

Football: Volume I, Bulletin 3
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To Bag, or Not to Bag: That is the Question

The beanbag is an important tool used by officials to mark specific spots on the football field where significant actions take place that could potentially be returned to as a point of reference at the conclusion of the play. It is inefficient to utilize unnecessary mechanics, so let's first start when a bag shouldn't be used. A beanbag is never needed for the purpose of indicating where a free kick ends or if a pass is intercepted. These spots will never be returned to as reference points. We likely see more bags dropped at the spots of interception than we do during actual situations when bags should be dropped. Beanbags should be dropped on the corresponding yard line where and when:

- First touching occurs by Team K
 - This is the spot that Team R may take possession for a new series on a free kick or scrimmage kick, will nullify any possession gained by K on a kick recovered before traveling 10 yards and may nullify the possession gained by K on a kick recovered after it has traveled 10 yards
- A scrimmage kick ends
 - This is the PSK spot and will be the basic spot if a penalty occurs during the scrimmage kick
- A fumble occurs
 - This spot identifies the end of a run and becomes the basic spot for fouls that might occur while the ball is loose
- The ball is caught or recovered during a play when the momentum exception applies
 - This spot is important to identify the location where the ball was caught or recovered by Team B or Team R and possession was gained
- The ball is located at the time of an inadvertent whistle while in possession of a player
 - This spot is important because it may be where the team in possession takes the ball for the next down if they do not choose to replay the down

All officials on the field should carry a royal blue or white beanbag (all officials should have the same color), and some officials (usually the deep official(s)) that rules on action by the receivers of punts should have two beanbags – one marking the end of the kick and another to indicate first touching or a fumble away from the end of the kick. When a beanbag is used, it should be dropped on the corresponding yard line, not thrown overhand as you would with your flag for a live ball foul. Officials on the restraining lines during free kicks should carry the beanbag in hand if an onside kick is indicated.

Something to Consider

4th and 15 from B's 40. A1 runs and is brought down on B's 35. During the down, a B player runs onto the field but does not participate. What's the ruling? Check back next bulletin for the proper ruling.

Last Week's Consideration

3rd and 7 on B's 45. The TE begins his motion parallel to the LOS towards the opposite end of the line. He stops, turns and faces the LOS, and moves into a three-point stance. Just as his hand touches the ground, the ball is snapped. The ball is handed off for a six yard gain. Is there a foul? If so, what is the foul? If there is a foul, what is the down and distance if the penalty is accepted and if it is declined?

Ruling: Illegal shift. If accepted, it would be 3rd and 12 on the 50. If declined, 4th and 1 on B's 39.