee gives a “pump up” signal with one hand without blowing a whistle to stop everything, reset the game clock to 25 seconds, and let it run immediately. If the Referee gives this signal while sounding the whistle and stopping the clock, reset the game clock to 25 seconds, and start it when the Referee “chops” it and marks it ready for play.
7. If the Referee gives a “pump up” signal with both hands, reset the play clock to 40 seconds and start it immediately.
8. Although other officials may give a “pump up” signal to the Referee, do not reset the play clock unless the Referee gives the “pump up” signal.



9. Make no statement to any coach, representative of the press or other person about what takes place on the field. Do not discuss any call made by the crew of officials or any penalty enforcement. Never criticize a call made by a game official.
10. If an overtime period is to be played, stay at your position. The play clock will be used in the overtime period.
11. As soon as the game is over, immediately exit the press box and field as quickly as possible.



# **ADDITIONAL DUTIES AND MECHANICS**



## **2022 FOOTBALL SEASON**

# CHAIN CREW INSTRUCTIONS

The typical line-to-gain crew (“chain crew”) consists of at least three individuals – a Down-Marker Indicator Operator and two others to hold the rods. A fourth member of the crew is recommended to operate the clip as specified below. If there is no fourth person, the Down-Marker Indicator Operator will operate the clip. In some cases where a fourth crew member is present, that member may also be requested to record penalties on a chart provided by the game officials. It is recommended that the members of the chain crew wear distinctive vests or jackets furnished by home or game management. The Head Linesman should remind crew members that they are assistant officials and not fans.

## PREGAME DUTIES

1. The chain crew shall meet the Head Linesman before game time and also five minutes prior to the second-half kickoff. If an auxiliary down-marker indicator is used, the operator shall meet the Line Judge on the press-boxside at the same time.
2. The Head Linesman shall make certain that the official line-to-gain and down-marker indicators have been placed opposite the press box or on the designated sideline and that all are in good working order and conform to the rules. The Line Judge shall make certain that any auxiliary down-marker indicator is in good working order and is placed on the opposite side of the field from the chain crew.
3. The complete concentration of the chain crew is absolutely necessary if crew members are to discharge their duties efficiently. The crew must refrain from showing any partisan reaction to the events taking place on the playing field. The crew must be prepared to act immediately on instructions from the Head Linesman so that teams and all concerned will know the exact situation concerning the down and yards to be gained. The crew shall not move or change the number of the down until signaled to do so by the Head Linesman. If there is an Auxiliary Down-Marker Indicator Operator, he shall act only on instructions from the Line Judge. The crew must remain impartial and may not communicate down and distance information to members of the coaching staff or team.
4. While serving on the chain crew, the crew should refrain from using items that would distract them from their responsibility (i.e. using electronic devices).

## GAME PROCEDURES

1. On the Head Linesman's signal, the chain crew shall move as quickly as possible to the next position.
2. When a runner or pass receiver is going out of bounds in the immediate vicinity, the involved crew member is to quickly and carefully drop the marker and move away from the sideline, keeping his / her eye on the spot of the marker. The crew members away from the play should hold their positions if possible.
3. The Head Linesman will set the spot of all first downs by going to the sidelines and marking, while facing the field, the exact spot where the rear stake will be set. The front crew member will then be sure the chain is fully extended before setting his / her stake.
4. The Down-Marker Indicator Operator, on every new series of downs, will set the down-marker indicator at the spot marked by the Head Linesman. When the line-to-gain equipment is moved, the rear rod is to be set behind the down-marker indicator and then the clip shall be placed at the back edge of the 5-yard line nearest the rear rod. The down-marker indicator must be held at all times in an upright position with the down correctly shown.
5. The Down-Marker Indicator Operator is to show the number of the down just completed and shall not indicate the new down until so notified by the Head Linesman. On instruction from the Head Linesman, the Down-Marker Indicator Operator will move the down-marker indicator to a new position with the marker indicator placed at the forward point of the ball and change the marker indicator to the correct down.
6. On all measurements for first down when the chain is moved onto the field, the Down-Marker Indicator Operator is to place his / her marker indicator at the spot of the front rod until a new series of downs is declared or the chain is returned to its previous position.
7. The chain is not extended if it is a first-and-goal situation. The Head Linesman should provide the Down-Marker Indicator Operator a bean bag in this situation to mark location of the box in case it is moved during the down.
8. The Down-Marker Indicator Operator should place the marker indicator on the line of scrimmage on all try situations. This will aid players and officials in determining the line of scrimmage on all plays toward the sideline. The chain will not be placed on a try.
9. If the sidelines become crowded and the crew does not have room to efficiently discharge its duties, the crew is to notify the Head Linesman immediately so that a time-out may be called and sidelines cleared before the game will be allowed to proceed.
10. If the game is delayed for any reason, the crew will stay with the game officials.
11. The official line-to-gain and down-marker indicators shall be operated approximately 2 yards outside the sideline opposite the press box, except in stadiums where the total playing enclosure does not permit. Unofficial

auxiliary line-to-gain and down-marker indicators may be used on the sideline opposite the official line-to-gain and down-marker indicators, and shall be operated approximately 2 yards outside the sideline, except in stadiums where the total playing enclosure does not permit. All indicators shall be operated as far off the sideline (up to 2 yards) as facilities permit and as directed by the Head Linesman and Line Judge.

12. With the 40- or 25-second play clock, it is possible the ball may be snapped prior to the down-marker indicator being set. Should this rare situation occur, the Head Linesman shall drop a bean bag at the spot where the Down- Marker Indicator Operator shall spot the down-marker indicator.

## FUMBLE COVERAGE

If you observe a fumble in your area of coverage, drop your bean bag to mark the spot of the fumble that occurs beyond the neutral zone. It is not necessary to bean bag a fumble that occurs behind the neutral zone, though it is not improper to do so.

After bean bagging the spot of the fumble, continue to officiate the remainder of the play.

If a pile of players forms while attempting to recover the fumble, be sure to see the ball before blowing the whistle. The first official to the pile should start digging for the ball in the pile. The second official should stop the clock and help in unpiling players. The remainder of the officiating crew should monitor for dead ball infractions and keep other players from joining the pile and roughly pushing or pulling players off the pile.

When players start digging for the ball in the pile and the play is obviously over, the 40-second play clock should begin running immediately. If the ball remains with Team A, the ball will be spotted, and the Referee will have the option of “pumping up” the play clock to 25 seconds. The Referee and the official monitoring the play clock should take primary responsibility in observing this, but all officials should assist in this process.

## PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

Enforcing penalties correctly is a crew effort. Proper enforcement is a critical part of game management, and all enforcements should be made correctly and in an efficient manner. However, a crew should never rush when administering penalties. In properly enforcing penalties, each official has a role in the process.

**The Calling Official:** An official who sees a foul shall drop his penalty flag at the proper spot. If enforcement would be from the spot of the foul, the official should try to get the flag near the actual spot of the foul. For dead ball fouls or fouls

simultaneous with the snap, the covering official should toss the flag overhead into the air and directly in front of him.

After the ball becomes dead, the official who called the foul should stop the clock and get the Referee's attention by giving short blasts of the whistle. The official should give a preliminary foul signal to the Referee and point to the direction of the offending team. If the calling official is covering the succeeding spot, he should not leave the spot until another official comes to him and takes the spot for him. Make sure another official is covering the spot of the foul. The official should communicate all the following important information to the Referee:

- 1) The foul that was called;
- 2) The offending team (jersey color, offense/defense, etc.);
- 3) The offending player's number;
- 4) Pertinent spots;
- 5) Status of ball when foul occurred (loose, pass, run, possession);
- 6) Outcome of the play if applicable (first down, touchdown, short, fumble, etc.); and
- 7) Status of clock on next play.

The calling officials should record all pertinent information on his game card including the player and team who fouled, whether the fouling team was on offense or defense, whether the penalty was accepted or declined, the foul and specific characteristics, the quarter, and time of the foul.

**Referee:** Give the time out signal and get the full information from the calling official. Give the preliminary signal to the press box side of the field, except when no preliminary signal is needed, such as after routine dead ball fouls involving the line of scrimmage (false start, encroachment, etc.) and enforcement is obvious. Through crewmembers, give and receive the options from the offended team's Head Coach. If the choice is obvious, simply inform the Coach what the result will be. It should not be necessary, in most cases, to confer at length with the Umpire to discuss enforcement. While the Umpire, Head Linesman, and Line Judge are marking the penalty, take a position clear of other players and make your penalty announcement. Include the foul, the offending team and player number, offended team's choice, penalty, and next down.

Inform all officials of any player who commits an unsportsmanlike foul. All officials should record the numbers of such players.

Immediately advise your RCO if anyone was disqualified from the game, and if any noteworthy event occurred.

Following the game, review all penalty information with the crew. You are responsible for submitting an accurate foul report through the LHSOA online foul reporting form, which can be found at [www.foulreports.com](http://www.foulreports.com).

**Umpire:** You have primary responsibility for enforcing penalties. Be able to enforce any penalty with minimal involvement from other officials. Secure the ball, verify the enforcement spot and distance, and mark off the penalty with the Head Linesman and Line Judge. Any discrepancy should be corrected immediately. On a properly marked field, do not step off the yardage except for the first and final yard.

**Head Linesman:** Be ready to move the chains and be certain of the next down number. Mark off the penalty along the sideline to verify enforcement with Umpire. This serves as a check on the enforcement. Any discrepancy should be corrected immediately. Assist in relaying penalty information and options to and from the appropriate head coach.

**Line Judge:** Mark and hold the enforcement spot. Mark off the penalty along the sideline to verify enforcement with Umpire but only after the Umpire and Head Linesman have already done so. This serves as a check on the enforcement. Any discrepancy should be corrected immediately. Assist in relaying penalty information and options to and from the appropriate head coach.

**Other Officials:** Help in retrieving the ball, holding the succeeding spot or spot of the foul, and recovering the penalty marker. Assist in relaying foul information to the appropriate sideline.

**All Officials:** Accordion in at the end of the play as usual. Assist in obtaining information about what happened on the foul and relay the details to the head coaches. Be aware of game clock status. Make sure the penalty has been assessed correctly. Communicate and make sure the entire crew agrees on the upcoming down number. If any official thinks a mistake has been made, bring it to the Referee's attention immediately. At the conclusion of the game, provide all foul information to the Referee for documentation and reporting.

## USE OF THE BEAN BAG AND HAT

**Bean Bag Use:** The bean bag is used to mark spots, other than the spot of a foul, that may be needed for reference or spots of enforcement. It is commonly used to mark the spot of a fumble, the end of a run, and the end of a scrimmage kick. It may also be used to mark other spots of reference.

All officials must carry at least one bean bag. To mark the spot where a scrimmage kick ends, the appropriate official (the Line Judge in a crew of four, the Back Judge in a crew of five or seven, and the Field Judge in a crew of six) should carry a second bean bag. The Head Linesman should also carry a second bean bag for marking the line of scrimmage in situations where the offense has snapped the ball but the down box marker is not in place.

An official should drop his bean bag at the appropriate spot in the following

situations:

1. Any spot of first touching during a free or scrimmage kick;
2. Any spot where a fumble occurs if the fumble is beyond the neutral zone;
3. The spot where a backward pass is thrown if it is beyond the neutral zone;
4. The spot of a catch, interception, or recovery inside B or R's 5-yard line when the momentum rule applies;
5. Forward progress when necessary; and
6. The spot where the scrimmage kick ends (post scrimmage kick spot).

**Use of Hat:** The covering official should drop a hat to signal that either of the following situations have occurred:

1. Any player has intentionally gone out of bounds during the play; or
2. A Team A or Team K player has gone out of bounds prior to a change of team possession.

Throwing a hat signifies only that the player has gone out of bounds. It does not signify that the player will commit a foul upon returning to the field.

An official may also throw the hat as if it were a penalty flag upon observing a foul after having already thrown a flag.



# POST-GAME REPORTING

After each game, the Referee is responsible for turning in necessary reports from the game. Additionally, the Referee should advise the RCO immediately after the game of any noteworthy game event.

The Referee must submit information involving any disqualification in the game through the [lhsaaonline.org](http://lhsaaonline.org) website. This allows the LHSAA to begin its necessary protocols addressing sportsmanship issues as soon as possible.

The Referee should also submit a foul report through the [www.foulreports.com](http://www.foulreports.com) website. These reports should be completed within 24 hours after the game ends. The Referee may give this duty to another member of the crew in the RCO approves, but reports must be timely submitted. Submitting this report timely allows the RCO to address coach's questions, and it allows film reviewers to begin their video evaluation of games.

The Referee should also include in any reporting who was present at the PAC.

To help this process, all officials play an important part. On your game card, record any foul you called, the team unit, and player committing the foul, and whether the penalty was accepted, declined, or offset. If able, someone other than an on-field official may record the fouls, but the crew should verify that they are correct.

Proper foul reporting is important. In addition to assisting in evaluating the game and addressing questions, the data it provides allows LHSAA, LHSOA, and RCOs to spot trends involving calls, determine points of emphasis, and allow for future adjustments of mechanics and rule proposals.

# FOUL ABBREVIATION CODES

## FIVE YARD PENALTIES

Delay of Game..... <b>DOG</b>	Illegal Forward Handing..... <b>IFH</b>
Delay of Game / Admin..... <b>DOG/GDA</b>	Illegal Forward Pass..... <b>IFP</b>
Disconcertion ..... <b>DSC</b>	Illegal Participation..... <b>ILP</b>
Encroachment..... <b>ENC</b>	Illegal Shift..... <b>ISH</b>
Encroachment On Free Kick <b>ENC/OFK</b>	Illegal Substitution..... <b>ILS</b>
Face Mask Incidental ..... <b>FMK</b>	Illegal Touching of Forward Pass .... <b>ITP</b>
False Start..... <b>FST</b>	Ineligible Downfield Player..... <b>IDP</b>
Free Kick Out of Bounds..... <b>KOB</b>	Intentional Grounding..... <b>ING</b>
Free Kick Infraction Formation..... <b>IFK</b>	Running Into Kicker / Holder..... <b>RNK</b>
Helping the Runner..... <b>IHR</b>	Sideline Interference 1 Warning.... <b>SLW</b>
Invalid Fair Catch Signal..... <b>IFC</b>	Sideline Interference 2 ..... <b>SLI</b>
Illegal Fair Catch Signal..... <b>ILC</b>	Snap Infraction ..... <b>ISP</b>
Illegal Formation..... <b>ILF</b>	

## TEN YARD PENALTIES

Holding Defense..... <b>DH</b>	Illegal Kicking the Ball..... <b>IKB</b>
Holding Offense ..... <b>OH</b>	Illegal Use of Hands ..... <b>ILH</b>
Illegal Batting the Ball..... <b>BAT</b>	Illegal Use of Hand to Face .... <b>ILH/HTF</b>
Illegal Block in the Back ..... <b>IBB</b>	Interlocked Blocking..... <b>ITB</b>
Illegal Early Block on Free Kick..... <b>IBK</b>	

## FIFTEEN YARD PENALTIES

Blow to Head..... <b>BTH</b>	Participating W/O Helmet..... <b>ILP/PWH</b>
Chop Block ..... <b>CHB</b>	Pass Interference Defense ..... <b>DPI</b>
Clipping..... <b>CLP</b>	Pass Interference Offense..... <b>OPI</b>
Contacting Helmetless Opponent .. <b>CHP</b>	Roughing the Kicker / Holder..... <b>RRK</b>
Face Mask Major ..... <b>FMM</b>	Roughing the Snapper..... <b>ICS</b>
Horse-Collar Tackle..... <b>HCT</b>	Roughing the Passer..... <b>RPS</b>
Hurdling..... <b>HUR</b>	Sideline Interference 3 or Contact . <b>SLM</b>
Illegal Blindside Block..... <b>BSB</b>	Targeting ..... <b>TGT</b>
Illegal Block Below Waist ..... <b>BBW</b>	Tripping..... <b>TRP</b>
Illegal Block After Fair Catch Sig.... <b>IBS</b>	Unfair Act..... <b>UFA</b>
Illegal Block on Free Kicker..... <b>RFK</b>	Unnecessary Roughness ..... <b>UNR</b>
Illegal Helmet Contact / Spearing .. <b>IHC</b>	Unsportsmanlike Conduct..... <b>UNS</b>
Illegal Participation..... <b>ILP</b>	



# FOOTBALL GAME REPORT



DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ START TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ END TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ ASSOCIATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 HOME: \_\_\_\_\_ SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_ REF: \_\_\_\_\_ FJ: \_\_\_\_\_  
 VISITOR: \_\_\_\_\_ SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_ UMP: \_\_\_\_\_ SJ: \_\_\_\_\_  
 OVERTIME (Y/N): \_\_\_\_\_ NO. OF OT PERIODS: \_\_\_\_\_ HL: \_\_\_\_\_ GCO: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL GAME TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ TV (Y / N): \_\_\_\_\_ LJ: \_\_\_\_\_ PCO: \_\_\_\_\_  
 BJ: \_\_\_\_\_

QTR.	TIME REMAINING	(H)OME (V)ISITOR	FOUL CALLED	(O)FFENSE (D)EFENSE (K)ICKERS (R)ECEIVER	PLAYER NO.	(A)CCEPT (D)ECLINE (O)FFSET (W)AVE OFF	OFFICIALS CALLING
							R U H L F S B
							R U H L F S B
							R U H L F S B
							R U H L F S B
							R U H L F S B
							R U H L F S B
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**PART FOUR**  
**OTHER OFFICIATING MATTERS**



# CONFERENCES



# **GAME MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION AND MEETING**

## **COMMUNICATION WITH HOME MANAGEMENT DURING WEEK**

To make sure that the officiating crew and game management are aligned on certain logistical matters, the Referee should contact the home school athletic director no later than two days before a scheduled varsity contest and discuss the following items:

- Scheduled game time.
- Time the officiating crew will arrive at the game site.
- Location of Officials' parking spots, which should be reserved and be in a safe location for the crew's arrival and departure.
- Location of the Officials' locker room.
- Adult chain crew, ball handlers, and when and where they should meet with crew. It is suggested that a school provide at least two ball handlers.
- Any planned special events and other game event matters.

The communication is only designed to address logistical matters. It should not include conversation about plays or rules, as those matters are more proper for the conference with the head coaches at the game site.

## **ONSITE PREGAME ADMINISTRATIVE CONFERENCE (PAC)**

The PAC is intended to bring together representatives from the various groups who are charged with, and have an interest in, assuring that the football game event is conducted in a timely, organized, and safe manner. The purpose is to

At a minimum, the following participants must attend the Game Management Meeting:

- Referee and Umpire from the officiating crew.
- Athletic Director (or designee) from home team who will act as Home Management.
- Athletic Director (or designee) from the visiting team.
- Security officials in charge of event and those responsible for safety of the officiating crew.
- Medical personnel, including team trainers.
- Television producer if applicable.

The PAC should no later than 45 minutes before kickoff either inside or just outside the officials' locker room. It generally should last no longer than 10 minutes. The Referee facilitates the meeting, but each representative leads necessary discussion of issues for which they are involved. The following PAC checklist may be useful:

## Football PAC Checklist

### Pregame Administrative Conference

#### PAC Participants

- ☐ Principal (or designee) from both schools
- ☐ Referee and designee
- ☐ Security staff from both schools
- ☐ Medical personnel from both schools *(can include athletic training students enrolled in AT degree program at LSU, SLU, or ULL under supervision of licensed athletic trainer)*

#### 1. Introductions

- ✓ Name, title/responsibility
- ✓ Location during game
- ✓ Identification of game day site manager responsible for administration of athletic contest

#### 2. Security

- ✓ Chain of Command
- ✓ Private/secure location for PAC participants to meet if catastrophic event
- ✓ Emergency protocol
- ✓ Officials' pre, during, and postgame escort *(including to and from dressing facilities and parking lot)*

#### 3. Medical

- ✓ Home and visiting team locations during the game
- ✓ Name/location of both school's licensed athletic trainers and/or appropriate healthcare professionals
- ✓ AED, Bleeding Control Kits and EMS locations *(What if EMS leaves event?)*
- ✓ Concussion protocol
- ✓ Typical injury response scenarios *(“what if” discussion)*

#### 4. Pregame/ Starting/ Halftime Procedures

- ✓ Times, lengths of halftime
- ✓ Presentations

#### 5. Weather

- ✓ Lightning detector *(location and staff – ideally home team's licensed AT – designated to monitor/document)*
- ✓ Heat/humidity FB timeout
- ✓ Suspension of play procedures

#### 6. Sportsmanship

- ✓ Responsibility of principal or designee for conduct of staff, team and fans



# **PREGAME CREW CONFERENCE**

The purposes of the crew pregame conference are to supplement an individual official's self-preparation and standardize the crew's thinking and focus regarding procedures, rules, philosophies, and mechanics as it makes its final preparations to work the game. To accomplish this, all members of the crew, including on-field officials, clock operators, and alternates, must attend the pregame conference.

The crew pregame conference can never sufficiently prepare an official for a game assignment. It is not meant to replace an individual official's self-preparation during the week, which should include rules study and video review. When possible, crew communication during the week is encouraged. All officials should be individually ready to work the game by the time the crew pregame conference begins.

The crew pregame conference should begin no later than 90 minutes before the scheduled game time to allow a thorough discussion.

The Referee or his designee will lead the crew pregame conference. Though there is no one way to conduct the conference, it should be organized and purpose driven. All officials should be encouraged to actively take part in discussions to make sure that the crew is ready to perform correctly, consistently, and professionally.

Though a pregame conference may take different forms and cover important matters, the following are suggested topics to address:

## **A. GENERAL**

1. Review rule changes and points of emphasis.
2. Review any special bulletins issued by LHSAA, LHSOA, or the RCO.
3. Obtain correct time and coordinate watches.

## **B. PREGAME DUTIES**

1. Game Management meeting.
2. Head Coach meeting.
3. Auxiliary Crew meetings (chain crew, ball handlers, school clock operator)
4. Monitoring of team warm-ups.
5. Observing player equipment.
6. Visible clock checks.
7. Field inspection.

## **C. COIN TOSS**

1. Timely bringing teams to team boxes.
2. Lining up speaking captains correctly.



3. Limitations on non-players entering field..
4. Timely coin toss.
5. Meeting after coin toss to record options before breaking to positions.

#### **D. FREE KICKS**

1. Proper positioning.
2. Counting of team players.
3. Communicating to Referee when in position and ready.
4. Instructions to teams and kicker.
5. Covering retraining lines, and philosophy regarding encroachment.
6. Anticipating onside kicks.
7. Starting clock.
8. Coverage during kick and on returns.
9. Fair catch signals and appropriate philosophies.
10. First touching.
11. Personal fouls, including blocking below the waist, illegal blindside blocks, and targeting.
12. Team K blocking and formation requirements.
13. Free kicks following a safety.
14. Free kicks following a fair catch.

#### **E. SCRIMMAGE PLAYS**

1. Initial positioning.
2. Presnap duties and crew communication.
3. Counting Team players.
4. Monitoring substitutions, and philosophy of when to call a foul for 12 or more players on the field.
5. Offensive formation requirements.
6. Line of scrimmage requirements, including encroachment and false starts.
7. Free-blocking zone.
8. Initial keys, player, and zone responsibility.
9. Giving a good, crisp dead-ball or other appropriate signal at the end of a play to signal that the 40-second play clock should begin.
10. Timely ball mechanics and bringing ball efficiently to spot for the next snap.
11. Play clock issues, including proper use of the 25- and 40-second counts.

#### **F. RUNNING PLAYS**

1. Coverage of runner in backfield, on sweeps outside the tackles, during pitchouts, and when in the open field.
2. Coverage during play, including point of attack, second level blocks, and cleanup, including off-ball action.
3. Forward progress, including philosophies on when to shut plays down.
4. Coverage on out-of-bound plays.

5. Cross-field mechanics.
6. Dead ball action.
7. Short yardage situations.
8. Coverage of fumbles and potential returns.

## **G. FORWARD PASS PLAYS**

1. Initial coverage of keys, areas of responsibility, especially as dictated by the offensive formations.
2. Coverage of receivers and transitions that may occur during the play.
3. Coverage of passer and potential defensive threats.
4. Ineligible receivers going downfield early, and coverage by U, H, and L, particularly with help from the offside wing official.
5. Coverage of passer behind or beyond the neutral zone when passing.
6. Coverage of whether a forward pass crossed the neutral zone.
7. H and L coverage for quick passes to the sideline.
8. Coverage on screen plays.
9. Complete / Incomplete passes, and the process of the completing a catch.
10. Forward progress and cross-field mechanics.
11. Interceptions and reverse mechanics.
12. Intentional grounding and exception.

## **H. PUNTS**

1. Initial positions, keys, areas of responsibility.
2. Exception to the numbering rule.
3. Action on the kicker.
4. Kicks touched or untouched by Team K or Team R after crossing neutral zone.
5. Kicks that do not cross neutral zone, and covering to make determination.
6. Duties during the kick and during the return.
7. Determining spot of kicks that go out of bounds in flight.
8. First touching.
9. Fair catch signals and appropriate philosophies.
10. Catch or recovery by either team.
11. Post-scrimmage kick.
12. Potential for personal fouls, especially illegal blindside blocks and targeting, during the return.
13. Blocks punts or errant snaps over punter's head.
14. Fakes.
15. Kick breaking Team R's goal line plane is always a touchback.

## **I. FIELD GOAL AND TRY**

1. Initial positions, keys, and areas of responsibility.
2. Exception to the numbering rule.

3. Action on the snapper.
4. Action on kicker and holder.
5. Official who whistles to determine when the ball is dead.
6. Blocked kicks, errant snaps, muffed holds.
7. Fakes.
8. Fair Catch signals and appropriate philosophies.
9. Coverage after the kick is made.
10. Covering spot on unsuccessful kicks (other than the Try).
11. Covering Team R's goal line and a kick from a field goal formation (other than the Try) is obviously short.
12. Coverage if Team R gains possession.
13. Ball must go entirely between goal post uprights and over cross bar to be successful.
14. Swinging gate formations.

## **J. GOAL LINE OR SHORT YARDAGE PLAYS**

1. When goal line mechanics begin when going in or coming out.
2. Initial positions and areas of responsibility.
3. Communication when nearing goal line area.
4. Coverage of forward / backward pass, and passer behind / beyond neutral zone.
5. Locating ball in player possession when near the goal line or line-to-gain.

## **K. FOULS**

1. See the entire action and know that a foul has occurred before throwing your flag.
2. Following play, tweet your whistle to get the crew's attention.
3. Give a preliminary signal of the foul after the play so that the R and crew know what was called.
4. Know status of ball when foul occurred.
5. Give correct and complete information to the R make sure the R understands the foul that was called.
6. Signals to press box.
7. Conveying information to coaches and helping relay choice for penalty options.
8. Enforcement process with U, H, and L.
9. Fouls that extend a period.

## **L. MEASUREMENTS**

1. Mechanics for getting R's attention when forward progress spot is very close and may require a measurement.
2. Place the dead ball on the ground at the spot it became dead and secure it until the measurement is complete.

3. Location of the official securing the ball (downfield, on the defensive side of the ball, shading away from the press box).
4. L gives the spot for H to place the clip.
5. Chains are placed on the press box side of the ball.
6. U stretches chain full.
7. Referee makes decision from the side of the ball opposite the press box.
8. Chain clip should be on the back of the five-yard line nearest rear rod.
9. If the ball is in a side zone, leave it there while a new ball is placed at the hash mark.

## **M. POST-GAME DUTIES**

1. Join other officials and leave the field together.
2. Make sure the entire crew, including clock operators, leave the stadium together.
3. Do not make any comments about the game to anyone.
4. Submit foul information to R for proper, timely input into foul recording system.
5. R informs RCO of any noteworthy matter in the game and of any disqualification.

## **N. MISCELLANEOUS**

1. Know the ball is dead, and see the ball before blowing a whistle.
2. Count players on every play.
3. Efficiency in ball movement, penalty enforcement, and timing.
4. Proper knowledge of starting and stopping the game clock.
5. Proper knowledge of when the play clock should be set to 25 or 40 seconds.
6. Mechanics for play clock coverage when there is functioning, visible play clock.
7. Make sure there are no questions before ending a period.
8. Bring positive information to your crew, and do not knowingly allow a mistake to occur without addressing it.
9. Be in proper position so that you can observe the play. Hustle and be alert.
10. Know the philosophies and points of emphasis.
11. Don't always call everything you see, but always see everything you call.

# **PREGAME COACH CONFERENCE**

Following the PAC, at no later than 30 minutes before kickoff, the Referee and Umpire will conduct a conference with each head coach, beginning with the head coach for the home team. The purpose of the conference is to assure that all players are properly equipped according to rule, and to address questions and concerns regarding proper application of rules as it relates to play. It should be brief and involve only matters involving the upcoming game. The following are sample items that should be

discussed with the head coaches:

- Verify official time and the scheduled kickoff time.
- Verify that all players are properly equipped according to rule, and obtain his signature on the official game card.
- Obtain numbers of the game captains.
- Obtain the coach's options if the team wins or loses the coin toss, recognizing that he can change his mind before the toss.
- Ask about any special or unique plays that the coach may use.
- Address concerns or questions that coach may have, especially concerning any new rules.
- If the coach has questions about plays or rulings in another game, refer him to the RCO to address those concerns.

## CREW UNIFORM



# UNIFORM

For all varsity contests, all on-field officials will wear the following:

**Shirt:** The officiating shirt approved by the LHSOA. All on-field officials in a game must wear the same length shirt (all short sleeve or all long sleeve). Officiating shirts shall be purchased only from vendors authorized by LHSOA to distribute them.

**Pants:** Long, solid black football pants with a one-and-one-quarter-inch (1.25") white stripe running down the outside of the leg from the waist to the cuff.

**Socks:** Black crew socks.

**Hat:** Officials other than the Referee will wear a fitted black baseball cap with traditional narrow white piping. The Referee will wear a fitted solid white baseball cap.

**Shoes:** Solid or predominantly black football shoes with minimal white striping. Black laces will be worn with either style of shoe. Shoes should be polished and cleaned before each game.

**Belt:** A black belt 1-1/4 to 2 inches wide with a plain buckle.

**Undershirt:** Any undershirt must be black or of a type that does not show at the collar of the outer shirt.

**Essential Equipment:** A whistle, weighted light gold flag for use as a penalty marker, white, black, or blue bean bags, game card, pen or pencil, and down indicator to keep track of downs. The Referee and Umpire should wear a second down indicator to reference the ball's lateral position on the field. The Head Linesman will have a clipping device to be used with the official line-to-gain equipment.

**Jacket:** Appropriate officiating jackets are permitted for pregame activities in foul or cold weather.



# LATERAL FIELD POSITIONS



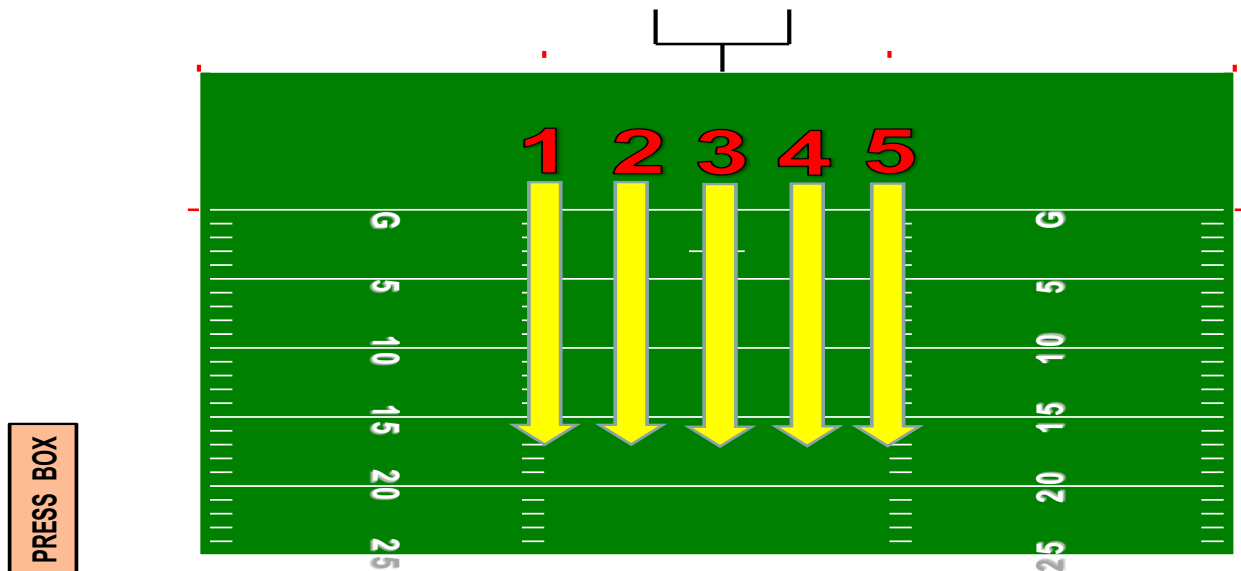


# REFERENCING THE SPOT OF THE SNAP

To promote consistency in spotting a ball and returning the ball to the previous spot, officials should know both the yard line of the snap and the ball's relation to one of five positions on that yard line within the hash marks. Snapping from one of these five positions when possible will assist in this process. The lateral positions of the field on a yard line are:

- Position 1: Inbound line / hash mark nearest the press box.
- Position 2: Goal post nearest the press box.
- Position 3: Middle of the field.
- Position 4: Goal post opposite the press box.
- Position 5: Inbound line / hash mark opposite the press box.

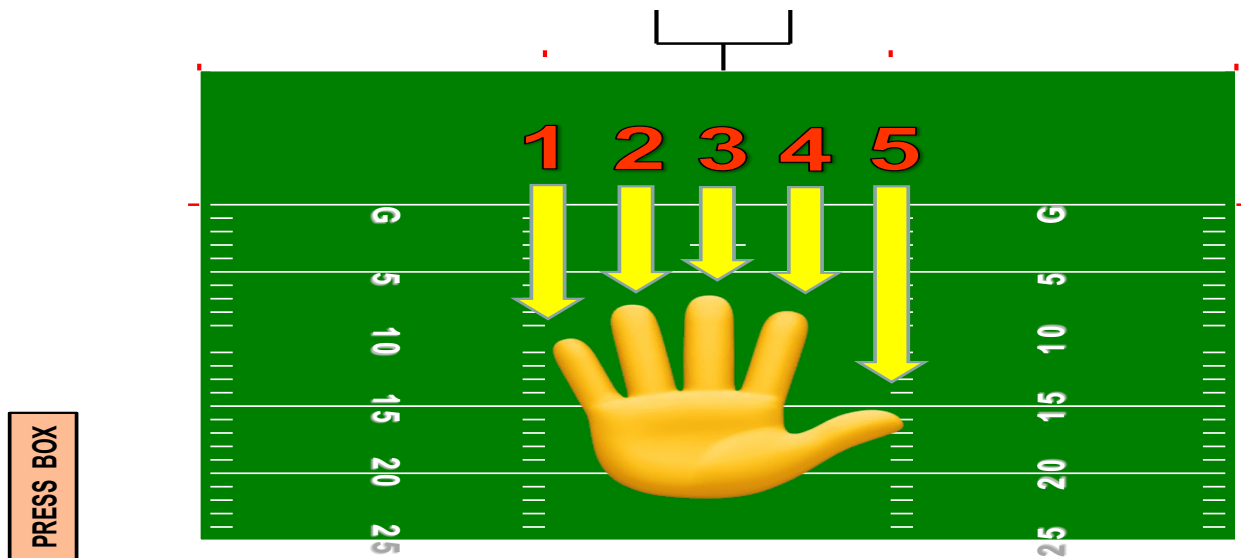
These positions are not completely equidistant, but they provide good reference points for spotting the ball laterally on a yard line. The positions are identified in the following diagram:



Use of these lateral positions will help make sure that the ball is where it should be as a result of team play. A spot is more than a yard line. It has vertical and lateral components. Where the ball is spotted between the hash marks on a yard line is just as important as the yard line on which the ball is spotted. The spot of the ball determines the short and wide sides of the field, and it determines a kicker's angle when attempting a field goal or hinder an opponent's return of a punt or free kick.

It is generally not difficult to remember the vertical position of a snap: the yard lines on the field provide a reference spot for the vertical component, and the down box provides a reference of the yard line from which the ball was snapped. To assist in remembering the previous spot, the Referee and Umpire should wear a second down

indicator on the opposite hand to reference the lateral position of the snap. Your thumb and fingers each reference a lateral position. An example is illustrated in the following diagram:



When possible, officials should spot the ball for the next snap at one of these five positions on the yard line. This promotes consistency and easy reference for remembering the exact location of the previous spot for returning to that spot following an incomplete pass and for penalty enforcement. It also may help the Referee in determining whether a passer has moved beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone for purposes of legally throwing the ball away. If a ball is snapped from one lateral position and the passer moves to the adjacent lateral position, he has moved beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone.

However, if the ball becomes dead halfway between two lateral positions, do not move the ball to the nearest lateral position. Place the ball at the dead-ball spot, and make an adjustment to your second down indicator to account for the spot. For example, if the ball will be spotted halfway between positions 1 and 2, place your indicator around both fingers referencing positions 1 and 2.

Additionally, always spot the ball at the dead-ball spot without moving it when the ball is near the line-to-gain or the goal line, the offense is stopped short of the line-to-gain on fourth down, a measurement has occurred, or the offense will send in the kicking unit to attempt a field goal.

# PLAY CLOCK



# 40- AND 25-SECOND PLAY CLOCK

**Play Clock Interval:** The play clock interval is the time the offense has to snap the ball. Generally, the interval is 40 seconds following the end of a regular, non-scoring play from scrimmage that will be followed by another play from scrimmage by Team A. The interval is 25 seconds from when the Referee marks the ball ready for play for other plays or following any administrative stoppage.

**Purpose of the 40-Second Play Clock:** The 40-second play clock is intended to provide greater consistency in between normal scrimmage plays. A byproduct of the 40-second interval may be that teams are able to run “up tempo offenses,” but this is not why the 40-second interval was established. Throughout the game, officials should strive to be consistent in spotting the ball on every play without regard to an offense’s desire to quickly snap the ball.

**When the 40-Second Play Clock is Used:** The 40-second play clock is used as follows:

**Game Play Situations:** As a general rule, the 40-second play clock is used after any regular scrimmage play (other than a scoring play) that will be next followed by a snap from scrimmage by Team A and there is no administrative reason to stop the normal flow of the game. Though there are some exceptions (e.g., Team A is awarded a first down after a legal kick), the general rule covers most situations. Following a team’s first play from a new possession, and continuing until it loses possession or scores, the 40-second play clock is used after every scrimmage play (including when Team A gains a first down) unless something occurs that stops the normal flow of the game.

**Administrative Stoppages:** The play clock is set to 40 seconds when the following occur:

- Team A
  - Obtains a First Down After Reaching the Line to Gain
  - Regains Possession After a Change of Team Possession During a Scrimmage Down (A-B-A)
- Team K
  - Retains Possession After a Scrimmage Kick Without A New Series Awarded to Either Team
- Defensive Team
  - Injury
  - Equipment Issue (including a helmet coming completely off)
  - Foul

**Exception:** *If the game clock will next start on the snap, the play clock is set to 25 seconds.*

**When the 40-Second Play Clock Starts:** Though it technically starts when the

down ends, an official's signal indicating that the ball is dead and the play has ended tells the Play Clock Operator to begin the 40-second count. These signals include the "dead ball" signal of raising an arm overhead (Sig. 7), an "incomplete pass" signal (Sig. 10), a "wind the clock" signal when the runner is down near a sideline (Sig. 2), or a "stop the clock" signal when a runner is out of bounds or Team A makes the line to gain (Sig. 3). It is NOT used after any scoring signal.

When the 40-second play clock is used following an administrative stoppage for a defensive injury, equipment issue, or foul, the play clock starts on the Referee's ready-for-play signal.

**When the 25-Second Play Clock is Used:** The 25-second play clock is used throughout the game following those situations that stop the normal flow of the game.

**Game Play Situations:** Use the 25-second play clock in the following game situations:

- Before Every Free Kick
- Before the Try
- Before Team A's First Snap Of a New Possession
- Team B is Awarded a First Down
- After a Scrimmage Kick Play in Which Either Team is Awarded a New Series

**Administrative Stoppages:** Use the 25-second play clock following "administrative stoppages" that stop the normal flow of the game, which include:

- Penalty Administration
  - Offensive Injury
  - Offensive Equipment Issues (including a helmet coming completely off)
  - Measurements
  - Charged Time Out
  - Official Time Out (other than awarding Team A a first down)
  - Television or Radio Time Out
  - First Play of Quarter of Overtime Possession Series
  - Delay or Unusual Action Causing Referee to Stop Game of Play Clock
  - Administrative Stoppage After Which the Game Clock Starts on the Snap Other Than a New Series for Team A After Reaching the Line to Gain
- Including Stoppage For a Defensive Injury, Equipment Issue, or Foul

**When the 25-Second Play Clock Starts:** It starts when the Referee marks the ball ready for play.

**Ready For Play When the 40-Second Play Clock is Running:** The ball is ready for play when the official places it at the appropriate spot for the next snap and steps away into position.

**Ready For Play When the 25-Second Play Clock is Used:** The ball is ready for play when the Referee marks it ready while sounding the whistle.

**Spotting of the Ball With the 40-Second Play Clock:** When the 40-second play clock has started, officials should complete any dead-ball officiating and then efficiently spot the ball for the next snap. Officials should always hustle, but they should never hurry in spotting the ball. Only in critical timing situations, beginning around the last four minutes of a half, should the crew move any faster than normal. Even then, the movement should be no more than a brisk jog.

**Guideline For When Ball Should Be Spotted:** Generally, the ball should be placed at the spot of the next snap when there are about 30 to 32 seconds remaining in the play clock interval, though it may sometimes be sooner or later. The Referee and Back Judge may peek at the play clock momentarily after the ball is spotted. If the play clock shows something extremely different from this range, it signals that there may have been either a play clock error or an unusual delay in spotting the ball.

**Spotting in the Last Two Minutes of the Half:** In the last two minutes of a half, when a runner is down inbounds, the Umpire should move sideline to sideline in a brisk jog, obtain the ball without anyone relaying it, and spot the ball. The Referee should not spot the ball in this situation. Also, if the runner is down inbounds and the ball is inbounds, use “one ball mechanics” and spot that ball for the next play. Do not look for a new game ball unless there was a long incomplete pass or the ball is well out of bounds. By doing this, the crew minimizes the chance of mishandling the ball and depriving an offense of valuable game time. Stopping or resetting the game clock and play clock because of officiating mistakes in handling the ball in this situation could unfairly disadvantage one team or give an advantage to the other. All officials should have heightened awareness in these critical moments of the game.

**Signals By The Referee to Reset the Play Clock:** At times during the game, the Referee may need to “pump up” the play clock. To do so, the Referee will signal for the Play Clock Operator to reset the play clock to either 25 seconds or 40 seconds. The Play Clock Operator should only reset the play clock if the Referee gives this signal. Other officials may give this signal as a suggestion to the Referee to pump up the clock, but only the Referee decides whether to do so.

**Resetting to 25 Seconds:** The Referee gives a pumping signal with one hand, palm up, overhead. If the play clock is running when this signal is given, the Play Clock Operator should immediately reset the play clock to 25 seconds and start it unless the Referee signals otherwise.

**Resetting to 40 Seconds:** The Referee gives a pumping signal with both hands, palms up, overhead. On this signal, the Play Clock Operator should immediately reset the play clock to 40 seconds and start it.

**Significant Delay in Spotting When the 40-Second Play Clock is Running:** Occasionally, despite best efforts, there may be extreme, significant delay in spotting the ball for the next play, taking play clock time away from the offense. When this happens, the Referee should make any necessary adjustments.

If the ball is not spotted by around 25 seconds, the Referee may “pump up” the play clock to 25 seconds once the ball is spotted without stopping it. In those situations in which it is clear that there will be a significant delay in getting the ball spotted that will unfairly affect a team, the Referee may declare an administrative stoppage, have the ball spotted, reset the play clock to 25 seconds, mark the ball ready, and start the clock (where applicable). However, this should rarely be used because it has the potential of causing a disadvantage or unfair advantage to a team, especially in critical time.

**Starting the Game Clock When the 40-Second Play Clock is Running:** When Team A is awarded a first down after a runner is down inbounds, the game clock will stop. The 40-second play clock will start, but the game clock starts when the ball is ready for play and the Referee signals for the clock to start.

In this situation, the Referee will give a “silent wind” to start the game clock once the ball is ready for play. For a “silent wind,” the Referee signals for the game clock to start by giving the traditional wind-the-clock signal (Sig. 2) without sounding a whistle.

If the runner went out of bounds, the Referee will neither give a signal nor sound a whistle. By rule, the game clock starts on the snap.

**No Holding the Snap For Defensive Match-Up Opportunity:** Between downs, players from either team may substitute. It is possible that Team A may make several substitutions as soon as the play ends. Although rules in the collegiate and professional games provide an opportunity for the defense to “match up” without fear that the ball will be snapped quickly, National Federation has no such provision. As a result, crews should not prevent the offense from snapping a ball that is ready for play to allow the defense time to complete substitutions or allow players to move positions to counter the offensive formation. Defensive units must be ready to substitute when they want to do so. However, upon spotting the ball, if the official sees a defensive player already running off the field as fast possible, there is nothing wrong with staying over the ball momentarily to let the player leave the field. However, if no defensive player is attempting to leave the field, or if a departing player delayed leaving the field or is not leaving quickly, the official should not hold up the snap because doing so would unfairly disadvantage the offense.

In any event, the normal pace of spotting the ball should generally prevent a team from gaining any unfair advantage using the substitution rules. Officials are not required, and they should not attempt, to get the ball down unusually faster than necessary. As stated, the ball should generally be spotted with between 30 and 32 seconds remaining in the play clock interval. By hustling without hurrying, verifying the spot with appropriate officials, and keeping a consistent flow and pace, crews will allow the game to flow and teams to play in a normal manner.

Additionally, Team A must comply with other requirements, including having all

players within the nine-yard marks and having the entire unit set for at least one second before the snap.

**Holding the Snap For Officiating Purposes:** Though not desirable, there may be times when it is necessary to prevent the snap while the 40-second play clock is running. This will most often occur when, because of dead-ball officiating from the previous play, the entire crew is not yet in position for the next play. In such a situation, the Referee should give a “stop sign” signal (extend hand straight forward, palm out), which informs the Umpire to have the center hold up on the snap until the officials are in position.

This will most likely happen in two situations: (1) when the runner is down close to the goal line or line to gain, and the Head Linesman and Line Judge crash in hard to find the spot, only to finally determine that the runner is short; and (2) following a play, members of the crew, while dead-ball officiating, have to break up players or get involved in a scuffle, but not so long as to create significant delay that would cause the Referee to declare an administrative stoppage. In both situations, the Referee should make sure that officials are in position for the next play before releasing the Umpire and allowing the snap.

## CASE PLAY EXAMPLES

1. For a kickoff, the Referee blows the ready with a **25-second** play clock. The **game clock starts when the ball is touched** other than first touching. The kick is caught and returned a few yards. The ball is spotted and the Referee blows the ready-for-play with a **25-second** play clock. The **game clock starts on the snap**.
2. 1 & 10. The ball is run **up the middle** for a five-yard gain. A **40-second** play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The **game clock does not stop**.
3. 2 & 5. An **incomplete pass** is thrown. A **40-second** play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The **game clock stops and starts on the snap**.
4. 3 & 5. The ball is run for a 10-yard gain, and the **tackle is inbounds**. A **40-second** play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The **game clock stops for the first down. It starts when the ball is spotted** and the Referee gives a **silent wind** of the clock without sounding the whistle.
5. 1 & 10. A sweep play is run to the right side and the runner is forced **out of bounds** after a three-yard gain. A **40-second** play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The **game clock stops**.



and starts on the snap.

6. 3 & 7. A pass is completed for a 20-yard gain, and the tackle is **inbounds**, but A77 is **flagged for holding** at the line. The **game clock stops to administer the penalty**. A **25-second** play clock and the **game clock start when the Referee sounds the whistle and winds the clock** (“whistled wind”).
7. 1 & 17. After a 15-yard run, A22 **fumbles** and a **pile forms**. The **game clock stops** to determine who recovered. **A88 recovers**. A **40-second** clock starts when the ball becomes dead. The **game clock starts when the officials see that A88 recovered**. If the play clock has gone under 25 seconds when the ball is spotted, the **Referee may pump up the play clock to 25 seconds**.
8. 3 & 2. Either team takes a **charged timeout**. The Referee marks the ball ready with a **25-second** play clock. The **game clock starts on the snap**.
9. 3 & 2. A22 runs for no gain **inbounds**, but is **injured**. The game clock stops. A22 leaves the game. The Referee marks the ball ready with a **25-second** play clock and **starts the game clock**.
10. 1 & 10. A25 runs for a 15-yard gain, and is tackled in bounds. B50 is injured on the play. After B50 leaves the game, the Referee marks the ball ready with a **40-second** play clock. The **game clock starts on the ready**.
11. 1 & 10. A11’s pass to A88 is incomplete. B50 loses his helmet on the play. After B50 leaves the game, the Referee marks the ball ready with a **25-second** play clock. **The game clock starts on the snap**.
12. 1 & 10. QB A11 completes a pass to A88 who runs for a 30-yard gain and is tackled inbounds. During the play, B25 roughs A11. After enforcement of the penalty, the Referee marks the ball ready with a **40-second** play clock. **The game clock starts on the ready**.
13. 2 & 5. B99 commits pass interference against A88, causing the forward pass to fall to the ground incomplete. After enforcement of the penalty, the Referee marks the ball ready with a **25-second** play clock. **The game clock starts on the snap**.
14. 4 & 2. R80 **fair catches** a punt. The Referee marks the ball ready with a **25-second** play clock. The **game clock starts on the snap**.

# SUMMARY PLAY CLOCK CHART

<b>Non-Kicking Scrimmage Play</b>	<b>Play Clock Starts At</b>	<b>Game Clock Starts On</b>	<b>Referee's Signal</b>
Runner Down Inbounds	40	Running	None
Dead Ball Out of Bounds	40	Snap	None
Incomplete Pass	40	Snap	None
Team A Awarded First Down When Runner Down Inbounds	40	Referee's Signal	Silent Wind
Team A Awarded First Down, Runner Down Out of Bounds	40	Snap	None
<b>Non-Scoring Scrimmage Kick Play</b>	<b>Play Clock Starts At</b>	<b>Game Clock Starts On</b>	<b>Referee's Signal</b>
Punt / FG and <b>Either Team</b> is Awarded a First Down	25	Snap	Chop
Punt / FG and <b>Neither Team</b> is Awarded a First Down (not replay after penalty)	40	Running	None
<b>Non-Kicking Change of Possession Plays</b>	<b>Play Clock Starts At</b>	<b>Game Clock Starts On</b>	<b>Referee's Signal</b>
Team B Awarded First Down	25	Snap	Chop
Double Change of Possession and Runner Down Inbounds– Team A Awarded First Down (A-B-A)	40	Referee's Signal	Silent Wind
Double Change of Possession and Runner Down Out of Bounds– Team A Awarded First Down (A-B-A)	40	Snap	None

\*Following a scrimmage kick, a team is usually awarded a new series. As a result, the 25-second play clock is normally used. However, the 40-second clock applies when Team K kicks on first, second, or third down, the kick not touched by Team R beyond the neutral zone, and Team K recovers it behind the neutral zone. In this situation, there is no change of possession, neither team is awarded a first down, and the game clock stays running.

<b>Free Kicks</b>	<b>Play Clock Starts At</b>	<b>Game Clock Starts On</b>	<b>Referee's Signal</b>
Before a Free Kick	25	Free Kick Timing Rules	Chop
After a Free Kick – New Series	25	Snap	Chop
<b>Time Outs</b>	<b>Play Clock Starts At</b>	<b>Game Clock Starts On</b>	<b>Referee's Signal</b>
Charged Team Time Out	25	Snap	Chop
Officials Time Out (other than awarding offense new series)	25	Determined by Previous Play	Chop or Whistled Wind
Heat and Humidity (H&H) Time Out	25	Determined by Previous Play OR Snap if LHSAA H&H In Aug. or Sept.	Chop or Whistled Wind
TV / Radio Time Out	25	Snap	Chop
<b>Other Administrative Stoppages</b>	<b>Play Clock Starts At</b>	<b>Game Clock Starts On</b>	<b>Referee's Signal</b>
Scoring Play	25	Free Kick Timing Rules OR Snap After Kickoff	Chop
Penalty Administration Game Clock Starts on <b>Ready</b>	25 (offense) 40 (defense)	<b>Ready</b>	Whistled Wind
Penalty Administration Game Clock Starts on <b>Snap</b>	25 (both)	<b>Snap</b>	<b>Chop</b>
Injured Player or Equipment Issue Game Clock Starts on <b>Ready</b>	25 (offense) 40 (defense)	Ready	Whistled Wind
Injured Player or Equipment Issue Game Clock Starts on <b>Snap</b>	25 (both)	Snap	Chop
Measurement	25	Determined by Previous Play	Chop or Whistled Wind
Start of Each Period / Each Overtime Period	25	Snap	Chop
Before and After a Free Kick / Kickoff	25	Snap	Chop
Other Miscellaneous Stoppage	25	Determined by Previous Play	Chop or Whistled Wind

## **PLAY CLOCK REFERENCE FOR TIMERS**

### **40-SECOND PLAY CLOCK**

Normally, the play clock is automatically reset to 40 seconds at the end of each play. Start the play clock when the official gives one of the following signals that the play is over:

#### **Ball Dead In Bounds After a Scrimmage Down:**

- Official raises his arm over head
- Official gives a winding signal when runner is down near the sideline
- Official gives a stop-clock signal when runner makes a first down

#### **Ball Dead Out of Bounds After a Scrimmage Down:**

- Officials gives a stop-clock signal

#### **Incomplete Pass:**

- Official gives an incomplete signal

Additionally, the play clock is set to 40 seconds after a defensive injury, equipment issue, or foul if the game clock will next start on the ready. Start the play clock in in this situation when the Referee marks the ball ready for play.

### **25-SECOND PLAY CLOCK**

The play clock is manually set to 25 seconds when:

- The Referee signals to “pump up” the play clock (one hand over head in a pumping motion, palm up).
- Any of the following occur:
  - Penalty – Offense
  - Penalty – Defense & Game Clock Will Start on Snap
  - Charged Team TO
  - TV / Radio TO
  - Injury / Equipment TO – Offense
  - Injury / Equipment TO – Defense & Game Clock Will Start on Snap
  - Official TO (except Team A First Down Through Play)
  - Measurement
  - Before Kickoff
  - First Play After Kickoff
  - After Any Score
  - Start of Each Period / Overtime
  - First Down After Punt / FGattempt
  - Offensive Helmet Comes Off Player
  - Team B Awarded First Down
  - Any Administrative Stoppage & Game Clock Will Start on Snap

### **OTHER INSTRUCTIONS**

If there is a delay of game foul, leave the clock on 0 until the penalty is finished. After a snap, set the clock to 40. Start it on the official’s signal at the end of the play. Watch the Referee closely for any signal to “pump up” the play clock to 25.

# **RUNNING CLOCK**



# **RUNNING CLOCK OPERATIONS**

LHSAA Bylaw 14.3.10 implemented the use of Running Clock Operations beginning with the 2022 football season. Under the bylaw, Running Clock Operations *must* be used when a 42-point differential between teams is reached and *may* be used at any time by agreement of the opposing coaches and the Referee. In addition to Running Clock Operations, opposing coaches and the Referee may agree to shorten any period at any time or terminate the game under NFHS Rule 3-1-3.

Running Clock Operations require more than turning the game clock on and letting it run. The bylaw provides times for stopping the game clock. The following summarize the rules and procedures for use during running clock operations.

## **BEGINNING RUNNING CLOCK OPERATIONS**

### **When do running clock operation begin?**

Running clock operations can begin in two ways:

- *Mandatory Operations:* When one team gains a 42-point lead.
- *Optional Operations:* When both coaches and the Referee agree to start them.

### **May teams return to regular timing once running clock operations have started?**

No. Once running clock operations commence, they continue to the end of the game, regardless of score.

### **What if the score becomes close toward the end of the game?**

Running clock operations continue to run. However, the Referee may still invoke Rule 3-4-6 to prevent one team from repeatedly committing fouls and running time during dead-ball periods to disadvantage an opponent.

### **May the Referee override the agreement of the coaches for Optional Operations?**

No. The Referee's agreement is a formality and is required only to ensure that the opposing coaches have agreed to begin the optional running clock operations.

## **RULES FOR RUNNING CLOCK OPERATIONS**

### **When does the game clock begin to run in running clock operations?**

- Under *Mandatory Operations*, the game clock begins on the **Ready for Play** for the **Kickoff**.
- Under *Optional Operations*, the game clock begins on the **Ready for Play** for the **next play that is not the Try**.

### **Once running clock operations begin, when does the game clock stop?**

The game clock continues to run until:

- The end of the Try after a Touchdown
- A field goal attempt ends
- A Touchback occurs
- Team K or R is awarded a new series
- A measurement is taken
- A team, injury, equipment, or heat time-out is taken
- An unusual and exceptional time-consuming penalty enforcement occurs
- An administrative matter requiring an official time-out occurs
- The Referee invokes Rule 3-4-6

### **When does the game clock continue running but would stop in regular time?**

In running clock operations, the game clock does not stop for:

- An incomplete pass
- A runner going out of bounds
- A loose ball going out of bounds
- A Touchdown
- Team A or B being awarded a new series (except by Touchback)
- Routine penalty enforcements

### **If the game clock stops, when does it restart?**

If the game clock is stopped for a team time-out or Rule 3-4-6, it starts on the Snap.

If the game clock is stopped for any other reason, it starts on the Ready for Play.

### **How is the play clock affected?**

The Play Clock rules remain the same as in regular time.

## **GAMES FOR WHICH THE BYLAW APPLIES**

### **What varsity games do running clock operations apply to?**

Running clock operations apply to games during the jamborees, regular season, playoffs, and state championships.

### **What non-varsity games do running clock operations apply to?**

Running clock operations apply to all non-varsity contests between hosted by an LHSA member school.



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# FOOTBALL SIGNALS CONTINUED



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