

THE OFFICIAL MECHANICS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF
THE MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

FOOTBALL

////// **GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL**



PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPLETE.
TOGETHER.

2024-2026





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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL 2024-2026

DR. KARISSA NIEHOFF, Publisher
Bob Colgate, Editor
NFHS Publications

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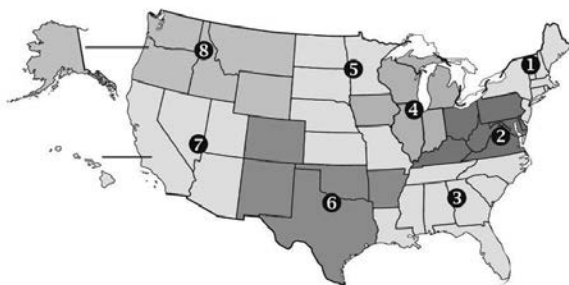
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Points of Emphasis

Pregame Administration

Many game officials may be under the impression that their job begins at kickoff and ends when the game clock expires. However, efficient administration of a game requires advance planning by the crew to ensure awareness of potential distractions that can cause problems and disrupt the orderly conduct of the game.

Pregame administration begins a few days before the game. The referee, as crew chief, has some added administrative responsibilities. The referee should contact the host school (either the athletic director or designated game administrator) by email or phone a few days prior to the game to confirm the date and time of kickoff. This is particularly important if the game was assigned months – and sometimes years – in advance. Games can and will be cancelled or rescheduled by schools, and members of the officiating crew are usually the last people to know of such changes. Moreover, it is a common business courtesy to contact clients in advance to confirm arrangements.

The referee should also inquire about parking location, changing facilities (if provided), the name and phone number of a contact person for the crew upon arrival, and whether there are any special activities occurring prior to the game. The referee should inform the school of the approximate arrival time of the crew. The referee should also inquire where the locker rooms are located for each team. This information can be important because some teams go to their locker room or another designated location after warm-up and return to the field just a few minutes before kickoff. If the referee is not aware of the team's location and has not had an opportunity to meet with the team's head coach, the pregame meeting will be rushed if it is held just minutes before kickoff.

Once the referee has contacted the school, the referee should provide the crew with all the information and specify the crew's arrival time if crew members are arriving separately. After the crew has arrived and changed into game uniforms, the referee should lead the crew in a pregame conference.

When the crew takes the field, each crew member has certain responsibilities, as detailed in this manual. Those responsibilities include field inspection, checking player equipment, checking the chain crew equipment and meeting with the chain crew, meeting with the clock operator, meeting with ball helpers, and checking and securing game balls.

Pregame administrative responsibilities should be conducted in a professional manner and should not be taken lightly. If game officials are diligent in conducting their pregame administrative tasks, the game will flow more smoothly and efficiently.

Clock Management

The rule implementing the 40-second play clock that was passed recently by the NFHS created not only some subtle changes to clock management but also had direct impact on the pace of play.

Occasionally, clock operators are volunteers, but in most cases they are hired by the home team and it is not unusual for them to be partisans. The vast majority of operators are ethical, reliable individuals who are burdened with multiple responsibilities. It is common for the game clock operator to also be responsible for maintaining the scoreboard. The latter duty requires the succeeding spot, down and distance to the line-to-gain to be updated promptly after each play. When a team achieves a first down inbounds, the game clock stops and is restarted when the referee signals. That interval should be no more than 3-5 seconds. The problem arises when the referee gives the start-the-clock signal — the “silent wind” — while the clock operator is working on the scoreboard console instead of watching the referee. The clock operator’s briefing should include a request to refrain from changing the scoreboard (down, distance and yard line where the ball is located) until the referee has restarted the game clock.

After a first down inbounds, the ready-for-play occurs when the ball has been spotted and the game official who spotted the ball has stepped away into position. Under no circumstances should the ready be delayed if the chain crew is still moving and is not in position. In such a case, the linesman can drop a beanbag to mark the spot of the snap. In that situation, to ensure the game clock is promptly started, the referee should begin the silent wind when the umpire has possession and is about to spot the ball. That will compensate for the clock operator’s reaction time to the signal and ensure the game clock has been started and is running when the ball is snapped. The prompt starting of the game clock will ensure neither team gets an unfair time advantage especially during the last 2 minutes of a half. If the spotting of the ball is delayed for any reason e.g., wet ball, exceptionally long gain, etc., the referee can adjust accordingly by slightly delaying the silent wind.

If there is a visible play clock that is not being operated by an on-field game official, play clock operators should be certified game officials who are knowledgeable of NFHS play clock rules. Operating the play clock is a more difficult proposition than operating the game clock. The game clock operator can adequately do the job by following on-field signals with only minimal knowledge of NFHS rules. The play clock operator frequently must act without a visible signal from a game official. Knowledge of the situations where a 40-second play clock is required versus a 25-second play clock is essential as is always keeping the referee in view for a play clock reset signal.

The Importance of Dead-Ball Officiating

Dead-ball officiating may be viewed by some game officials as an afterthought and a time to take a break. However, when the ball becomes dead, it is the most critical time for game officials to continue to perform their duties in order to maintain

decorum among opponents. Game officials should strive to be excellent dead-ball game officials since the likelihood of fouls being committed is at perhaps its highest.

Dead-ball fouls include behavior that is outside of the normally accepted boundaries of football and can involve both players and nonplayers. Some examples are baiting and taunting, fighting, throwing equipment in frustration, verbal abuse of game officials, and initiating contact with an opponent after the play is over. Because this type of behavior tends to gender ill will between opponents, it is imperative that it is immediately recognized by game officials and penalized accordingly.

NFHS football rules penalize unsportsmanlike actions in different ways:

- Illegal personal contact is a category of fouls that involve contact with an opponent. Frequently referred to as a personal foul, illegal personal contact can result in disqualification if the game officials deem the foul to be flagrant. Even though they may involve unsportsmanlike actions, penalties for dead-ball illegal personal contact fouls, with limited exceptions, are always enforced from the succeeding spot, the same way as penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct fouls are enforced. While there are no rules mandating additional penalties for multiple illegal personal contact fouls committed by the same player or nonplayer, good dead-ball officiating will minimize the chance of participants repeatedly committing these types of fouls. Game officials must recognize situations where opponents are likely to commit dead-ball fouls and minimize the chance of them happening through positioning and communication with players.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, by definition, are non-contact fouls (other than illegal participation) that do not influence a play. The penalties for these fouls are always enforced as dead-ball fouls (i.e., from the succeeding spot). When an unsportsmanlike conduct foul is judged to be flagrant or when any player or nonplayer commits two unsportsmanlike conduct fouls in the same game, the offender is disqualified. Unsportsmanlike conduct fouls cannot be combined with illegal personal contact fouls to disqualify an offender.

Recognizing unsportsmanlike actions requires game officials to be familiar with and use approved mechanics. Since most dead-ball fouls occur within 3 seconds of the end of a play, maintaining appropriate distance and angles after a play ensures game officials who do not have runner responsibility will be positioned so that they can monitor areas around the ball. This “Halo Principle” allows effective coverage of all 22 players. Rather than rushing to retrieve the football or focusing on the area around the runner, game officials should gently pinch-in toward the nearest players keeping them within sight and sound until the opponents have separated and teams are on their own side of their line of scrimmage. This is particularly important after a touchdown or try, when multiple players and substitutes are intersecting as they enter or leave the field.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Understanding the need to eliminate unsportsmanlike actions from the game, properly and consistently penalizing unsportsmanlike conduct and illegal personal contact and using NFHS-approved football game officials' mechanics and officiating philosophies are all critical steps to improve sportsmanship in high school football.

NOTE: Any reference in this manual to "he," "him" or "his" shall be deemed a reference to "she," "her" or "hers," as the case may be, when the person is a female.

NOTE 2: The MHSAA has adopted a mechanic in football that mandates that the sideline officials (i.e., Head Line Judge, Line Judge, Side Judge and Field Judge) at the varsity level switch sides of the field with their cross-field crewmates to start the second half of a game.

First Half: The head linesman and side judge will start the game on the sideline opposite the press box with the head linesman being responsible for the line to gain crew, while the line judge and field judge will start the game on the press box side of the field.

Second Half: The line judge and field judge will start the second half on the sideline opposite the press box with the line judge being responsible for the line to gain crew and the head linesman and side judge will start the second half on the press box side of the field.

This is an **optional** mechanic at the subvarsity level.

Definition of Terms

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

Blitz — A defensive strategy in which several players commit to rushing the passer. See “Showing blitz.”

Cleaning up after the play — Mechanic in which the game official not responsible for the ballcarrier observes action behind and around the ballcarrier.

Dead-ball officiating — Activity during the time immediately after the ball becomes dead.

Digger — Game official who burrows into a pile and determines which team has recovered a fumble.

Downfield — Refers to the direction the offensive team is moving with the ball. On a scrimmage down, it is the area beyond the neutral zone. Opposite of “Upfield.”

Down indicator — Apparatus used by the line-to-gain crew to show ball position and the current down.

Eye contact — Gaining the visual attention of another game official before making a ruling. By doing so, game officials can avoid conflicting calls.

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

Give up — Turning attention from a specific player (usually the runner) because the player has entered another game official’s coverage area.

Halo principle — Technique involving imaginary circles around players that help define coverage areas for game officials.

Hash marks (or hashes) — Also known as the inbounds marks, the lines on the field from which the ball is snapped if it becomes dead in a side zone or out-of-bounds.

Inside-out look — Pivot that turns a game official’s back toward the middle of the field, allowing him an angle to action in a side zone or on the sideline.

Key — An action or reaction by a player that gives the game official a tip as to what type of play the offense will run; a player a game official observes for all or part of a down.

Line-to-gain crew — Non-game officials in charge of the line-to-gain equipment and down indicator.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Line-to-gain equipment — 10-yard length of chain connected at each end to poles used to indicate the line Team A has to reach in order to achieve a first down. The down indicator is also considered to be part of the line-to-gain equipment.

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

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

Nine-yard marks (or numbers) — The yard line identification numbers painted on the field. The distance from the sideline to the top of the numbers is 9 yards.

Officiate back to the ball — Mechanic in which a wing official who has moved toward Team B's goal line moves back toward the play in order to determine the spot of forward progress.

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

Preventive officiating — Refers to actions by game officials who minimize the chance of problems from occurring by talking to players and coaches. Preventive officiating is often related to dead-ball officiating.

Short side (of the field) — The side of the field from the hash mark to the nearer sideline when the ball is snapped from the hash mark; opposite of the "Wide side."

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

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

Side zone — The area of the field between the sidelines and the hash marks.

Square off — 90-degree turn made by a game official when marking the spot of forward progress.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

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

Strong side — For the purposes of this book, the side of the offensive line on which there are more eligible receivers outside of the tackles; opposite of “Weak side.”

Trips — Three eligible receivers on one side of an offensive formation.

Upfield — The direction the defense or receiving team is moving. Opposite of “Downfield.”

V — Triangular alignment used by game officials to relay the ball from a side zone to the hash mark.

Weak side — For the purposes of this book, it is the side of the offensive line on which there are fewer eligible receivers outside of the tackles; opposite of the “Strong side.”

Wide side (of the field) — The area from the opposite hash mark through the middle of the field and side zone to the sideline when the ball is snapped from the opposite hash mark. Opposite of the “Short side.”

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

Wing official — The head linesman or line judge.

General Football Officiating

Officiating Philosophies and Axioms (Alphabetical by Topic)

Officiating axioms relate to situations when there is question or doubt caused by positioning, timing, view or circumstance. When this occurs, officials should apply these “rules of thumb” to make the best possible ruling. There is a difference between, and these do not apply to, plays that are close calls; and they should never be used as an excuse for being out of position, not using approved mechanics or failing to focus on proper keys and coverages. Officials should continually work to be in the proper position to see the plays and rule on them correctly. Just because a play is close does not mean the official should be in doubt. When an official is certain of what occurred, he should rule on exactly what he observed.

Axioms will be identified throughout this section with the bullet point led with (Axiom).

A. Ball Spotting

- When the next series following a change of possession begins outside of Team B's or R's 10-yard line, or when Team A obviously reaches the line-to-gain, the ball should be placed on the back of the nearest advanced whole yard line. If inside of Team B's or R's 10-yard line, or short or close to the line-to-gain, the ball should be placed precisely where the play ended.
- On a grass field, measurements should be granted in critical situations when requested and the ball is within ½-yard on either side of the line-to-gain. This is not necessary for turf fields when the series started on a whole yard line.

B. Blocking

- If a player is illegally blocked or held into making a tackle, no foul should be called unless the action is a personal foul or there is an extended element of time between the foul and the tackle.
- If there is a potential holding by either the offensive or defensive team, but the action occurs clearly away from the point of attack and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, holding should not be called.
- Obvious and intentional takedowns create special focus and should be called.
- Rarely should you have a hold on a team block unless a clear hold takes place after the defender breaks through the combination.
- If the blocker is in a “chase mode” all the action must be from the side to be legal. It is a block in the back when the force is on the back, even if one hand is on the number and one hand is on the side. The force of the block could be slight and still a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner or prevents him from making the play. If the force is clearly from the side, it is not a foul. Blocks that start on the side and subsequently end up in the back are also not fouls as long as contact is maintained throughout the block.

- Blocks in the back that occur at the same time a runner is being tackled should not be called, unless they are in the nature of a personal foul or there is forcible contact that involves player safety.
- **(Axiom)** If there is question whether an illegal block or hold takes place in the endzone or in the field of play, it occurred in the field of play.

C. Catch/No Catch

- A completed catch occurs when a player secures a ball in flight before the ball touches the ground, first touches the ground in bounds with any part of his body and then maintains possession throughout the catch attempt.
- Secure possession is proven:
 - a. When an upright player controls the ball and holds it long enough to advance, elude a defender or hand off or pitch the ball.

b. When a player that is going to the ground during the act of the catch controls the ball maintains possession of the ball through the process of contacting the ground and momentum of the catch ending. If the ball contacts the ground during the process, but the contact with the ground does not cause the player to bobble or lose control of the ball, the official should determine secure possession has been proven.
- If a player attempts to make a catch while going out of bounds at the sideline or end line, he must secure possession of the ball inbounds and maintain possession as he goes out of bounds. If a player is bobbling the ball while any part of his body is touching out of bounds, it cannot be a catch.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, a catch (or interception) is incomplete.

D. False Starts vs. Motion

- Sudden, irregular movements or those movements that are clearly meant to simulate the start of a play should be flagged as a false start regardless of the position of the player(s).
- Trick plays to entice encroachment by the defense should be held to the highest level of scrutiny as to their legality.
- Players in motion that turn perpendicular with the line of scrimmage and then start forward should be flagged for a false start; but players that remain relatively parallel with the line of scrimmage and just start drifting toward the line of scrimmage should be flagged for illegal motion.
- If the ball is snapped as a back is moving toward the line of scrimmage while going in motion (to be distinguished from a “sudden, irregular movement”), this should be flagged for illegal motion.
- **(Axiom)** When there is a question to whether an action is a false start or illegal motion, rule false start.

E. Fumbles

- **(Axiom)** When in question, the runner fumbled the ball and was not down.
- **(Axiom)** When in question as to whether the quarterback passed or fumbled, it should be ruled an incomplete pass.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, forward progress has ended instead of the runner breaking out of the grasp or fumbling the ball.

F. Game Clock

- **(Axiom)** When in question, a charged team timeout precedes a foul that prevents the snap.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, stop the clock for potentially injured players.

G. Kicking Plays

- For onside or “pooch” kicks, the kicker’s retraining line should be officiated as a plane, and encroachment should be called anytime a K player (other than the holder or kicker) breaks the plane before the ball is kicked. This line is not officiated as strictly on normal kickoffs.
- If an illegal block in the back occurs on a kick that will not be returned, i.e., fair catch, kick out of bounds or touchback, and the contact was slight (not a personal contact foul) and near the end of the kick, no flag should be dropped.
- Roughing the kicker will be called for forcible contact to the plant leg, and running into the kicker is general called when the contact is on the kicking leg unless severe and/or forceful.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, Team A is not in a scrimmage kick formation and is required to meet numbering requirements.
- **(Axiom)** When there is question as to whether a kicked ball crossed the plane of the goal line, consider the ball having entered the endzone.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, a foul by the receiving team on a scrimmage kick occurs before the end of the kick.
- **(Axiom)** When there is question as to whether a Team K player interfered with a Team R player before the ball was touched, it was kick-catch interference rather than a clean play.
- **(Axiom)** When there is a question whether a kicked ball has been touched by either Team K or Team R, the ball was not touched.

H. Line of Scrimmage

- Officials should work to keep offensive linemen legal and address issues immediately. Only call formation fouls when obvious, or when a warning to a player and subsequent warning to the head coach are ignored.
- Formations during a planned trick play should be officiated with a high-level of scrutiny.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, the tight end is not covered up when there are already enough players on the line of scrimmage and should be considered covered up if there are not.
- **(Axiom)** When there is a question as to whether a defensive player aligned tight on the line of scrimmage jumps into the neutral zone, call the foul.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, a quick or abrupt movement by the center or quarterback is a false start.

I. Pass Interference

- When a flag is thrown for pass interference, the calling official should be able to articulate the reason for the foul.
 - a. Offensive Pass Interference (OPI)
 - i. Blocking beyond the expanded neutral zone. If a Team A or K player blocks an opponent beyond the expanded neutral zone during a pass that crosses the line of scrimmage, it is OPI. This will not be called on an overthrown screen pass intended for a player behind the line of scrimmage unless the blocking prevents the player from catching the ball.
 - ii. Pick plays. Intentional contact by a Team A or K player against a defender beyond the expanded neutral zone (or not immediately against a player across from him) intended to free up another player during a pass that crosses the line of scrimmage is a foul for OPI.
 - iii. Pushing off. It is OPI if a receiver attempts to create separation by shoving a defender. Hand checking or other normal or incidental contact is not enough to be considered as pushing off.
 - iv. Playing through the defender. It is OPI when, because of the location of the pass, the receiver defends against a catch by the Team B or R player that has established his position by making contact before the ball arrives that hinders his opponent from making a play on the pass.
 - b. Defensive Pass Interference (DPI)
 - i. Arm bar. DPI occurs when a defender extends his arm across and into the body of the receiver before the ball arrives and restricts his opportunity to catch the pass.

- ii. Grab and restriction. When a defender grabs ahold of a receiver's arms or pins them against his body in a way that restricts his ability to catch the pass, it is DPI.
- iii. Not playing the ball. DPI should be called when a defender making no attempt at the ball contacts the receiver before the ball arrives.
- iv. Playing through the receiver. It is DPI when a defensive player plays through a receiver's back, regardless of whether he is attempting to play the ball or not.
- v. Hook and turn. If a defender uses his arm to hook a receiver's arm or body and restricts him by causing the receiver to turn before the ball arrives, it is DPI.
- vi. Cutoff. It is DPI when a defender cuts off the path of a receiver using contact or "rides" him away from the path of the pass.

J. Passing Situations (Miscellaneous)

- Unless the quarterback is under duress or illegally attempting to conserve time (not a spike immediately following the snap), intentional grounding should not be called.
- If the passer is contacted after he starts his passing motion, intentional grounding will likely not be called; but if he is contacted clearly before he starts his passing motion, there should be a foul for intentional grounding if there is no eligible receiver in the vicinity.
- If the passer is throwing the ball away and it lands incomplete near or beyond the sideline, do not penalize the offense for having ineligible players downfield.
- **(Axiom)** If an interception is near the goal line and there is a question as to whether possession is gained in the field of play or endzone, it was made in the endzone and a potential touchback.

K. Personal Fouls

- If action is deemed to be "fighting," i.e., a strike or attempted strike with the arm, hand, leg or foot, the player must be disqualified.
- **(Axiom)** When there is a question as to whether an act is a fight or simply unnecessary roughness, it should be deemed unnecessary roughness (not unsportsmanlike conduct).
- **(Axiom)** When in doubt, it is a block below the waist, a clip or a chop block.
- **(Axiom)** When there is question as to whether a player is in a defenseless position, they should be considered defenseless.
- **(Axiom)** When there is question as to whether to eject for an illegal helmet contact or targeting foul, the player should not be ejected.

- **(Axiom)** When there is a question on the severity of a facemask penalty, it is a 15-yard penalty rather than a 5-yard penalty. MIBT – make it be there.
- **(Axiom)** When there is question to the status of the ball when a hit near the end of, and away from, the play, it should be considered a dead-ball rather than live-ball foul.

L. Runner Down

- The ankle or wrist is considered part of the foot or hand, respectively, and does not make a runner down.

M. Scoring Plays

- **(Axiom)** When in question, it is not a touchdown.
- **(Axiom)** When in question, it is not a safety.

N. Sideline Plays

- If contact occurs on a runner before he has a foot down out of bounds, it should be considered legal unless the contact is forcible and meant to punish.
- If a runner continuing down the sideline after the whistle has blown eases up, forcible contact by an opponent is a foul unless it was part of the initial action.
- **(Axiom)** If there is a question as to whether a runner has stepped out of bounds, the runner should be considered as remaining in bounds.

Pregame Conference

The great importance placed on the pregame conference with officiating partners has made the concept almost cliché. Nearly everyone in officiating — camp directors, clinicians, book authors, columnists, veteran game officials — all say a pregame conference is a significant ingredient of success. They're all right: If you can talk about it before it happens on the field, you're better prepared to deal with it.

There are as many different pregame conferences as there are game officials. There is no magic formula for a "successful" pregame conference. There are a number of topics, however, that should be included:

Rules Changes/Major Differences

Cover recent rules changes, especially in the beginning of the season when the rules and interpretations may still be a bit unclear. Cover major rules differences when you work different levels of play — for example, going from high school to small college games or high school to youth ball.

Special Coverage

Discuss what to do in the event of hurry-up offense, obvious outside kick situation, etc. If the weather is threatening, discuss how the crew will handle a suspension of play due to lightning. The crew should also decide how it will handle fights or similar altercations.

Making the Call

Go over signals between game officials (receivers on or off the line, "two sticks" for a first down, etc.). Discuss which crew members are responsible for counting players and what signals will be used to indicate a team has enough, too many or too few players. Remind game officials who are sharing coverage to make eye contact and to practice good dead-ball officiating.

Reporting Fouls to the Referee

Referees should tell crew members how they wants fouls reported. Should the game official identify the offending team by uniform color or by referring to them as offense and defense? Remind game officials to indicate the status of the ball at the time of the foul (loose ball, dead ball, etc.) and the result of the play (incomplete pass, scoring kick was good, etc.). Remind wing officials they are to tell the coach who committed the foul, the nature of the infraction and any special enforcement (loss of down, quarter extended for an untimed down, etc.).

Time-out Responsibilities

Who's timing the time-out? Where are the game officials positioned during the time-out? How are you going to inform the teams that the time-out is over? Who will tell the coach how many time-outs each team has remaining? Coaches should be told how many time-outs each team has left after every charged team time-out.

Bench Decorum

This is a key element, often overlooked in pregame conferences. It is especially important if the crew does not work together often. Make sure that the game officials involved have roughly the same idea about what conduct is out of line and what isn't. Remind wing officials to find the "get back" coach, the assistant who will help keep players and team personnel out of the coaching belt.

Injured Game Officials

Discuss how the crew will adjust assignments if a game official is injured or becomes too ill to work. Which game officials will move where is up to the crew, but generally a crew of four works without a line judge and a crew of five works without a back judge when a crewmate is ill or injured. When a crew is reduced to two game officials, one game official should work as the referee and the other as a head linesman.

Halftime Intermission

Are you going to let the coaches and teams leave the field before heading off yourselves? A recommended procedure is for the game officials to meet at a designated place on the field, allow the teams to leave and have the referee signal the timer to start the clock. Also, someone needs to make sure the game officials and teams are properly notified of the time on the clock so they can return in time. The game manager should let the game officials know if someone has been designated or if the game officials will be responsible.

Leaving the Field

Will the crew leave the field together or is each game official to leave on his own?

Game Expectations

If you know of some team history that may affect the game, discuss it. For example, if the two teams were involved in a fight the last time they met, you may want to talk about those ramifications on the game and the players' and coaches' attitudes.

Pregame Duties

Meeting with Coaches

The referee and umpire meet with each of the head coaches. When and where the meeting occurs depends on local practice or conference policy. If it occurs on the field, it should be out of the way of players. It is best to meet with the home coach first as he may have information about pregame ceremonies that must be relayed to the visiting coach. If the umpire does not attend the meeting, he should utilize that time to check player equipment. The meeting should begin with the game officials introducing themselves and giving the coach a card listing names of crew members. The coach must:

- Verbally verify all his players are legally equipped in compliance with the rules and will use no illegal equipment.
- Acknowledge everyone is expected to exhibit good sportsmanship throughout the game.

PREGAME CONFERENCE

- Identify if there are players with protective guards, casts, braces, etc. that need to be inspected.
- Notify the referee of the designated representative who will request time-outs from the sideline. The head coach's designee shall remain in place for the entire game except in case of emergency.
- Notify the referee of the designated representative (coach or player) who will make decisions regarding penalty acceptance or declination.
- Identify if the quarterback is right or left handed.
- Identify if the kicker is right or left footed.

It is recommended the game officials obtain the name of the "get-back coach" who will aid in sideline control.

Get the captains' numbers. Some crews also obtain the captains' names. If a game official wishes to speak to a captain during the game, perhaps to seek his help in calming an angry teammate, the captain will respond better if he is called by name rather than number. Some crews also ask the coach what his choice would be if his team wins the coin toss. In the excitement that is felt before the game, captains sometimes blurt out something other than their coach's wishes. If you've asked the coach and the captain gives a different answer, a preventive officiating technique is to ask the captain, "Are you sure that's what you want?"

Inform the coach when the coin flip is to take place (conference or association rules may dictate; "normal" is 3 minutes before game). Tell him he is responsible for having his team on the field for the mandatory 3-minute warmup after halftime intermission. Also, if there is a planned extended halftime intermission, make sure the coach is aware of it.

The crew should take the field together. Unless conference or state association rules state otherwise, the crew should be on the field in uniform 30 minutes before kickoff. Once on the field, the game officials' duties are as follows:

Referee

- Inspect the field. The referee should walk down both sidelines and along each end line at a brisk but unhurried pace. You don't need to inspect every blade of grass, but if you discover potholes, broken glass or other hazards, ask game management to have the problem taken care of immediately. If the field is marked for another sport (many football fields are also used for soccer), make sure the crew knows which lines are being used for football. Make sure the goalposts are straight and free of decoration and that the goal post pads are securely fastened. Check the pylons to ensure they are properly placed.
- Spot-check players. Make a casual visual inspection of players as they warm up. Look for tinted eyeshields, knotted jerseys, towels with decorations and other uniform-related violations. Before the game, ask the head coach to have the players make the necessary corrections.

PREGAME CONFERENCE

- Check with the crew. Verify that the umpire has inspected any tapings or protective equipment, that the head linesman has met with the line-to-gain crew and that the line judge has met with the timer and the ball helpers. Discuss unusual plays or formations either team may have.

Umpire

- Spot-check players. Make a casual visual inspection of players as they warm up. Look for tinted eyeshields, knotted jerseys, towels with decorations and other uniform-related violations. Before the game, ask the head coach to have the players make the necessary corrections.

Head linesman

- Inspect the down indicator and chains. Make sure the chain is securely attached to the poles and is free of kinks. If there is no tape at the midway point of the chain (to facilitate the determination of whether a 5-yard defensive penalty will result in a first down), ask a trainer for tape and mark the chain. The ends of the down indicator and chain poles must be properly covered. If they are not, ask game management to remedy the situation.
- Meet with the line-to-gain crew.

Line Judge

- Inspect the field. The line judge should walk down both sidelines and along each end line at a brisk but unhurried pace. You don't need to inspect every blade of grass, but if you discover potholes, broken glass or other hazards, ask game management to have the problem taken care of immediately. If the field is marked for another sport (many football fields are also used for soccer), make sure the crew knows which lines are being used for football. Make sure the goalposts are straight and free of decoration and that the goal post pads are securely fastened. Check the pylons to ensure they are properly placed.
- Keep track of the game balls (crew of four). Ensure that game balls are kept separate from practice balls; players are not allowed to warm up with the game balls. If the game balls are delivered to the game officials' locker room before the game, the air pressure can be checked with a gauge. Air can be removed from balls that are over-inflated; balls that are under-inflated should be returned to game management and corrected or not used. If the game balls are given to the game officials on the field, a visual and touch inspection should be used. Once approved, game balls should be marked (e.g., game official's initials) so only approved balls are used in the game.
- Meet with the ball helpers and timer (crew of four).
- Meet with the auxiliary down indicator operator (when applicable).
- Meet with the line-to-gain crew.

Back Judge (Crew of Five)

- Keep track of the game balls. If the game balls are delivered to the game officials' locker room before the game, the air pressure can be checked with a gauge. Air can be removed from balls that are over-inflated; balls that are under-inflated should be returned to game management and corrected or not used. If the game balls are given to the game officials on the field, a visual and touch inspection should be used. Once approved, game balls should be marked (e.g., game official's initials) so only approved balls are used in the game.
- Meet with the ball helpers and timer.

When Duties are Completed

After onfield pregame duties have been completed, the referee, head linesman and back judge (crew of five) move to midfield on the head linesman's side of the field while the umpire and line judge move to midfield on the opposite side.

That is an ideal time to casually observe both teams for information that will be helpful during the game: Is the quarterback right-handed or left-handed? How strong are the punter's and kicker's legs? How is the wind affecting kicks? Watch both teams without giving the appearance they are being inspected. Before the kickoff, exchange information with other crew members.

Avoid using pregame time for non-essential chat with players, coaches, spectators or others, especially if it could give the appearance of favoritism.

A Note About Professionalism

Game officials shall not use any form of alcohol or tobacco or be under the influence of (i.e., impaired by) a controlled or illicit substance(s) beginning with the arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the game.

Part 1

Officiating Principles

1.1 Uniform

Your uniform should be clean and well kept. The entire crew shall be dressed alike.

Shirt: The standard shirt has black and white vertical stripes 2 inches wide. Game officials should have shirts with short and long sleeves. All crew members should wear the same length sleeves. Do not wear a long-sleeved garment underneath a short-sleeved shirt. T-shirts and turtlenecks (for cold weather) should be black. The undershirt should not have any letters or pictures that could be seen through the striped shirt. Shirts should always be tucked in. Association patches and/or the American flag are allowed if their use is accepted in your area of the country. Uniform shirt shall have an MHSAA emblem logo worn on the left chest.

Pants: Full-length black pants with a single 1¼-inch white stripe down each leg shall be worn. Optional: Crews may wear black officiating shorts for scrimmages or subvarsity contests only. Regardless of pants or shorts and color, a black leather belt 1¼- to 2-inches wide with a plain buckle is always worn.

Shoes: Entirely black shoes are most acceptable. Black shoes with minimal white markings (like shoe logos) are allowed. Black laces are required.

Socks: When black pants are used, all black socks are required.

Cap: A black cap with white piping should be worn by all but the referee. The referee's white hat must be clean. All caps should be fitted; adjustable caps appear unprofessional.

Whistle: If a whistle on a lanyard is used, both must be black. The whistle should be plastic. Metal whistles (even with rubber caps) are outdated and appear unprofessional. Carry a spare in your pants pocket. If a finger whistle is used, it should also be black plastic.

Jacket: Jackets are not recommended. When high school associations allow jackets to be worn during the game, the jacket should be black-and-white striped. Jackets may be worn before the game during warmups. All game officials should either wear jackets or go without.

Accessories: Each game official must have:

- At least one penalty flag (two are recommended). Each flag should be 15 by 15 inches and have a center weight. Most game officials put rubber bands around the weight to form a ball which aids the flight and direction of the flag when it is thrown. Do not use a flag with a metal clip. The flags may be carried in the belt or in pockets; your association may have a policy for location of flags. Wherever it is carried, as little of the flag as possible should be visible so the game official doesn't appear flag-happy.
- At least one beanbag to mark non-penalty spots. Beanbags should be white or blue and worn in the belt. All members of the crew should use like-colored beanbags, except the back judge shall carry two different color beanbags; one for marking the end of the kick and one for marking first touching.
- An information card (to record time-outs, captains, etc.) and a writing instrument.
- A wristband, rubber band or other device to keep track of downs. The umpire should wear a second device to keep track of the area of the field from which the ball was last snapped.

Other Accessories: Gloves, when worn, should be black. The referee should have a coin. The head linesman should have a device that is clipped to the chain as an aid for measurements and for re-establishing the location of the chain if it is moved, and an extra snap clip to aid setting the down indicator after the first and third quarters. A second clip is recommended.

- The back judge (crew of five) or referee (crew of four) should have a watch or timing device for the play clock if the field does not have a visible play clock or if the field play clock malfunctions. The line judge (crew of four or five) should have a watch to time the game.
- When allowed by state or local association policy, game official-to-game official communication devices may be worn by some or all crew members.

1.2 Use Of The Beanbag

The beanbag is used to mark spots, other than the spot of a foul, which may later be needed as a reference point.

It is not necessary to drop a beanbag at the spot a player intercepts a pass. Unlike the spot of a fumble, that spot has no bearing on penalty enforcement. The beanbag should be dropped on the correct spot and not thrown; however that won't always be practical. If the spot is in a side zone, then only the correct yard line is needed because any penalty enforcement would bring the ball back to the nearest hash mark. Situations in which the beanbag should be used:

Fumbles

The spot of the fumble must be marked in the event a foul occurs and that spot is needed to determine where the related run ended for penalty for enforcement. Technically, the spot is required only for fumbles beyond the neutral zone, but many game officials bag all fumbles out of habit.

First Touching

During both free and scrimmage kicks, there are times when it is improper for Team K to touch a kick. That is known as “first touching” and it applies only when Team K touches the ball when it is not entitled to possession.

On free kicks, if Team K touches the ball before the ball crosses Team R’s free-kick line and before it is touched there by any Team R player, the spot must be marked with the beanbag. For a scrimmage kick, the spot must be marked if Team K touches the ball in the field of play beyond the expanded neutral zone before Team R touches it.

The spot must be marked because Team R may have the right to take the ball at that spot.

End of a Scrimmage Kick

If a scrimmage kick ends between the goal lines, the covering game official must mark the spot with a beanbag. That is in case post-scrimmage kick enforcement (PSK) is needed on a foul.

The back judge (crew of five) should use two different-colored beanbags: one for marking the end of a kick and the other for marking first touching.

Momentum Exception

When a defensive player intercepts an opponent’s forward pass; intercepts or recovers an opponent’s fumble or backward pass; or a Team R player catches or recovers a scrimmage kick or free kick between his 5-yard line and the goal line, and his original momentum carries him into the end zone where the ball is declared dead in his team’s possession or it goes out-of-bounds in the end zone, the ball belongs to the team in possession at the spot where the pass or fumble was intercepted or recovered or the kick was caught or recovered.

Inadvertent Whistles

When a game official inadvertently blows his whistle, causing the ball to become dead, the covering game official must drop his beanbag at the spot of the ball when the whistle was blown. The down may be replayed or the team in possession at the time the whistle was blown may choose to accept the result of the play.

Marking the Out-of-Bounds Spot

If the wing official is covering the out-of-bounds spot and finds it necessary to follow players out-of-bounds, especially in the opponent’s bench area, a beanbag should be dropped at the spot where the runner went out-of-bounds.

1.3 Flags And Penalties

Fouls must be reported to the press box and both coaches. Additionally, all fouls must be communicated to all members of the officiating crew as each game official has a role in penalty enforcement. Your signals and sequence speak a language. Using signals to report is just like talking to the press box and spectators, only you're using signals instead of words.

Notification

Once the flag is thrown, the game official who threw it must ensure both the referee and head linesman are aware as soon as possible after the play ends. The head linesman will ensure the chains and down indicator are not moved and the referee will prepare for the steps that follow. Use three short blasts on the whistle after the ball is dead to bring the flag to the referee's attention.

The referee's first step in quality communication is to get an accurate report from the game official who threw the flag. The referee must then move clear of the players, face the press box, stand stationary and indicate the foul and the offending team using the appropriate signal.

When wing officials throw a flag for a dead-ball foul prior to the snap, they should jog slowly toward the middle of the field to report the foul to the referee. Remember to practice good dead-ball officiating during the jog; if a player has crossed the neutral zone and contacted an opponent, the contacted opponent may try to retaliate.

Avoid signaling the foul rather than reporting the foul to the referee because another game official may have a different foul. Instead of signaling from their position, the calling game officials should get together to discuss what each game official has seen, then report their decision to the referee.

Reporting Fouls

Some referees simply want to hear the foul and offender, such as, "No. 49 offense, illegal motion." Others prefer to be told what the reporting game official saw, "No. 49 cut upfield too soon." It may make sense to use both techniques dependent upon the experience level of the crewmate. Once the explanation of the foul has been given, the referee should face the press box and give a preliminary signal if appropriate.

On certain fouls, it is critical the referee be told the status of the ball when the foul occurred or whether a player involved was an eligible receiver. The trend at many levels is to get away from referring to teams by jersey color. The pregame conference should include a discussion of how to report fouls.

Giving the Explanation

The choices should be presented on all penalties unless it is a double foul or the penalty is automatically declined. The foul should be explained to the offended team's designated team representatives along with the options. State the options briefly, but correctly, clearly

and courteously. The umpire must listen to the referee's explanation to ensure the options are properly offered.

The wing official on the sideline of the penalized team should tell the coach the number of the guilty player and explain the foul in non-technical terms, e.g., "The man in motion cut downfield too soon." Don't guess or make up a number if you don't know the number of the fouling player. If a non-existent number is reported, crew credibility is immediately destroyed.

Once the referee determines whether the penalty has been accepted or declined, he must inform other members of the crew. If the penalty is accepted, the umpire must understand where to walk from — the enforcement spot, how far to walk and which direction to walk.

The line judge should hold the enforcement spot until he is certain that the penalty enforcement has been done correctly. The head linesman should walk off the penalty yardage on the sideline as the umpire is walking off the penalty.

Finally, the referee should again move clear of the players, face the press box, stand stationary and indicate the foul and the offending team using the appropriate signals.

Use of the Microphone

The referee's use of a field microphone adds another dimension to communication — a positive dimension when used properly. The microphone should be used to explain penalties and unusual situations. The referee shall have the option whether or not to use a field microphone. The referee shall have control (on/off switch) of the microphone. If used, the microphone should be tested prior to the start of the game.

Signals are still necessary, starting with a preliminary signal (no microphone) and then (after the penalty is accepted or declined) the final signal in conjunction with the use of the microphone.

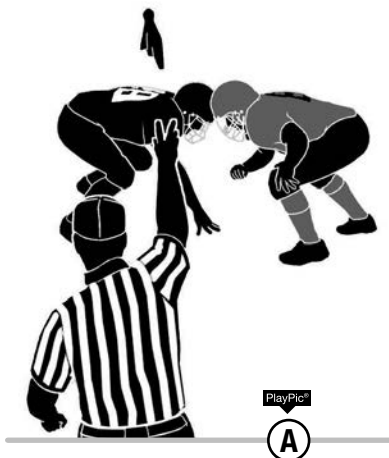
Use normal voice quality — no shouting. Realize that there often is a delay between speaking and hearing what was said over the loud speakers. Speak in short phrases. Pause briefly between phrases. The number of the player who committed the foul may be announced. Once the announcement is complete, turn the microphone off so other comments are not broadcast.

Use of the Flag

Correct penalty enforcement can be facilitated if the flag is thrown properly. There are two ways to throw the flag: into the air or carefully to a spot. The latter is used when a spot foul occurs. If it is possible the spot of the foul will be the enforcement spot, you must get your flag as close to that spot as possible. If you're off target, you should relocate the flag as soon as possible after the play by picking it up and moving it definitively. The longer you delay making this correction, the more it will appear you are manipulating the situation.

For dead-ball fouls or fouls simultaneous with the snap, the flag should be tossed into the air directly in front of the game official (PlayPic A).

A few techniques to avoid: slam-dunking the flag to the ground; looking angry when you toss it; holding the flag and waving it, instead of throwing it; or throwing it at the fouling player. On late hits, the latter looks confrontational, and worse yet, might hit the player in the face.



1.4 Whistle Mechanics

Each game official will carry a whistle as part of required game equipment. A whistle on a lanyard is preferred. The lanyard should be black. Some assigners or associations allow the use of finger whistles. Check to see if finger whistles are allowed before using one.

Whichever type of whistle is used, having a spare whistle in a pocket is recommended. The referee, umpire, head linesman and line judge should strongly consider having the whistle in their mouths prior to the snap in case a dead-ball foul occurs or a team's time-out request is granted. Once the snap occurs, it is strongly recommended that no game official have a whistle in the mouth until the ball becomes dead.

Remember, by rule, the whistle rarely causes the ball to become dead. Blowing the whistle only confirms something has happened to cause the ball to become dead.

When, at the end of a play, any game official sees a flag has been thrown, he should alert the crew by giving three short blasts of the whistle. That helps ensure the down indicator is not moved or the chains moved until the penalty is sorted out.

The referee uses the whistle to indicate the ball is ready-for-play, there is a time-out (charged or official), there is a player injury and to prevent the ball from becoming live due to a dead-ball foul before the snap. Rarely will the referee use the whistle to confirm the ball is dead after a play.

The umpire whistles to indicate a time-out, dead-ball foul that prevents the snap and player injury. It is strongly recommended the umpire refrain from using the whistle to confirm the ball is dead at the end of the play. The umpire may blow his whistle if he sees an incomplete pass in his coverage area, however.

Wing officials use the whistle to indicate time-outs, dead-ball fouls that prevent the snap, injuries and when the ball becomes dead following plays in their coverage areas (including incomplete passes and the runner or a live ball going out-of-bounds).

The back judge uses the whistle to indicate time-outs, a delay-of-game foul, injuries, the end of a quarter, touchback, the ball is dead in his coverage area and touchdowns when he is the covering game official.

1.5 On the Field Before the Game

The game officials enter the field together at least 30 minutes before game time or at an earlier time if required by the state association.

The referee and one other crew member (usually the umpire) meet with each of the head coaches. When and where the meeting occurs depends on local practice or conference policy. If it occurs on the field, it should be out of the way of players. It is best to meet with the home coach first as he may have information about pregame ceremonies that must be relayed to the visiting coach. If the umpire does not attend the meeting, he should utilize that time to check player equipment.

The meeting should begin with the game officials introducing themselves and giving the coach a card listing names of crew members. The coach must:

- Verbally verify all his players are legally equipped in compliance with the rules and will use no illegal equipment.
- Acknowledge everyone is expected to exhibit good sportsmanship throughout the game.
- Identify if there are players with protective guards, casts, braces, etc. that need to be inspected.
- Notify the referee of the designated representative who will request time-outs from the sideline. The head coach's designee shall remain in place for the entire game except in case of emergency.
- Notify the referee of the designated representative (coach or player) who will make decisions regarding penalty acceptance or declination.

It is recommended the game officials obtain the name of the "get-back coach" who will aid in sideline control.

Some crews may prefer to obtain the captains' numbers and names. If a game official wishes to speak to a captain during the game, perhaps to seek his help in calming an angry teammate, the captain will respond better if he is called by name rather than number. Also, the referee should ask if the quarterback is right-handed or left-handed and if the punter and place kicker are right-footed or left-footed, which aids in positioning.

The referee obtains the game balls for inspection and approval before the game. The coach should be asked if the team plans on using any unique formations or trick plays. Foreknowledge helps the crew be prepared for such instances and increases the chances

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the play will be officiated correctly. Avoid conversations about “what the other team does.” The presence of medical staff should be ascertained. If possible, meet with the athletic trainer and make introductions and ask where they will be located during the game. Also, the referee should inquire how communication will be handled if weather should become an issue.

All game officials should inspect the field. The head linesman and line judge should walk the sidelines and along each end line. If potholes, broken glass or other hazards are discovered, game management should be asked to have the problem taken care of immediately. If the field is marked for another sport, make sure the crew knows which lines are being used for football. The goalposts should be free of decoration, the goal post pads securely fastened and the pylons properly placed.

The referee and umpire should make a casual visual inspection of players as they warm up. Look for tinted eyeshields, knotted jerseys, towels with decorations, untucked jerseys, untucked undershirts, exposed knees, more than one tooth and mouth protector and other uniform-related violations. Ask the head coach to have the players make the necessary corrections.

All game officials should spend some time warming up. Run along the sideline for several yards. If calisthenics or stretching are necessary, they should be performed out-of-bounds near the end zone.

Casually observe both teams for information that will be helpful during the game. Watch both teams without giving the appearance they are being inspected. Pay attention to player actions similar to those that will be seen during the game. Things to look for include:

- How strong are the punter’s and kicker’s legs?
- How is the wind affecting kicks? How does the kicked ball spin?
- Does he tend to slice it?
- What formations do the teams use?
- Do they rush the snap after getting set?
- What blocking techniques are used?
- Do the linemen block low?
- Is the tight end and/or slot back in the free-blocking zone?
- Does the offensive line use unusually wide splits?
- Do they use a double wide, a slot or trips?
- What patterns do the receivers run?
- On defense, do linebackers line up tight enough to be in the free-blocking zone at the snap?

The head linesman must inspect the down indicator and chains and meet with line-to-gain crew. The head linesman and line judge should learn the names of ball helpers and brief them.

1.6 Line-to-Gain Crew, Timers and Ball Helpers

Line-to-gain crew

It is important for the head linesman to have a thorough pregame meeting with the line-to-gain crew. Game officials will often encounter a line-to-gain crew that “has been doing this for 30 years” and needs no instruction. In those cases, the head linesman can remind the line-to-gain crew not all crews do things the exact same way, thus creating the need for the meeting.

A four-person line-to-gain crew of all adults is preferable. If the crew consists of only three members, the person working the down indicator can also work the clip while the trail chain holder tends to the down indicator. No one on the line-to-gain crew should double as a ball helper.

When a new series begins, the down indicator is set on the spot where the head linesman’s downfield heel intersects with the sideline. The chains are then set according to the position of the down indicator. Once the spot has been established, the down indicator should be moved at least 6 feet (2 yards) away from the sideline. The 6-foot spacing allows the line-to-gain crew some cushion. If players approach, the line-to-gain crew must retreat and drop the equipment away from the direction of the field. That protects the players and the line-to-gain crew.

Remind the down indicator holder all spots are taken from the forward point of the ball. At the start of a new series, the head linesman will go to the sideline and mark the spot with the heel of his downfield foot.

The down indicator holder is not to change the down or move the down indicator until the head linesman gives the signal of the next down. Let the down indicator holder know what signals will be used to indicate the down (inexperienced line-to-gain crews may not know a fist indicates fourth down). Remind the down indicator holder the down indicator will be needed on a try to mark the spot of the snap.

Although most chain-holders understand not to move the chains unless directed, the reminder needs to be offered. The chain-holders should be shown the signal the head linesman will use telling the crew to stay put and the signal that moves the crew. Many linesmen use the “stop” signal to indicate stay put and a beckoning motion of the hand or arm as the signal to move.

If the head linesman tells the crew to move, not seeing a penalty marker is down, the crew should be told not to hesitate to point out the flag to the head linesman.

When a first down is declared, the trail pole goes immediately behind the down indicator so the game officials’ view of the down indicator is not obstructed. The lead holder is responsible to ensure the chain is taut at all times. Instruct the line-to-gain crew when the trail pole is set behind the down indicator, the trail pole holder should step firmly on the chain; that ensures the chain will be taut and the trail pole will not be displaced when the lead pole is pulled.

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Once a first down is awarded to Team A inside Team B's 10-yard line, the chains are no longer needed and should be moved well away from the sideline.

The head linesman's clip is a safety valve. If the chains are moved either in error or for safety reasons, the clip provides the exact chain location. The clip operator should be told to place the clip on the back edge of the line. Then the chains are moved off the sideline. If two clips are used, the clip operator should mark the new yard line with a second clip, leaving the original clip in place until after the first-down play ends.

The clip goes on the back edge of the 5-yard line nearer the trail rod. The clip is set on the yard line and the clip is never removed until the stakes are in a new position.

Tape on the halfway point of the chain helps the head linesman determine if Team A will achieve a first down on a 5-yard penalty, thus precluding the need for a measurement.

For instance, if the down indicator is three links behind the tape and Team B is flagged for a 5-yard penalty, the head linesman can check the tape and tell the referee, "They'll still be short." Conversely, if the down indicator is slightly beyond the tape, the head linesman can tell the referee, "It will be first down." If, during his pregame inspection of the chains, the head linesman sees there is no tape on the chain, he should ask a trainer or team manager for a strip of tape about 6 inches long. The chain is folded in half and the tape wound around the links at the halfway mark.

To ensure the proper penalty yardage is assessed, the head linesman should go to the succeeding spot when penalties are to be enforced.

At the end of the first and third quarters, the chains need to be moved to the other end of the field. The head linesman should record the down, distance, yard line on which the ball is resting and yard line on which the clip is located. The head linesman then grabs the chain on either side of the clip, asks the rod holders to rotate so they are opposite of where they were when the quarter ended and then jog to the corresponding yard line on the other end of the field. The head linesman places the clip on the ground at the appropriate line, then asks both stakeholders to pull the ends taut. The down indicator is placed once the the ball has been spotted.

With the 40-second play clock, it is possible the ball may be snapped prior to the first down marker being set. Should that rare situation occur, the head linesman shall drop a beanbag at the spot where the down marker indicator should be spotted.

Game Clock Timer

When plays end at the sideline, the timer should observe if the covering game official signals to stop the clock. Also remind the timer to look for the stop-the-clock signal when the ball goes near a sideline, there is a change of possession or there is a first down, and a try is always untimed.

In addition to the time allotted for halftime intermission, there is an additional three-minute warmup that immediately follows the intermission. The timer times both.

If the regulation game ends in a tie and overtime is played, the timer will need to put three minutes on the clock. After that, the clock is not needed unless there is a second overtime (a two-minute break occurs in that case).

As a backup, an onfield game official should time the game. Those duties fall to the line judge in a crew of four or five.

Remind the timer if the scoreboard is equipped with a horn to indicate the end of a period, it should not sound while a play is in progress. Restated, auto horn should be in the “off” position.

Play Clock Timer

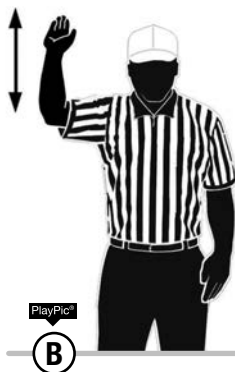
The back judge (crew of five) or referee (crew of four) meets with the play clock timer before the game. The timer is instructed the covering game official’s signal will designate when to start the play clock. When the ball is declared dead, the play clock starts when the following signals are given (only one signal is used):

- The dead ball signal indicates the play has ended inbounds. The covering game official raises one arm straight up (PlayPic A).
- The start-the-clock signal indicates the play has ended inbounds near the sideline (Note: In some associations, only the stop-the-clock signal is used if a first down has been achieved when a play ends inbounds near the sideline.)
- The stop-the-clock signal indicates the play has ended out-of-bounds.
- The incomplete pass signal indicates the game clock should stop.

If the play clock is interrupted, it will always be reset to 25 seconds.

If there is an appreciable delay in spotting the ball and the play clock is down to 20 seconds, the play clock should be reset to 25 seconds. Use signal 17 (PlayPic B) right arm extended upwards with the palm facing up, pumping the arm three times as if “pushing the sky.” In the event the play clock must be reset to 40 seconds use the signal in PlayPic B with both hands.

When there is no visible play clock the referee should approximate that interval and use his best judgment to reset the play clock to 25 seconds. When in doubt, reset the play clock. The game clock will start by rule either on the ready-for-play signal or the snap.



OFFICIATING PRINCIPLES

When a first down is gained and the play ends inbounds, the game clock stops to award the new series but the 40-second play clock starts when the ball becomes dead. Although the ball normally can be snapped as soon as it is spotted, in that special case, it cannot be snapped until the game clock is re-started. The umpire will stand over the ball to prevent a snap until the referee signals the game clock to start and the umpire confirms it has started. If the clock operator does not respond, the referee may blow his whistle to get the clock operator's attention. Such a whistle does not reset the play clock. If the clock operator still doesn't respond, the referee signals time-out and resets the play clock to 25 seconds.

The play clock is turned off whenever the ready-for-play is whistled with less than 25 (or 40) seconds remaining in any quarter and the game clock is running. In that way the quarterback is not confused over the amount of time remaining to snap the ball.

If the play clock is interrupted, whether it is because of a malfunction or for an official's time-out, it must be reset to 25 seconds. The play clock will never resume at the interrupted count. When that occurs, the game clock must also be stopped and will restart on the snap or on the referee's ready-for-play signal if the game clock was running. Use signal 17 for resetting the play clock. In the event the play clock must be reset to 40 seconds use signal 17 with both hands.

If the play clock does not start on time, start it as soon as you are aware. The back judge will have a backup play clock if the play clock is visible on the field. If the play clock continues to malfunction, the referee may direct that it be turned off. The play clock will then be kept on the field with the back judge signaling the last five seconds of the count.

If the play clock gets to zero prior to the snap or free kick, it is left at zero until the penalty is enforced, then reset. If it is close to whether the start of the play beat the clock and there is no flag, reset the clock to 40 seconds. If the play clock is still running after the play starts, reset it to 25 or 40 seconds during the play. The play clock is used during overtime.

Ball Helpers

If two ball helpers are available, appoint one to be responsible for each sideline. The ball helpers keep up with the play at all times, normally mirroring the position of the wing official on their side of the field.

In addition each ball helper should be made responsible for the end line in field goal and try situations. One ball should be placed on the ground behind the goal post. The ball helpers then take a position well behind the posts in order to retrieve the ball after the kick. A game official can pick up the ball behind the goal post for use on the ensuing kickoff or snap.

If the ball becomes dead out-of-bounds or inbounds nearer the sideline than the hash marks, the ball helpers should give a ball as quickly as possible to the nearest game official. If the dead ball goes out-of-bounds, or is dead because of an incomplete pass, the ball helper should then retrieve it. If the dead ball is inbounds, the ball helper should wait with the game official covering the spot until it is no longer required and then take it off the field.

While some associations still allow it, it is recommended ball helpers not be allowed on the field. That minimizes the risk of injury or a ball helper interfering with live play.

In inclement weather or muddy conditions, the ball helpers must ensure their ball is kept dry and clean. It is the responsibility of game management to supply towels for that purpose.

1.7 The Halo Principle

The halo principle is designed to not only provide coverage when the ball is in those areas, but to ensure that all 22 players are observed on every play.

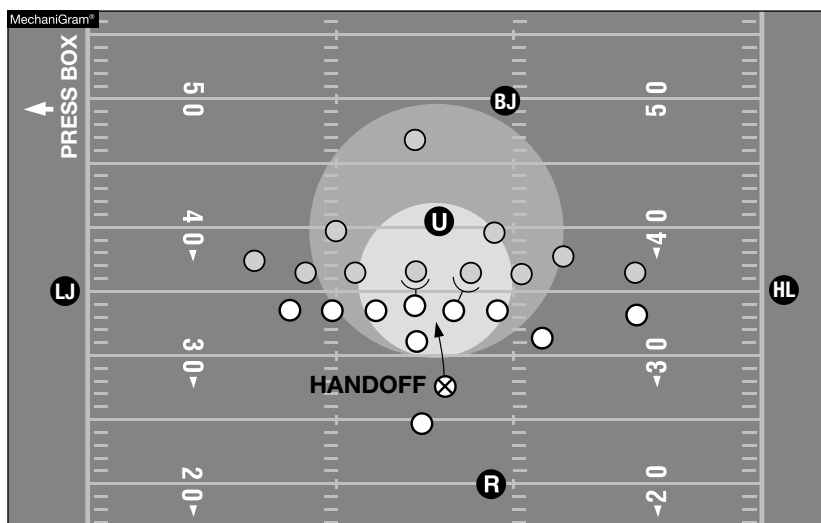
When a player is in possession of the ball (or the ball is loose on the ground, such as a rolling punt or a fumble), the halo surrounding the ball and all players in around it is called the main halo. There is no hard-and-fast definition for the size of halos; use 2 to 5 yards as an average. The game official nearest the main halo is responsible for the actions of players within the halo. The remaining game officials are responsible for the secondary halos, which surround the players in their area.

The concept is illustrated in the MechaniGram (next page), which depicts a running play up the middle. The umpire observes the main halo (light gray shading), around the runner. The wing officials and back judge (crew of five) observe the secondary halo (darker gray shading), looking for holding, illegal blocks and other fouls. The halos shift in depth, width and location as the runner advances and varies his direction left or right.

When the quarterback takes the snap and spins to hand the ball to the halfback, the quarterback, the halfback and any other Team A players in the vicinity (possibly the fullback, a pulling lineman or a receiver who was in motion) are inside the main halo, which is observed by the referee. But once the play moves into and beyond the line of scrimmage, the referee should no longer be watching the ballcarrier; he should instead be observing what happens to the quarterback, those other Team A players mentioned above and perhaps any Team B players who have broken through the line. The main halo becomes the responsibility of the appropriate wing official (or the umpire if the run is up the middle).

When the runner has moved beyond the line of scrimmage, all halos shift. That's the turning point, the pivotal factor in coverage. The appropriate wing official should take the secondary halo in front of the runner, 15 or 20 yards ahead of the runner. The scope of the wing's observation can be extremely wide, because all the action is directly in front of him.

As the runner advances, the main halo moves with him and other members of the crew have to make a sudden shift of focus. The back judge in a crew of five must be prepared to sweep past the sidelines to assist in direct coverage if the runner should wind up out-of-bounds. When the runner goes beyond the sideline, the back judge must follow him.



When a punt flies overhead, the umpire will be in the midst of players streaming downfield and will actually be inside the secondary halo described earlier (the secondary circle in front of the receiver’s immediate perimeter). The umpire should watch the players who are trying to get into position to make the tackle and the opponents who are blocking them.

Some punters choose not to try to become involved in the pursuit and simply admire their punt as it flies downfield. If the referee is also looking at the ball far downfield, he could fail to see an unnecessary and illegal block on the punter. Even if the punter is no longer covered by roughing the kicker rules, an opponent should not get a free shot at punishing a player who is not moving to participate in the play.

1.8 Fumbles

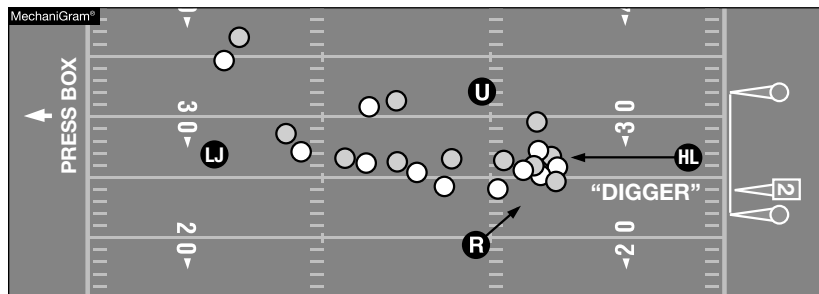
Officials have specific duties when a pile forms on top of a fumble. The ball will be spotted and the process will be much simpler if each crew member does his job.

When a game official sees a fumble, he must drop a beanbag at the yard line at which the ball was fumbled (the spot may be used for penalty enforcement if a foul occurs while the ball is loose). He must also continue officiating.

If the covering game official sees a player recover the fumble from a prone position, he should blow the play dead. If the defense recovers, the stop-the-clock signal is given, followed by a point in the direction of the recovering team. If the offense recovers, the covering game official

should only signal the next down (unless a first down was achieved; in that case, the stop-the-clock signal is given, followed by a point in the direction of the recovering team).

If a fumble results in players from both teams forming a pile that prevents the covering game official from determining possession, the ball must be “dug out” of the pile. The game official closest to the pile becomes the “digger,” the game official responsible for unpling the players and determining who has recovered the fumble. The game official nearest the digger manages player conduct in the pile. Other game officials near the pile observe action in and around the pile, and the game official farthest from the pile signals the clock to stop and confirms that the clock has stopped.



Assuming the pile consists of four or more players, the digger begins by getting the players on top of the pile to get up. One method is to tap those players and say, “You’re out,” or “You don’t have it; get up.” Pay attention when you get close to the pile; you don’t want a mouthful of helmet. The digger can’t be shy about getting dirty. The ball is somewhere on the ground; the digger should be, too.

If the players are slow to unpile, another game official can approach the pile and assist the digger; the remaining game officials should practice dead-ball officiating and observe the players not on the pile.

Another digger’s trick is to grasp the arm of the player who is clearly in possession of the ball at the bottom of the pile. By saying, “I’ve got the ball; everyone off the pile,” the digger can ensure the proper team is awarded possession while getting the players to disperse.

If the digger can clearly see the ball or is certain he knows which player has covered it, he verbally relays that information to the referee. If Team A has recovered, the referee announces the next down and restarts the clock (or signals the first down if Team A has achieved a first down). If Team B has recovered, the referee alone signals the change of possession.

The digger can help statisticians and spectators by pointing to or otherwise identifying the player who recovered the fumble once the pile has dispersed.

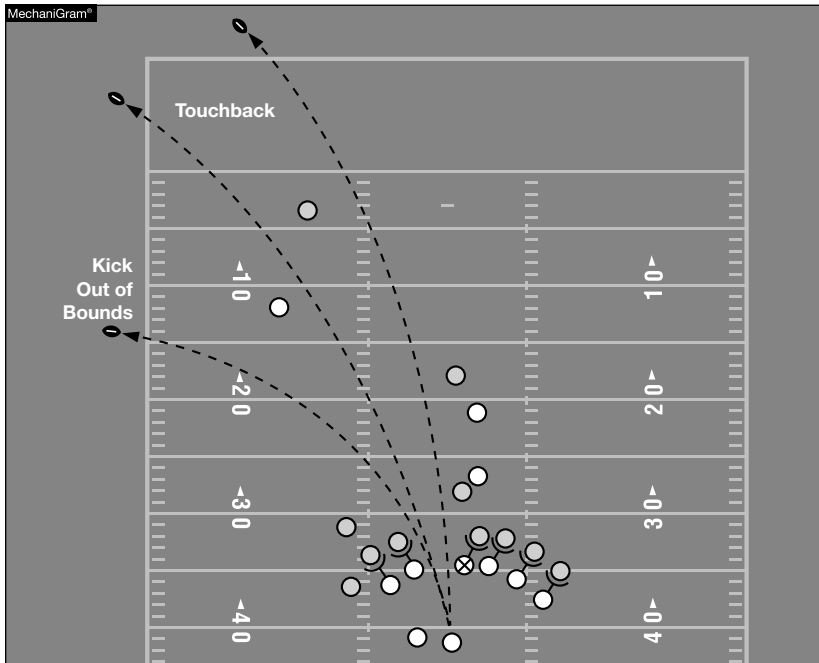
When a fumble is recovered between two game officials and the pile consists of four or fewer players, there is usually no need for a digger. The game officials should make eye contact and confirm what they’ve seen (e.g., “I’ve got red ball.” “So do I.”). If they agree, both give the proper signals. If they don’t agree, one must serve as the digger.

1.9 Snap Location After Kick or Penalty

When a punt goes out-of-bounds across a sideline, Team R has no choice when it comes to the location of the next snap. The ball will be snapped from the nearest hashmark just as if the ball was carried out-of-bounds by a runner. In the MechaniGram, Team R will snap from the hashmark closest to the sideline on its own 15-yard line. The ball may not be placed in the middle of the field (or anywhere else for that matter).

Before the ready-for-play signal, the team that will next snap may designate the spot from which the ball is put in play anywhere between the hashmarks for a try or kickoff, following a fair catch or awarded fair catch, following a safety or touchback, or for the start of each overtime series. The privilege may be repeated if the down is replayed or a dead-ball foul occurs.

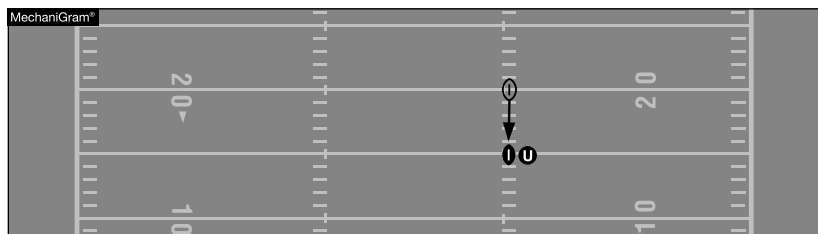
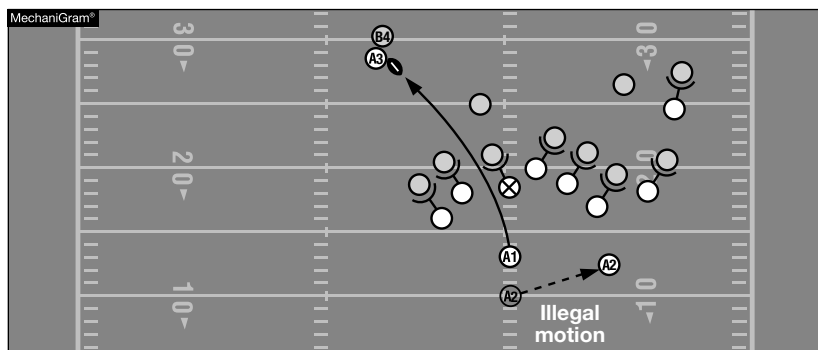
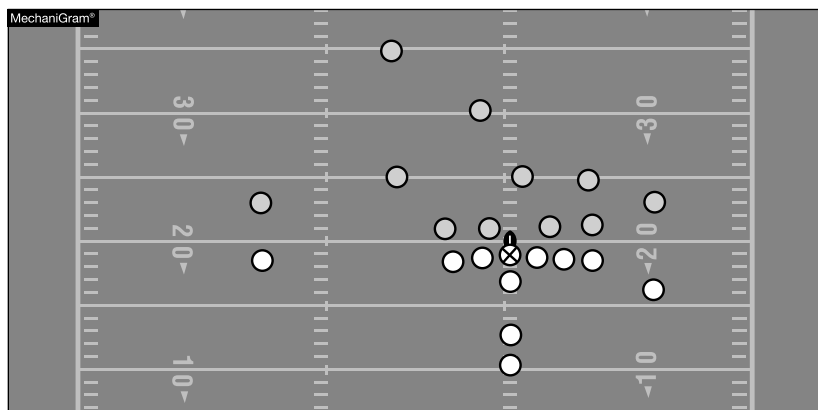
A free kick out-of-bounds is subject to being placed 25 yards from the previous spot or 5 yards from the out-of-bounds spot, but still on the nearest hashmark.



Previous Spot Means Previous Spot

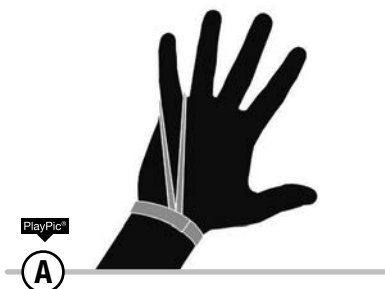
When a penalty has previous-spot enforcement, it not only means the yard line from which the ball was last snapped or free kicked. The penalty must be enforced with consideration to the lateral position of the ball as well. In the top MechaniGram, Team A is snapping from the hashmark on its own 20-yard line. In the MechaniGram above, A2 is flagged for illegal motion as A1 completes a pass to A3 closer to the opposite hash. A3 is immediately tackled by B4.

When Team B accepts the penalty, the umpire must return to the exact place from which the play started — that is, the same hashmark on Team A's 20-yard line, as seen below.

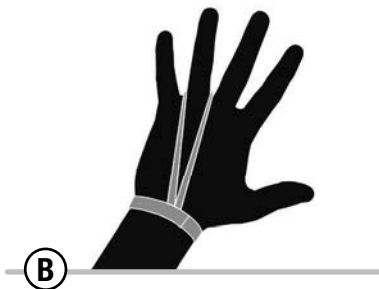


Umpire Keeping Track of Previous Snap Location

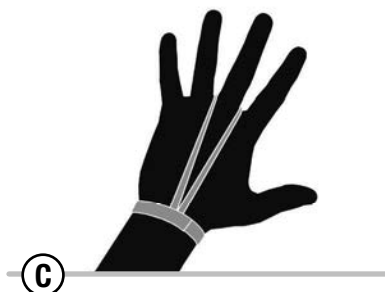
Umpires should wear two down indicators on their hands. One can be used to keep track of the down, the other to help remember the spot of the previous snap. See PlayPics A through E.



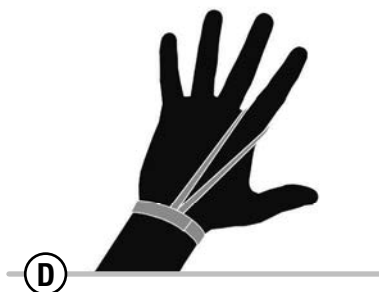
Little finger means
left hash.



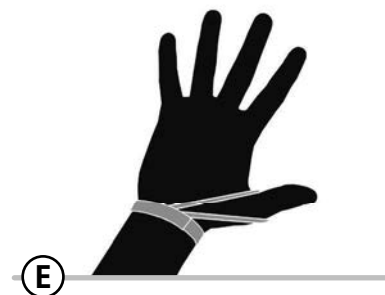
Ring finger means
left upright.



Middle finger means
middle of field.



Index finger means
right upright.



Thumb means
right hash.

1.10 Game Official-to-Game Official Communication

Game official-to-game official communication using wireless radios is becoming increasingly common in high school football. Used properly, these devices help crews carry out their duties more efficiently. They are not a substitute for the physical signals used to communicate with each other on the field. Overuse will defeat their purpose.

When and How to Use Units

- Push to talk models are preferred. They prevent unnecessary and confusing ambient noise.
- Remind crew members not to start talking before they press the button. Doing so will garble messages. Rather, press the “PTT” button, pause, and then speak for more satisfactory results.
- Problems arise when everyone wants to be a crew saver and multiple people use the radio.

When and What to Communicate

- Player counts. The back judge can communicate to the appropriate wing whether or not a replaced player on his sideline gets off the field before the snap. The crew can communicate if a late substitute enters before the snap, is not on his team’s side of the neutral zone at the snap or enters during the play and participates.
- Reporting fouls.

Communication devices are ideal for communicating penalty information from one side of the field to the other. The number of the foul player can be reported to coaches, along with the enforcement, clock status, explanation of the foul, etc.

- Numbers for offensive linemen using the numbering exception.
- Ball inbounds or out-of-bounds (clock status on ready-for-play).
- “Five will get you a first down.”
- Incorrect down is displayed on the down box.
- Number of time-outs remaining.
- Back judge moving to the end line.

When to Be Silent

- During the coin toss (start of game and overtime).
- When the referee and another game official are talking to a coach.

- When other game officials are communicating with each other.
- When the referee is announcing fouls on the stadium mic.
- During live-ball play.
- When multiple flags are thrown (Example: One wing official has a flag for a false start and the other has thrown a flag for defensive encroachment). Rather than use radios in those cases, game officials should come together as always and discuss the situation in person. Once a decision has been made, report the result to referee as normal without use of the radios.

Non-Verbal Communication

When game officials aren't lucky enough to have electronic means of staying in touch, they can still "talk" to each other the old-fashioned way by using crew communication signals. The mechanics manual has eight approved signals. Some associations have developed more. Before adopting additional, unofficial signals, get approval from your state association, conference coordinator or other governing body.

Player counts

When counting players, game officials can point out if either team has too many, too few or the right number of players before the snap. That's an aid in detecting substitution and participation fouls.

The signal for 11 players is fist extended straight out with the elbow not bent and the thumb on top of the fist.



There are no formal signals for a team having fewer than or more than 11 players. One suggestion for less than 11 is splaying the fingers of both hands across the chest. In cases where a game official counts more than 11 players, a suggestion is to confirm the count with another game official (e.g., line judge with back judge, referee with umpire) and request a "recount" by using a finger-winding motion in front of the chest (caution: this has another meaning as you will discover later). If the recount confirms a count of 12 and the ball has not yet been snapped, the guilty team is flagged immediately for a dead-ball foul for illegal substitution. If the count is completed after the ball is snapped, it's a live-ball foul. Officials are encouraged to rule this a dead-ball foul whenever possible.

Yardage issues

When Team A needs more than 10 yards to achieve a first down, the "double stakes" signal is used. That signal is arms crossed in front of the chest. That reminds the crew not to stop the clock when a runner passes only the back stake.

A penalty or a play or plays that gain yardage will leave the down box farther downfield than the tape used to indicate the halfway point on the chain. That means a 5-yard penalty

on Team B will result in a first down for Team A, or as often abbreviated by crews, “Five will get you one.”

The head linesman can indicate the situation with an unofficial signal. That’s accomplished by making eye contact with the referee and placing the palm of his hand flat against his chest. If a Team B foul such as encroachment occurs, the referee already knows that a new series will be awarded.

Clock issues

The referee may need to know if the previous play ended in or out-of-bounds, especially after a first down or penalty enforcement. Two signals are used to let the referee know when the clock will start. The rotated index finger as described earlier serves as the wind the clock on the ready signal while wrists crossed at waist level means don’t wind the clock.

The covering game official gives the dead-ball signal (hand raised above the head) to indicate to the play clock operator to start the 40-second count.

To let the clock operator know the runner is not out-of-bounds when a play ends near a sideline, the covering game official should wind his arm — the traditional start-the-clock or do-not-stop-the-clock signal. Unless local custom dictates, do not give the wind signal followed by the stop-the-clock signal to indicate a first down was reached inbounds near the sideline.

Formations

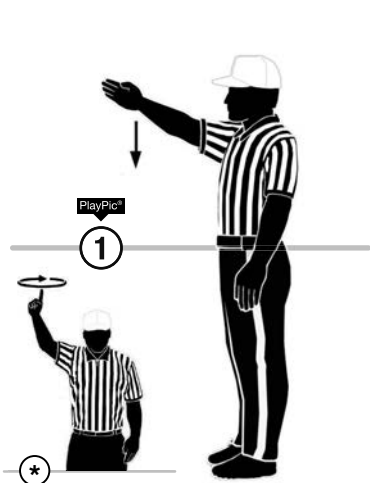
An arm fully extended into the offensive backfield, palm facing the field, has two meanings. Wing officials use the approved signal to let crewmates know the closest receiver to that wing official is in the backfield. That is an aid in determining pre-snap keys. The same signal indicates a pass has been thrown backward.

If a wing official puts one hand to his cheek, it indicates there is an unbalanced line.

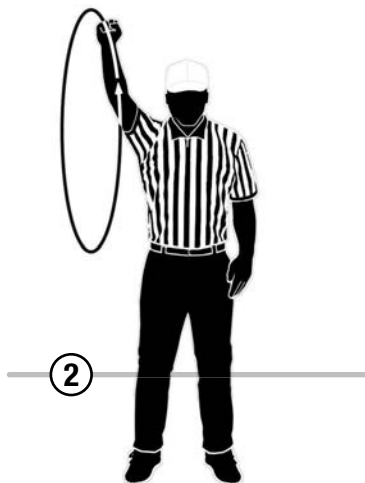
The rolling fists indicate that if the offense is in a scrimmage-kick formation, the snapper has protection. That unofficial signal on fourth down is a reminder that the clock will stop at the end of the down regardless of how the down ends.

Part 2

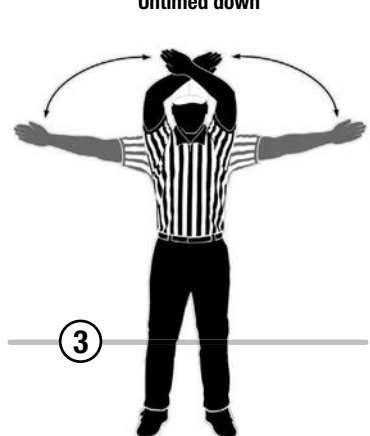
NFHS Official Football Signals



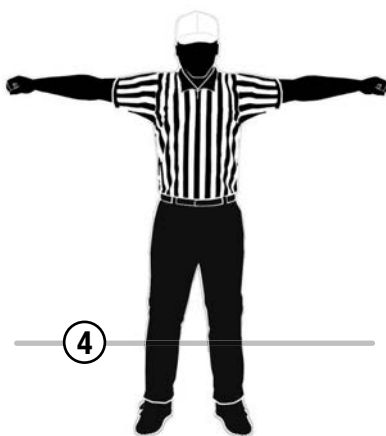
Ball ready-for-play
*Untimed down



Start clock



Time-out
Discretionary or injury time-out
(followed by tapping hands on chest)



TV/radio time-out

SIGNAL CHART



5

**Touchdown/field goal/
point(s) after touchdown**



6

Safety



7

**Dead-ball foul
Touchback (move side to side)**



8

First down



9

Loss of down



10

**Incomplete forward pass
Penalty declined
No play, no score
Toss option deferred**

SIGNAL CHART



11

Legal touching of forward pass
or scrimmage kick



12

Inadvertent
whistle



13

Disregard flag



14

End of period



15

Sideline warning



16

First touching
Illegal touching

SIGNAL CHART



17

**Reset play clock
to 25 seconds**
(Use both hands to have play
clock reset to 40 seconds)



18

Encroachment



19

False start
Illegal formation
Free kick infraction



20

Illegal shift (2 hands)
Illegal motion (1 hand)



21

Delay of game



22

**Substitution
infraction**

SIGNAL CHART



23

Disconcerting act



24

**Illegal helmet contact
Targeting**



25

Illegal horse-collar tackle



26

Illegal blindside block



27

**Unsportsmanlike conduct
Noncontact foul**



28

**Illegal
participation**

SIGNAL CHART



29

Sideline interference
(Face press box)



30

**Running into or
roughing kicker or holder**



31

Illegal batting/kicking
(Followed w/ point toward foot)



32

**Invalid fair catch
Illegal fair catch**



33

**Pass interference
Kick catching interference**



34

Roughing passer

SIGNAL CHART



35

Illegal pass/forward handing
(Face press box)



36

Intentional grounding



37

Ineligible downfield on pass



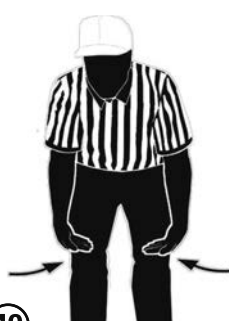
38

Personal foul



39

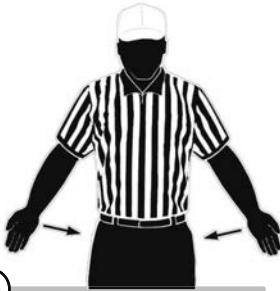
Clipping



40

Block below waist

SIGNAL CHART



41

Chop block



42

Holding



43

**Illegal block
Illegal use of hands/arms**



44

**Helping the runner
Interlocked blocking**



45

**Grasping of
face mask or helmet
opening**



46

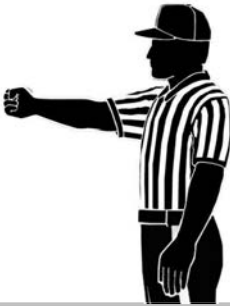
Tripping



47

Disqualification

2.1 Crew and Supplementary Signal Chart



11 players



More than 11 players on the field



Less than 11 players on the field



Pass juggled



**Play ended out-of-bounds
Don't start clock**



Unbalanced line

CREW AND SUPPLEMENTARY SIGNAL CHART



Double sticks



Snapper protection rules apply



Start clock on ready



**Receiver off the line
Backward pass**



Five-Second Visible Count

(Used by referee in crew of four and back judge in crews of five and seven of the last five seconds when onfield 40/25 play clock not used)

2.2 Penalty Signaling Sequences

The order of the penalty signals used by the referee is just as important as the clarity of the signals. Again using the language parallel, think of signal sequence as words in a sentence. The singular words, “Sequence important the is the of signals,” makes little sense when thought of as individual words, but “The sequence of the signals is important,” uses the same words and is easy to understand.

The key to quality signaling is remembering that it is a sequence of fluid movements. Take your time. Signals executed with separate and distinct motions ensure clarity; jumbled quickly together and the messages are lost.

It is also important to face the proper direction when giving the signal. All signals are given facing the press box.

When the ready-for-play signal is used, it should always be given from a position that is visible to the clock operator. It can be the downward stroke of your arm for the start-the-clock signal when the clock starts on the ready.

The false start and encroachment signals are always preceded by the signal for a dead-ball foul.

By following these principles and using the correct, accepted signals you will effectively communicate your decisions to all involved.

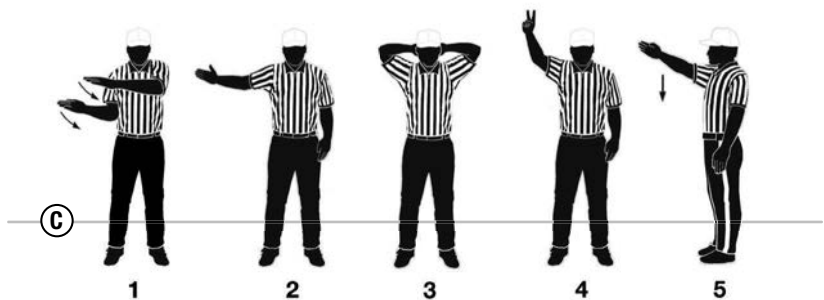
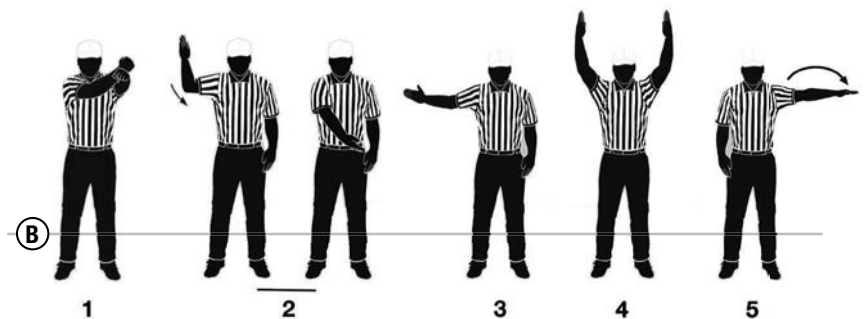
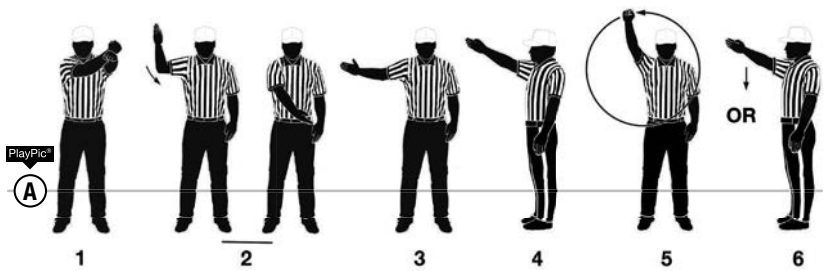
Live-Ball Fouls

Signaling the penalty for a live-ball foul is a four-step process: foul signal, a point toward the team that fouled, an indication of the next down and either the ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal.

In PlayPic A, Team B has been called for roughing the passer. The referee signals the foul (1) and (2), indicates which team has fouled (3) and signals that Team A has been awarded a new series (4). The referee waits to be sure the chains have been moved and the other game officials are in position. If the pass was complete in spite of the roughing and the runner was downed inbounds, the referee blows his whistle and simultaneously gives the start-the-clock signal (5). If the pass was incomplete or the play ended out-of-bounds, the referee gives the ready-for-play while simultaneously blowing his whistle (6).

In PlayPic B, Team B has been called for roughing the passer, but Team A scored a touchdown. The scoring team may choose to have the penalty enforced on the try. If so, the sequence in PlayPic A is used with the ready-for-play signal. If the scoring team chooses to have the penalty enforced on the next kickoff, the referee signals the foul (1) and (2) and indicates which team has fouled (3). The referee signals the touchdown (4), then points to the spot of the next kickoff to indicate the enforcement (5).

PENALTY SIGNALING SEQUENCES



In PlayPic C, Team A has been called for intentional grounding. The referee first indicates the foul (1), followed by the fouling team (2). Because the penalty includes a loss of down, the referee gives that signal (3), then signals the next down (4). Because the pass was incomplete, the referee gives the ready-for-play while simultaneously blowing his whistle (5).

PENALTY SIGNALING SEQUENCES

Cases that involve a disqualification add a step to the process. The referee must indicate the decision to the press box. PlayPic D illustrates the sequence for a live-ball foul for illegal helmet contact that results in a disqualification. The referee first indicates the nature of the foul (1) and (2) the fouling team (3). The disqualification is then indicated (4). If the penalty results in a first down, the referee signals that Team A has been awarded a new series (5); if not, the referee signals the next down. In this example, the penalty has given Team A sufficient yardage for a first down. If the previous play ended inbounds, the referee blows his whistle and simultaneously gives the start-the-clock signal (6). If the previous play was an incomplete forward pass or if the play ended out-of-bounds, the referee gives the ready-for-play while simultaneously blowing his whistle (7).

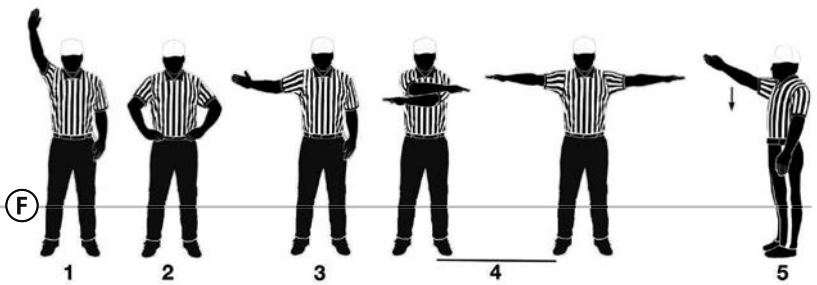
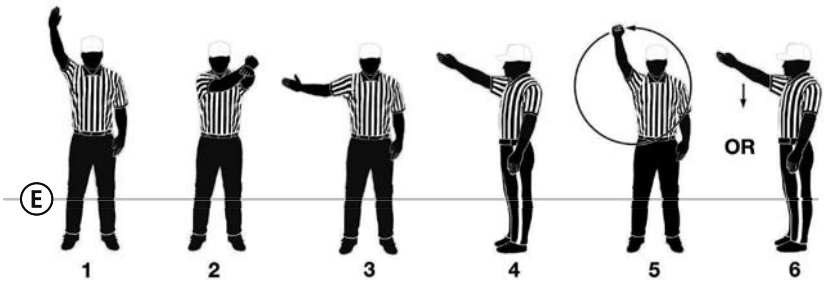
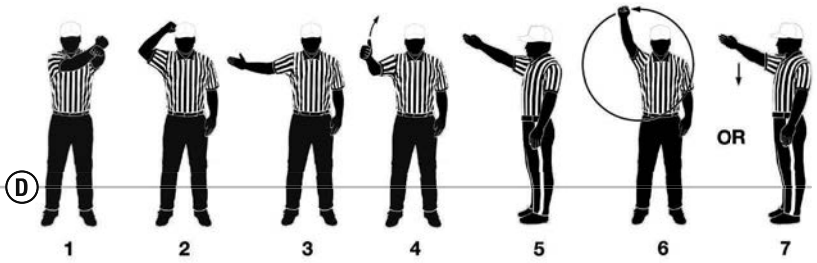
Dead-Ball Fouls

When a dead-ball foul has been called, the dead-ball signal must precede the signal for the nature of the foul. That means signaling the penalty is a four- or five-step process: the dead-ball signal, followed by the foul signal, followed by a point toward the team that fouled, followed by an indication of the next down, followed by either the ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal.

In PlayPic E, Team B has been flagged for a personal foul that occurred during a dead-ball period. The referee begins with the dead-ball signal (1) followed by the signal for personal foul (2). He then indicates the team that fouled (3) and signals the next down. If the penalty results in a first down, the referee signals that Team A has been awarded a new series (4); if not, the referee signals the next down. In the example, the penalty has given Team A sufficient yardage for a first down. If the previous play ended inbounds, the referee blows his whistle and simultaneously gives the start-the-clock signal (5). If the previous play was an incomplete forward pass or if the play ended out-of-bounds, the referee gives the ready-for-play while simultaneously blowing his whistle (6).

Penalties for dead-ball fouls are rarely declined because the yardage is “free.” However, on those rare occasions when the penalty for a dead-ball foul is declined, the referee must indicate the declination after indicating which team fouled. In PlayPic F, Team K is ready to attempt a try but Team R has been called for encroachment. Team K declines the penalty because its kicker is more comfortable kicking from the present distance. The referee gives the signals for dead-ball foul (1) and encroachment (2). He indicates which team has fouled (3), followed by the declination (4). The referee then gives the ready-for-play while simultaneously blowing his whistle (5).

PENALTY SIGNALING SEQUENCES



Part 3

Crew of Four

3.1 Philosophy

Movement and compromise are the characteristics of football officiating. Twenty-two players are moving around, competing for space and position; the game officials must utilize hustle, angles, distance and planned compromises to observe and control the action.

The challenge for game officials in a crew of four is to observe the same number of players and the same amount of territory with one less set of eyes than in a crew of five. That means game officials must expand their areas of coverage and utilize teamwork to get the job done.

Hustle

Hustle is an overused word today. Everyone knows it's needed to succeed, but what does it really mean when relating it to football officiating? Hustle to cover plays and to get into position is important regardless of how many game officials work a game, but it's especially important in a crew of four because the same amount of ground and the same number of players have to be covered by fewer game officials.

Significant movement by all game officials is critical for proper field coverage. Hustle gives you a chance. That equates to more running and a well-placed concern for angles.

Movements

All game officials must work hard at understanding then obtaining proper angles. Your line of sight must provide you with an opportunity to view a developing play or part of a play. You must be able to see completely through the play, which means your vision must be unobstructed by the players directly involved in the play and others near the play.

When the ball is snapped, all 22 players are in motion. A game official's angle and distance adjustments are constant as play is in motion. A step or two in the right direction may open up a whole new viewing experience, free from obstruction; a step in the wrong direction will screen you from the critical game action.

Good wing officials flow downfield with the play when a runner is in their coverage area and move into the field of play to watch the players behind the play when the run is on the opposite sideline.

Movement allows the non-covering game officials to watch players away from the ball, the critical component to combating physical play. When a wing official moves off the sideline, he can watch the areas behind the run, where rough play often occurs.

The covering wing official also moves along the sideline to improve angles. There's usually at least three and sometimes six or seven players around the ball, either trying to throw blocks or attempting to make the tackle. Movement is critical to watching action around the ball. It's also paramount to game control.

Proper movements when the play is over are also important. Because the ball is live for only a few seconds every play, there is a tendency to think about spotting or retrieving the ball for the next play and forgetting about the players. If game officials ignore post-play action, players get physical with each other and game control suffers. All game officials must observe player action after the ball has been whistled dead.

Field Coverage

Proper coverage is enhanced by good eye contact and a “feel” for where your crewmates are looking. You must learn about all aspects of football officiating to know what areas all members of the crew are covering. Once you've mastered that, practical onfield application develops through communication, including eye contact and understanding. At the risk of being obvious, you've got to know exactly what both you and your crewmates are expected to do in specific situations — then effectively communicate with your crewmates — to truly master football officiating. When you understand why angles and distance are important and how and when to obtain them, you'll find yourself in great position throughout each game.

3.2 Coin Toss

The coin toss is conducted in the center of the field 20 minutes before the game. The toss may be held at an earlier time off the field if both coaches agree. In such a case the results may be simulated in the center of the field 3 minutes before the game.

The umpire goes to the sideline with the line-to-gain equipment and the referee to the opposite sideline. The speaking captains (those who will give options for their teams) should be positioned so they are closest to the referee when the group meets in the center of the field. The umpire and referee meet the captains at their respective sidelines and escort them to the middle of the field, positioned so their backs are to their own sidelines. The referee may either face the scoreboard or have his back to it during the toss.

When they reach the center of the field, the referee and umpire will be across from each other. The head linesman is positioned at the top of the numbers on the side of the field

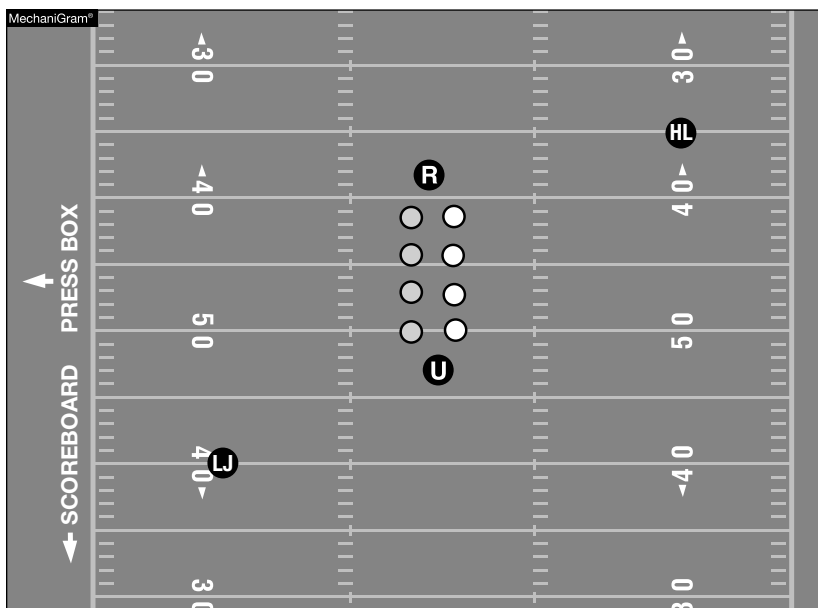
with the chains; the line judge assumes a similar position on the opposite side. Both wing officials should face their respective sidelines and ensure the other players on their sideline are outside the field of play.

The referee should allow all captains to view both sides of the coin, identifying which side is heads and which is tails. The visiting captain is instructed to call heads or tails before the coin is flipped. The umpire repeats the choice loudly enough for all to hear.

Once the winner is determined, the winner is offered his choice: defer, receive, choose a goal to defend or kick. If the choice is to defer, the referee immediately faces the press box, taps the shoulder of the deferring captain and signals the declination. The remaining choices are then presented to the other captain and the final selection is made by the deferring captain. If the winner of the coin toss does not defer, no signal is immediately given.

When the final selections are made, the captains are asked to put their backs to the goal line their team will defend and the referee gives the appropriate signal. If the choice is to kick or receive, only the first selection is signaled. If the choice is to defend a goal, two signals are given: pointing both arms toward the goal line being defended, followed by the appropriate signal for the other captain.

If at any time during the toss the referee errs or gives incorrect information (for instance, giving the wrong team an option), the umpire should speak up immediately. When the toss is completed, the other game officials join the referee and umpire in the



center of the field and record the results of the toss. All game officials simultaneously move to their kickoff positions.

Second Half

It is recommended that as the teams are entering the field prior to the beginning of the second half, the head linesman and line judge obtain the second-half choices from the respective head coaches. The choices are communicated to the opposing coaches during the 3-minute warmup period. At the conclusion of the warmup, both teams assume their respective free-kick formations.

Overtime Procedure

If overtime is necessary, the game officials wait for the 3-minute intermission to end. The referee and umpire go to their respective sidelines and once again escort the captains to the center of the field while the other game officials assume the same positions as for the pregame toss. The coin toss is repeated with the visiting team again calling it. When the winner is determined, the following options are explained: start the overtime period on offense, defense or choose which goal to be used.

When the selections are completed, the captains of the team on offense are asked to face the goal line in the direction their team will advance and the opposing captains stand with their backs to that goal line. The referee then taps the shoulder of the captain of the team that won the toss and gives the first down signal in the appropriate direction.

3.3 Keys

Football game officials should develop field and situational awareness to help them determine what's going to happen before it occurs. Those hints are called keys. Game officials have initial keys at the start of each play, but those keys are not permanent. They are initial responsibilities that change as the play develops.

There are two basic types of keys: call them "situational" and "positional" keys.

Situational Keys

Situational keys are partially based on the down, distance, score, time remaining, offensive and defensive formations and actions of players at the snap. For example, it's third down and 11. Team A trails by two points with 1:37 to play in the fourth quarter and has the ball on its own 44-yard line. Going without a huddle, Team A lines up in a shotgun formation with three receivers on the right side of the formation. All of that adds up to a pass. That hunch is confirmed when, at the snap, the offensive linemen drop back to pass block, the quarterback retreats into the pocket and the receivers run pass patterns rather than block Team B's linebackers and defensive backs.

In addition to down, distance and other game factors, offensive and defensive formations provide hints as to what type of play a game official can expect in a given situation. Most

teams using the wishbone formation, for instance, are predominantly running teams. Teams using four-receiver sets and shotgun formations pass more times than not.

Linemen provide situational keys. For example, pulling linemen indicate a sweep or trap block. Retreating linemen indicate a pass. Charging linemen indicate a running play. Linemen's splits may indicate certain types of plays. When offensive linemen provide only passive resistance, allowing defensive linemen to penetrate the neutral zone, a screen pass often follows.

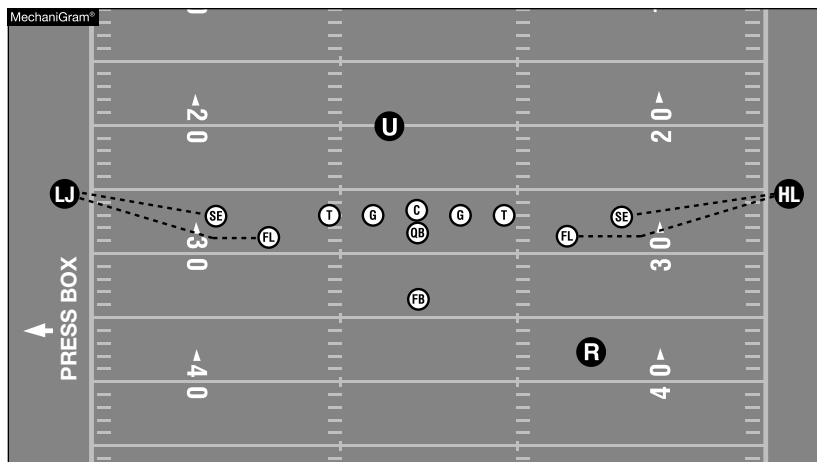
Positional Keys

Simply stated, the wing officials key on the eligible receivers who line up on their sides of the field. When there is more than one eligible receiver on a particular side, the primary key is the eligible receiver on the end of the line of scrimmage (the tight end or split end). Any flanker, slot back or motion man is a secondary key.

Motion

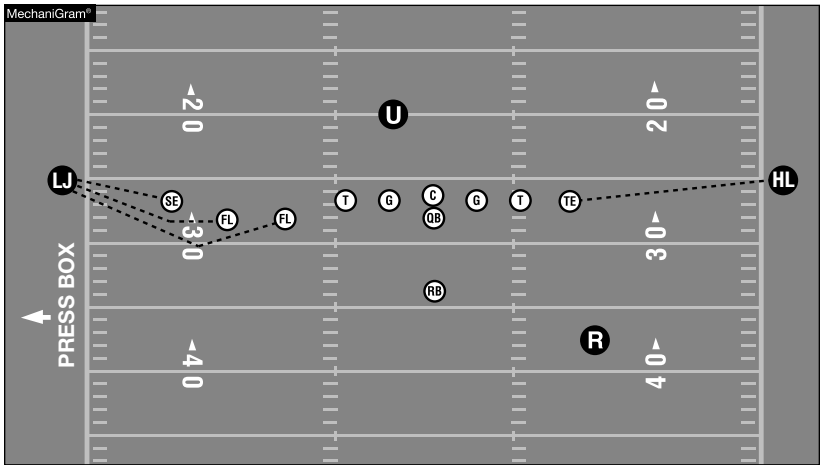
Legality of motion is always the responsibility of the line of scrimmage official from where the motion originates. Once the player crosses the snapper, the opposite line of scrimmage official assumes responsibility of legality of motion. If the player doubles back toward his original position, the line of scrimmage official initially responsible remains responsible.

BALANCED FORMATION



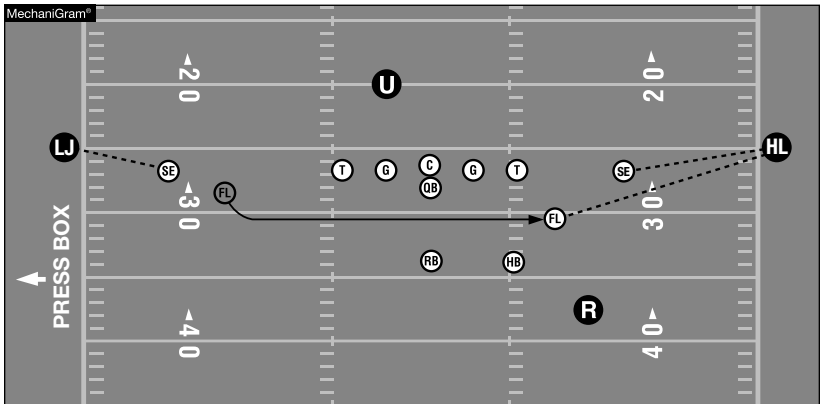
In this balanced formation, there are two receivers outside of the tackles on either side of the formation. The wing officials' main key is the widest receiver (in this case, the split end); the flankers are secondary keys.

TRIPS TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE



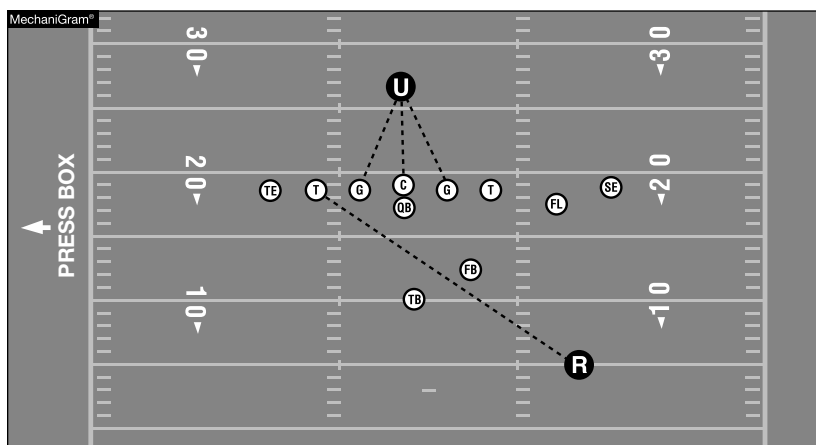
The wing official on the strong side keys on the strong side widest receiver (in this case the split end) and the two inside receivers are secondary keys. The weak side wing keys on the tight end. If another receiver motions or sets to his side, the widest receiver becomes the key.

MOTION CHANGES FORMATION FROM UNBALANCED TO BALANCED



Strength was to the line judge's side, but motion changed the strength of the formation to the head linesman's side. The split end is the line judge's key. The flanker and the split end are the head linesman's keys.

REFEREE AND UMPIRE KEYS



In all but the rarest cases, the referee will key on the opposite side tackle. In all cases the umpire will key on the center and both guards.

3.4 Before and After the Snap

The referee is responsible for observing the huddle to ensure Team A is not violating substitution rules, identifying eligible receivers in the backfield, observing shifts and watching for false starts and other pre-snap violations by the offense. He also counts Team A on scrimmage downs and Team R on free kicks.

The umpire is responsible for ensuring that Team A has five players numbered 50 to 79 on the offensive line. The umpire should listen for defenders interfering with the offense's snap count, observe the snapper for snap infractions and observe the guards for false starts. He also counts Team A on scrimmage downs and Team R on free kicks. The umpire keeps track of the play clock when a visible clock is not used and should use a visible (upward movement of the arm) and audible count to warn Team A if 20/35 seconds have elapsed and the ball has not been snapped.

Before the snap, the wing officials identify the eligible receivers on their side of the field, assist the referee in monitoring substitutions, count to ensure Team A has no more than four players in the backfield and assist the umpire in checking the legality of uniform numbers of offensive linemen and receivers. If the receiver nearest the game official is in the offensive backfield, the wing uses the extended arm signal to alert the opposite wing. The wings count Team B players on scrimmage downs and Team K players on free kicks.

Forward Progress

The wing officials are primarily responsible for forward progress. Progress should be indicated by using the downfield foot. Keep your head up and observe players while marking a spot. Do not go around or jump over players to mark progress. Move into the field until you approach players, then stop.

If a spot is close to the line to gain, the spotting game official must come all the way to the spot where the play ended. Wait for players to clear your path and then continue to spot the ball.

The primary game official responsible for determining the forward progress spot is the game official who can actually see the ball when the play is declared dead — not based on what side of the field the play ends — usually from hash mark to hash mark.

3.5 Time-outs

Any game official should grant a valid time-out request and immediately stop the clock if it is running. That game official reports the time-out to the referee. The referee indicates the time-out by repeating the stop-the-clock signal and indicating the team being charged the time-out by facing the team and extending both arms shoulder high, giving two “chucks” in that team’s direction.

All game officials must record the number and team of the player requesting the time-out, the quarter and the time remaining on the game clock. The referee then confirms the number of time-outs each team has remaining. The head linesman and line judge inform the coaches on their respective sidelines of the time-outs remaining.

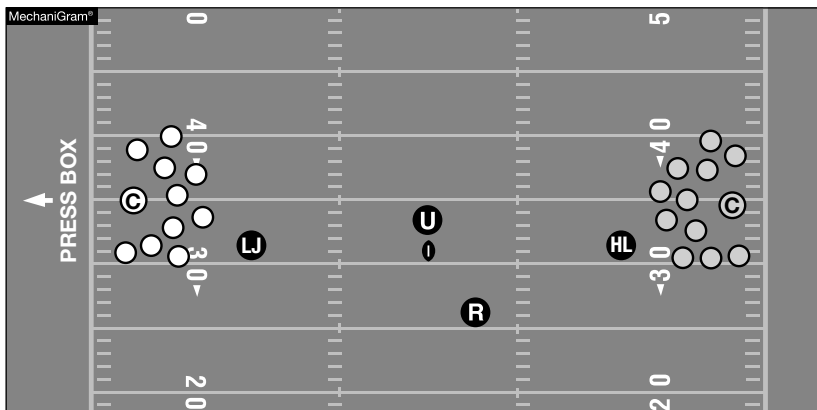
The referee is responsible for timing the time-out. The one-minute count begins when the referee is informed of the time-out. When 45 seconds have expired, the referee informs the head linesman and line judge so they can inform their teams. When the minute has expired, the referee whistles the ball ready-for-play.

The procedure for signaling an official’s time-out is the same as for a charged time-out. After stopping the clock, the referee has the option of tapping his chest to indicate it is an official’s time-out. Play should resume as quickly as possible.

If the official’s time-out is for injury, any team conference must be an “Outside 9-Yard Mark Conference” if approved by the referee.

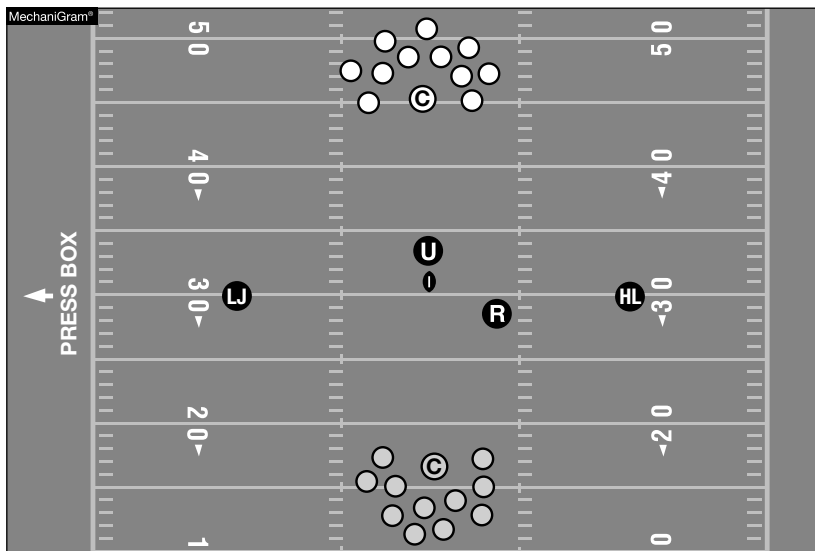
During time-outs, wing officials are responsible for monitoring conferences near your sideline. Help get players promptly back onto the field.

TIME-OUT WITH BOTH TEAMS AT THE SIDELINES



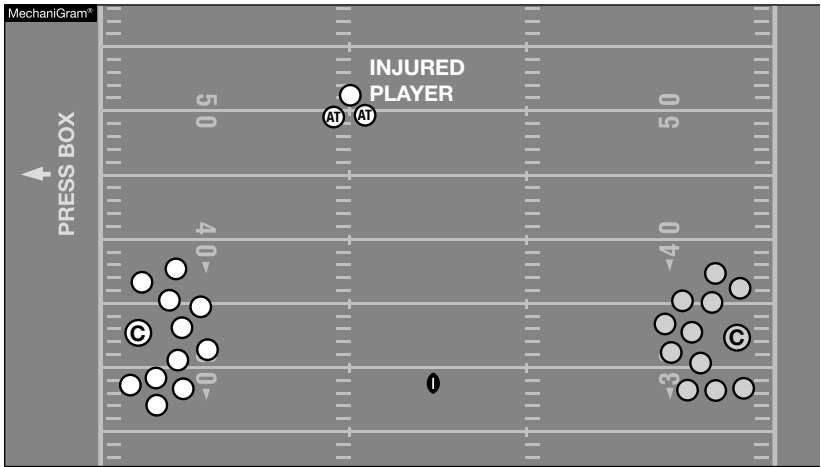
During the time-out, the referee remains in his position in the offensive backfield, the umpire stands over the ball and the head linesman and line judge should take positions midway between the ball and their respective sidelines.

TIME-OUT WITH ONE OR BOTH COACHES ON THE FIELD



During the time-out, the referee remains in his position in the offensive backfield, the umpire stands over the ball and the head linesman and line judge should take positions midway between the ball and their respective sidelines.

INJURY TIME-OUT



When an injury occurs and the referee grants an authorized conference, it must be an “outside the 9-yard marks conference.” That conference provides an opportunity for players to get water. If the injured player is between the hash marks and the numbers, the team whose sideline is affected should move away from the injured player.

3.6 Measurements

When the referee calls for a measurement, the line of scrimmage official should have the down indicator moved behind the lead rod. That is a reference point in case the line to gain should somehow become lost during the process. As the chains are being brought onto the field, the line of scrimmage official should use his foot to indicate the intersection of the 5-yard line where the chain is clipped and a line through the ball parallel to the sideline. That is the spot where the line of scrimmage official will place the clipped part of the chain.

The line of scrimmage official brings the chain in from the sideline with the line-to-gain crew members. Putting one hand on the links on each side of the clip improves the line of scrimmage official’s chances of keeping track of the proper link in case the clip falls off the chain. The clip must be placed on the back edge of the line for the measurement. A good double-check is for the line of scrimmage official to state that the next down will be first if the ball is beyond the rod or the next down of the series if it is short. (Example: “It will either be first or fourth.”)



Once the line of scrimmage official tells the referee he has the chain on the proper mark, the umpire takes the forward rod from the line-to-gain crew member, then pulls the rod to ensure the chain is taut. The referee rules whether or not the ball is beyond the front rod.

If the measurement is in a side zone and does not result in a first down, the umpire should keep control of the rod. As seen in the PlayPic on the previous page, the referee uses his hands (or thumb and index finger if the ball is inches short of the front rod) to inform both benches how short the play ended of a first down.

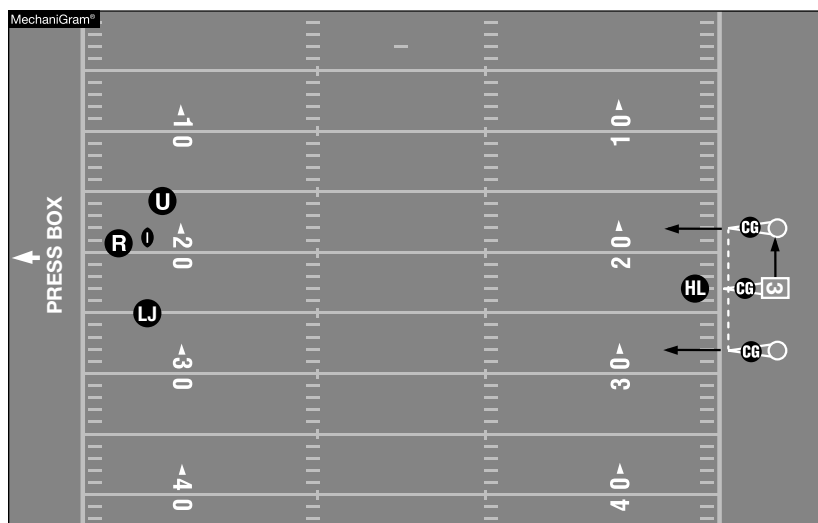
The referee grasps the chain at the link in front of the ball and rises. The referee should grasp the chain with two hands with the link that will be used to place the ball between his hands; that will ensure the proper link is maintained. Referee, umpire, line judge and head linesman walk to the nearest hash mark.

If the measurement occurred on fourth down and Team A is short, the referee signals the change of possession by giving the first down signal toward Team A's goal line. The referee then sets the ball in the same position as it was when it became dead so its foremost point becomes the rear point when the direction is changed. The new rear rod is then moved to the new foremost point of the ball.

If the measurement results in the award of a new series, the referee signals the first down. The line of scrimmage official need not hold the chain as he accompanies the line-to-gain crew back to the sideline, but he must go all the way to the sideline and indicate to the line-to-gain crew where the new series will begin.

Whether or not the result is a first down, the referee must wait for the line of scrimmage official's signal that the line-to-gain crew is back in position before giving the ready-for-play signal.

MEASUREMENT IN A SIDE ZONE



Action on the field: Play ends in side zone close to a first down.

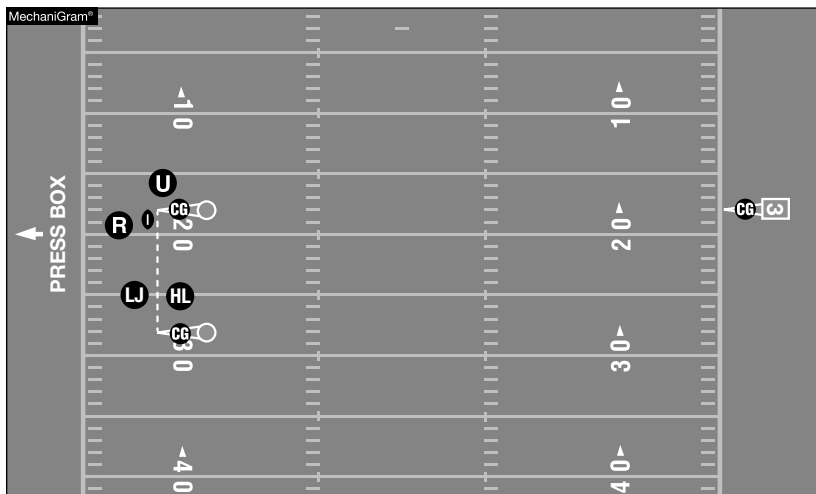
Referee: Stops clock after seeing that measurement is necessary. Waits at spot for arrival of line-to-gain crew. Secures the ball in place on the ground facing Team A's goal line.

Umpire: Marks the forward-most point of the football with a beanbag. Waits at spot for arrival of line-to-gain crew.

Head linesman: Has down indicator holder move down indicator behind lead rod. Brings chain in from sideline with line-to-gain crew members to spot indicated by line judge.

Line judge: Indicates intersection of the 5-yard line where chain is clipped and line through ball parallel to sideline with beanbag or foot.

SHORT OF A FIRST DOWN PART 1



Action on the field: Team A is short of a first down.

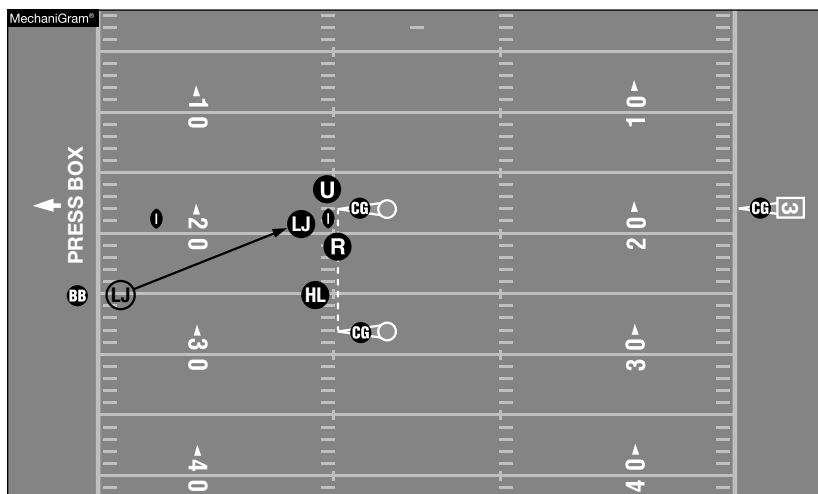
Referee: Rules whether or not ball is beyond front rod. Uses hands or fingers to inform both benches how short the play ended of first down.

Umpire: Holds lead rod.

Head linesman: Holds clip in place.

Line judge: Gets spare ball from ball helper.

SHORT OF A FIRST DOWN PART 2



Action on the field: Chains are moved to hash mark for ball placement.

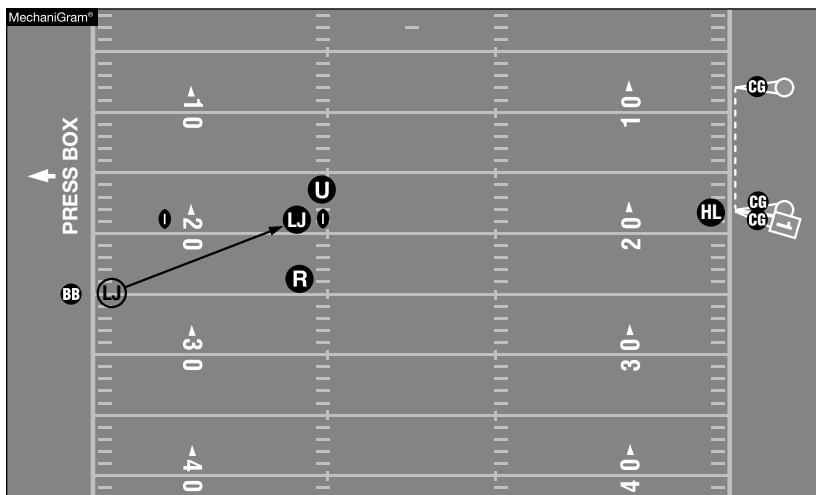
Referee: Grasps chain and rises. Walks to nearest hash mark. Sets chain on ground, maintaining link where ball will be placed. Gets ball from line judge and places it. Waits for head linesman's signal that line-to-gain crew is back in position and other game officials are ready before giving ready-for-play signal.

Umpire: Maintains control of front rod and walks to nearest hash mark.

Head linesman: Maintains control of clip and walks to nearest hash mark. Accompanies line-to-gain crew back to sideline and sets chains for next down. Signals to referee when line-to-gain crew is back in position.

Line judge: Delivers ball to referee for placement.

TEAM A AWARDED A FIRST DOWN



Action on the field: Team A is awarded a new series.

Referee: Signals first down. Waits for head linesman's signal that line-to-gain crew is back in position and other game officials are ready before giving ready-for-play signal.

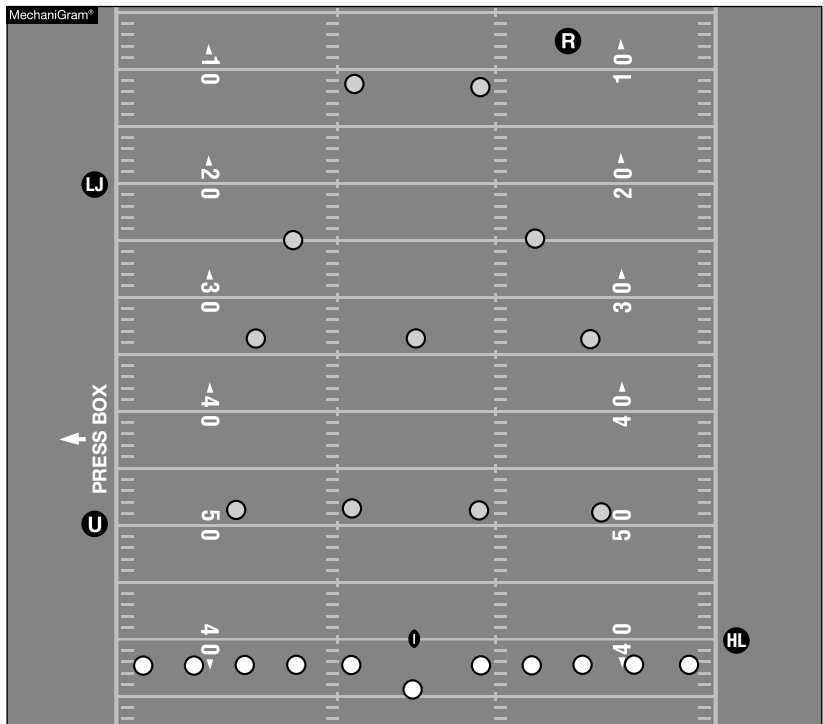
Umpire: Moves to hash mark where ball will next be snapped. Gets ball from line judge and places it.

Head linesman: Returns to sideline with line-to-gain crew and indicates where new series will begin. Signals to referee when line-to-gain crew is back in position.

Line judge: Delivers ball to umpire for placement.

3.7 Positioning

FREE KICK

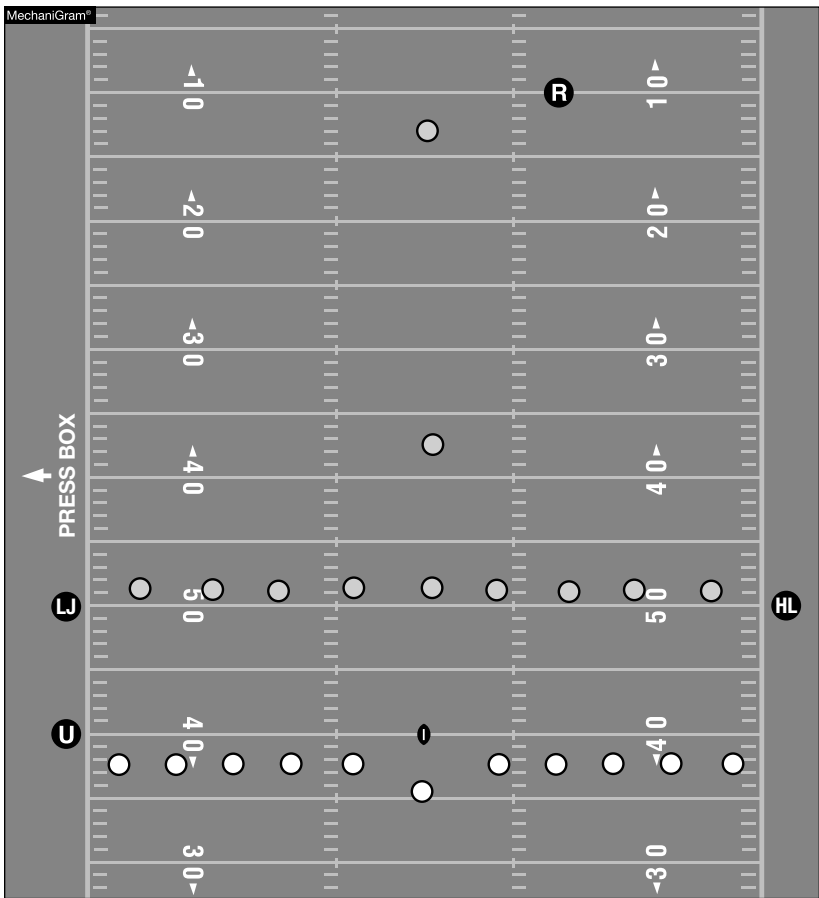


Referee: Starting position is near the top of the numbers near Team R's 5- or 10-yard line opposite the press box. The referee is responsible for noting whether Team K has at least four players on either side of the kicker. After getting ready signals from the rest of the crew and the kicker, the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal.

Line judge: Starting position is on the sideline at Team R's 20-yard line. The line judge signals the referee by lifting an arm overhead when he is ready for the kickoff.

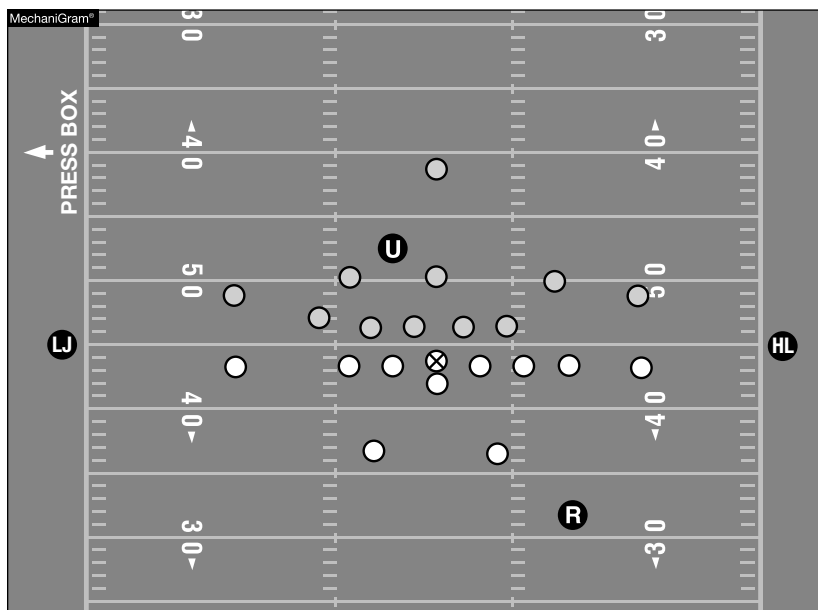
Head linesman and umpire: The head linesman is on Team K's free-kick line, the umpire on Team R's free-kick line. The head linesman moves toward the center of the field once the players are on the field and the umpire comes to the top of the numbers. The head linesman is responsible for noting whether no Team K player other than the kicker is more than 5 yards from Team K's free-kick line. The head linesman should not give the ball to the kicker until Team K has 11 players on the field and should remind the kicker not to kick the ball until the referee has sounded his whistle. When they are in position and ready for the kick, they should raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee.

ON-SIDE KICK



The head linesman and line judge assume positions on Team R's free-kick line while the referee moves up to about Team R's 10-yard line and the umpire moves to Team K's free-kick line. The referee is responsible for noting whether Team K has at least four players on either side of the kicker. The umpire is responsible for noting whether no Team K player other than the kicker is more than 5 yards from Team K's free-kick line. The umpire, head linesman and line judge should have their beanbags in hand to mark the spot if Team K first touches the kick and should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards. They should also observe the legality of Team K's blocking.

SCRIMMAGE PLAY

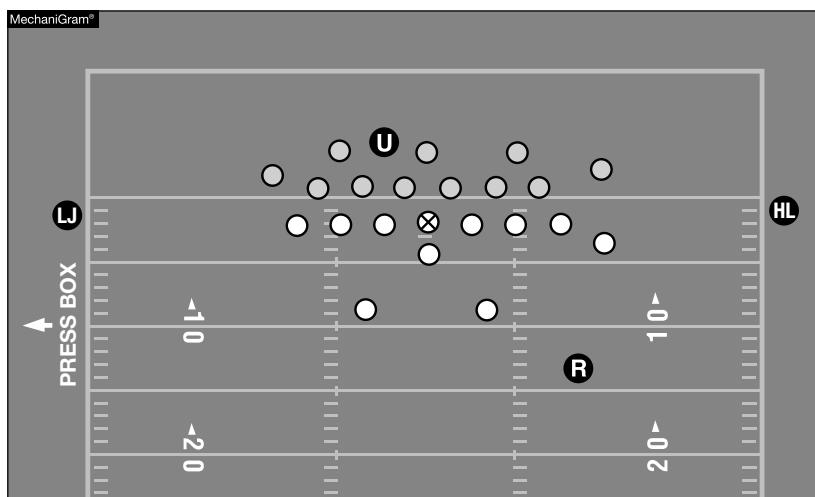


Referee: While Team A is in the huddle, take a position approximately 10-15 yards from the line of scrimmage and 5 yards wide of the huddle to be more visible to the clock operator. Once Team A is at the line, starting position is on the passing-arm side of the quarterback, approximately 10 to 12 yards deep and at least as wide as the tight end.

Umpire: Starting position is 5 to 8 yards behind Team B's line and between the defensive ends. The umpire must be able to see the ball from the time the snapper handles the ball until the time it is snapped.

Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage on the sideline. Working on the sideline is strongly encouraged.

GOAL LINE GOING IN



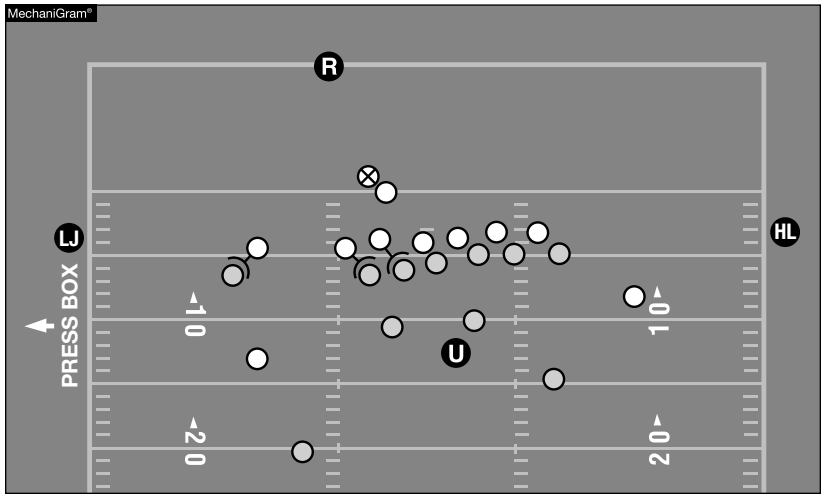
Referee: Starting position is on the passing-arm side of the quarterback, approximately 10 to 12 yards deep and at least as wide as the tight end.

Umpire: Starting position is 5 to 8 yards behind Team B's line and between the defensive ends. The umpire must be able to see the ball from the time the snapper handles the ball until the time it is snapped.

Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage on the sideline.

All: A touchdown, safety or touchback signal is given only by a game official who actually rules on the play. Mirroring the signal can cause problems; if the covering game official is incorrect, the crew will find it difficult to overcome two game officials making a mistake. If the covering game official is correct, there is no need for a second signal.

GOAL LINE COMING OUT



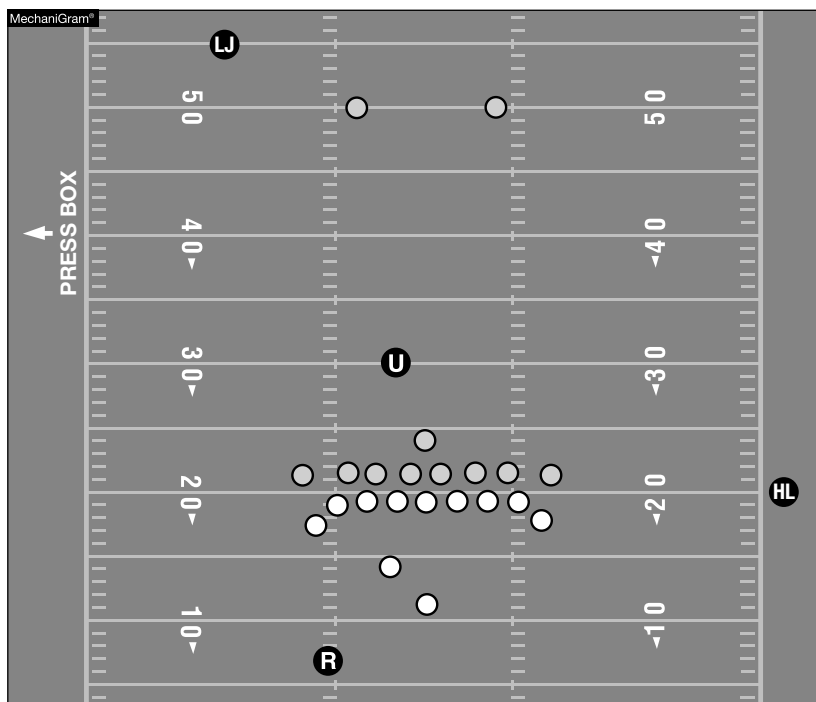
Referee: Starting position is on the endline, on the passing-arm side of the quarterback when snapping from the 10 yard line and in.

Umpire: Starting position is 5 to 8 yards behind Team B's line and between the defensive ends. The umpire must be able to see the ball from the time the snapper handles the ball until the time it is snapped.

Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage on the sideline.

All: A touchdown, safety or touchback signal is given only by a game official who actually rules on the play. Mirroring the signal can cause problems; if the covering game official is incorrect, the crew will find it difficult to overcome two game officials making a mistake. If the covering game official is correct, there is no need for a second signal.

SCRIMMAGE KICK



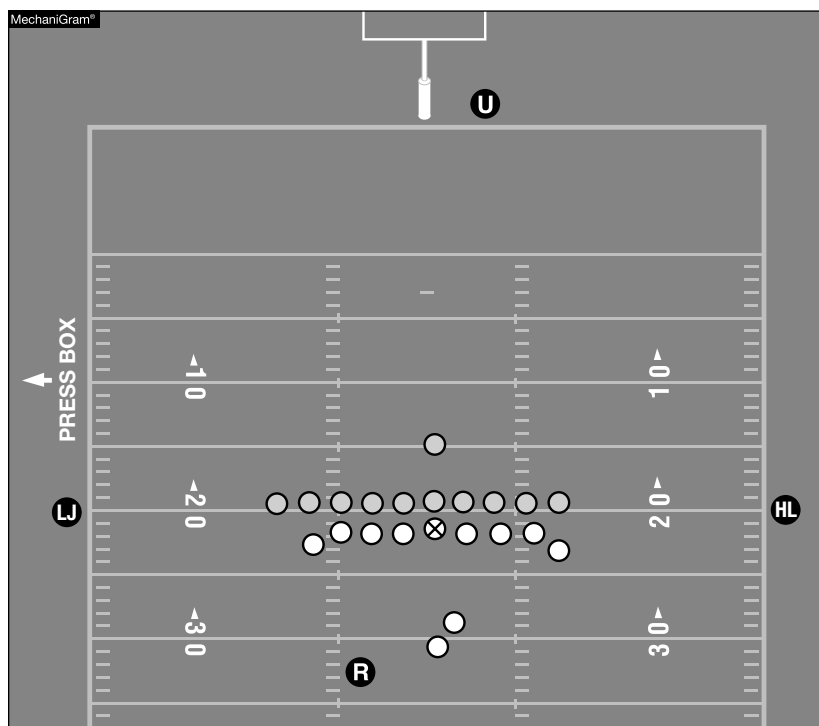
Referee: Starting position is 2 to 3 yards behind and 3 to 5 yards outside the punter, on the line judge's side.

Umpire: Starting position is 10 yards deep and favoring the line judge's sideline. Say, "Don't charge directly into the snapper," to remind Team R players about rules regarding contact on the snapper.

Head linesman: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage and more than 9 yards outside the widest offensive player.

Line judge: Starting position is 7 to 10 yards wider than and behind the deepest receiver.

SCORING KICKS



Referee: The referee faces the holder from a position about 1 yard behind and 2 to 3 yards to the side of the kicker. The referee is responsible for ruling if the kick is inside or outside the upright on his side, opposite the umpire.

Umpire: Starting position is beyond the end line and under the upright opposite the referee. Umpire is responsible for ruling whether the kick is above or below the crossbar, and inside or outside the upright opposite the referee.

Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage not closer than 9 yards outside the widest offensive player. The head linesman rules on roughing the holder and kicker.

NOTE: On a field-goal attempt by free kick, the chains are set to establish the 10-yard neutral zone. The referee is behind the upright and determines whether kick is successful. All other game officials' mechanics are the same as for a kickoff.

3.8 Coverage

Free Kicks

On kicks inside Team R's 5-yard line, the referee is responsible for determining whether the momentum exception applies and whether the kick is to be ruled a touchback.

The referee is responsible for a rectangular area on his side of the field extending from the goal line to Team R's 30-yard line and slightly more than halfway across the field.

The line judge is responsible for a rectangular area extending from the goal line to Team R's 30-yard line slightly less than halfway across the field.

The head linesman watches for infractions involving Team K's free-kick line. After the ball is kicked, the head linesman drifts downfield, maintaining coverage of his sideline. He should not go beyond Team R's 45-yard line in case the runner breaks off a long return and enters the head linesman's coverage area.

The umpire watches for infractions involving Team R's free-kick line. After the ball is kicked, the umpire drifts downfield, maintaining coverage of his respective sideline. He should not go beyond Team R's 30-yard line in case the runner breaks off a long return and enters the head linesman's coverage area.

If the kick goes out-of-bounds, the covering game official is responsible for either dropping a beanbag (if Team R caused the ball to go out-of-bounds) or a penalty marker (if Team K caused the ball to go out-of-bounds). Game officials trailing the runner must clean up after the play.

The covering game official signals the clock to start if he sees the ball is touched other than first touching by Team K. The covering game official is also responsible for signaling the clock to stop if the runner is downed in his area or if the ball goes out-of-bounds. All game officials not responsible for the runner must look for illegal blocks.

Free Kicks After a Safety

For the free kick that follows a safety, the head linesman should be at Team K's 20-yard line, the umpire at Team R's free-kick line and the position of the remaining game officials is adjusted accordingly.

Scrimmage Plays

The referee focuses on the ball, the runner and the blocking around the runner. If the play goes to the opposite side, the referee should move toward or parallel to the line of the scrimmage and maintain a position approximately in line with the runner. If the play is to the referee's side, the referee moves behind the play and is responsible for the runner until he crosses the neutral zone or turns upfield. The referee is generally responsible for determining if a pass made from behind the neutral zone is backward or forward, but there are exceptions to this mechanic. For example, in the case of quick passes made to the flat, the wing officials must assist the referee in making that determination. Additionally, if the passer is threatened, the wing officials must be ready to assist in determining the initial

direction of the pass. The responsibility for initial direction of the pass should be discussed during the pregame meeting.

The referee should watch the handoff or the pitchout, see the runner head outside the free blocking zone, and watch to see that no one contacts the quarterback before drifting along to follow the play. On runs that end out-of-bounds behind the neutral zone, the referee may assist in marking the spot.

The umpire observes the blocking to find the point of attack. When the hole opens, the umpire should move away from it (to avoid interfering with the defensive pursuit) and laterally (thus turning his head toward the blockers in front of the runner and the tackling efforts of the defense).

The head linesman and line judge observe the tackle on their side and read his block to determine the type of play. The wings move down the field trailing the runner. If the run is up the middle or in the wing's side zone, watch the action around and in front of the runner. When the play ends, square off at a 90-degree angle to mark forward progress. If the play is to the opposite side of the field, move into the field no farther than the numbers and observe players not directly involved in the play.

Sweeps require the referee, umpire and the appropriate wing official to react quickly. It is important for the referee to observe action around and behind the runner and for the umpire to observe action around and in front of the runner. Upon observing the pulling lineman and the formation of the wall in front of the runner, the wing official's first movement should be a step back (farther off the sideline) and upfield (into the offensive backfield). Once the runner is beyond the wing's position, he should not attempt to outrun the runner; rather, he should trail the play slightly and observe the runner and action around him.

When a play ends inbounds near a sideline but a first down has been achieved, the covering game official should give the stop-the-clock signal. It is not appropriate to give the "wind-the-clock" signal before the stop-the-clock signal if the play ended inbounds but a first down was achieved.

If a play moves into the side zone, the umpire may have to move outside the hash mark and toward the sideline in order to clean up behind the play. When play swings around to one side, the umpire should turn his attention to the blocking ahead of the runner and should prepare to cross outside the hash mark if the runner is downed in the side zone near the sideline. The umpire can help get the ball back to the hash mark and set it at the progress spot. He should not automatically halt at the hash and rely on other game officials to get him the ball.

If the runner is driven out-of-bounds less than 5 yards past the scrimmage line, the covering wing official can handle the play and supervise players outside the sideline after marking the out-of-bounds spot with his foot. When a play is more than a 5-yard gain and the runner heads across the sideline, the covering wing official marks the spot while keeping an eye on players; the referee or umpire must hustle to the spot and escort the players back to the field.

A play gaining considerably more than 10 yards may find the covering wing official policing activity past the sidelines. The covering wing official and the referee or umpire should work together to be sure the ball is properly spotted and off-the-field activity is monitored.

Goal Line Plays

When the ball is snapped between Team B's 15-yard line and the goal line, the wing officials release slowly downfield at the snap, staying ahead of the runner all the way to the goal line. The referee has primary responsibility for determining the initial direction of a pass made from behind the neutral zone.

The touchdown signal is given only by a game official who actually sees the ball in possession of a runner break the plane of the goal line. Mirroring the signal can cause problems; if the covering game official is incorrect, the crew will find it difficult to overcome two game officials making a mistake. If the covering game official is correct, there is no need for a second signal.

When Team A snaps the ball at or inside its own 7-yard line, the wings move quickly to the goal line in order to see if the runner advanced the ball completely beyond the goal line. If so, they cover the play and mark forward progress as usual. The referee has sole responsibility for determining the initial direction of a pass made from behind the neutral zone.

Scrimmage Kicks

Once the kick is away, the referee takes a quick look to see the flight of the ball. If the kick is toward a sideline, he must be prepared to determine the spot the ball went out-of-bounds. If the kick is short, the referee goes directly to the out-of-bounds spot; if the kick is long and goes out-of-bounds, the covering game official moves past where he thinks it flew out before walking toward the referee with his hand up — along the sideline — until the referee chops downward, telling him to halt.

If the runner breaks a long return, the referee may assume responsibility for the runner. On blocked kicks, the referee should be ready to rule on the recovery and observe the advance of any player who runs with a recovered ball.

The umpire should move toward the line at the snap. Once the ball has been kicked and players from both teams have run past the umpire, the umpire pivots to the line judge's side and moves slowly downfield.

The head linesman doesn't move downfield until the ball is beyond the neutral zone. The head linesman is primarily responsible for determining if the ball crossed the line. The head linesman is responsible for his sideline from end line to end line and for covering the runner when the return is to his area. If the run is to the opposite sideline, he should clean up behind the play.

If the kick is short and in the head linesman's side zone, he must know who touched a loose ball; if the kicking team is first to touch the kick, a beanbag should be dropped at the spot of the touching.

When kicks go out-of-bounds, the covering game official should kill the clock at once. If the kick is short and toward a sideline, the referee determines the spot the ball went out-of-bounds. If the kick is long and goes out-of-bounds, the covering game official moves past where he thinks it flew out before walking toward the referee with his hand up — along the sideline — until the referee chops downward, telling him to halt.

On blocked kicks, the head linesman should be ready to rule on the recovery and observe the advance of any player who runs with a recovered ball. The head linesman must also be cognizant of a fake punt. If a pass to the head linesman's flat is used on the fake, the head linesman must know if the pass was forward or backward. If the kicker initially starts to run before deciding to kick, the head linesman may have to rule whether the punter was beyond the line when the ball was kicked.

The line judge is responsible for covering all kicks down the middle and to his side zone and should be prepared to get to Team R's goal line to rule on momentum exception or touchback situations.

All deep receivers are the responsibility of the line judge. He should observe the receivers and the players around them rather than the ball as it flies downfield. Remaining far enough away from the receiver to retain a wide-angle view and moving in at a controlled pace, with eyes searching, once the receiver has completed the fair catch helps the line judge look for illegal action around the receiver. In such cases, it is also a good idea not to have the whistle in the mouth; it is possible for a fair catch to be muffed and a whistle blown before the ball dribbles loose from the receiver's grasp.

The line judge is responsible for his sideline from the line of scrimmage to Team R's end line and for covering the runner when the return is to his area. If the runner breaks into the opposite side zone, coverage transfers to the head linesman and the line judge cleans up behind the play. On a return to the middle of the field, the line judge has responsibility for the runner until he gives up the runner to the umpire; the point at which the transfer occurs depends on how far downfield the umpire has drifted after the kick. The referee may take over coverage of the runner if the runner breaks off a long return.

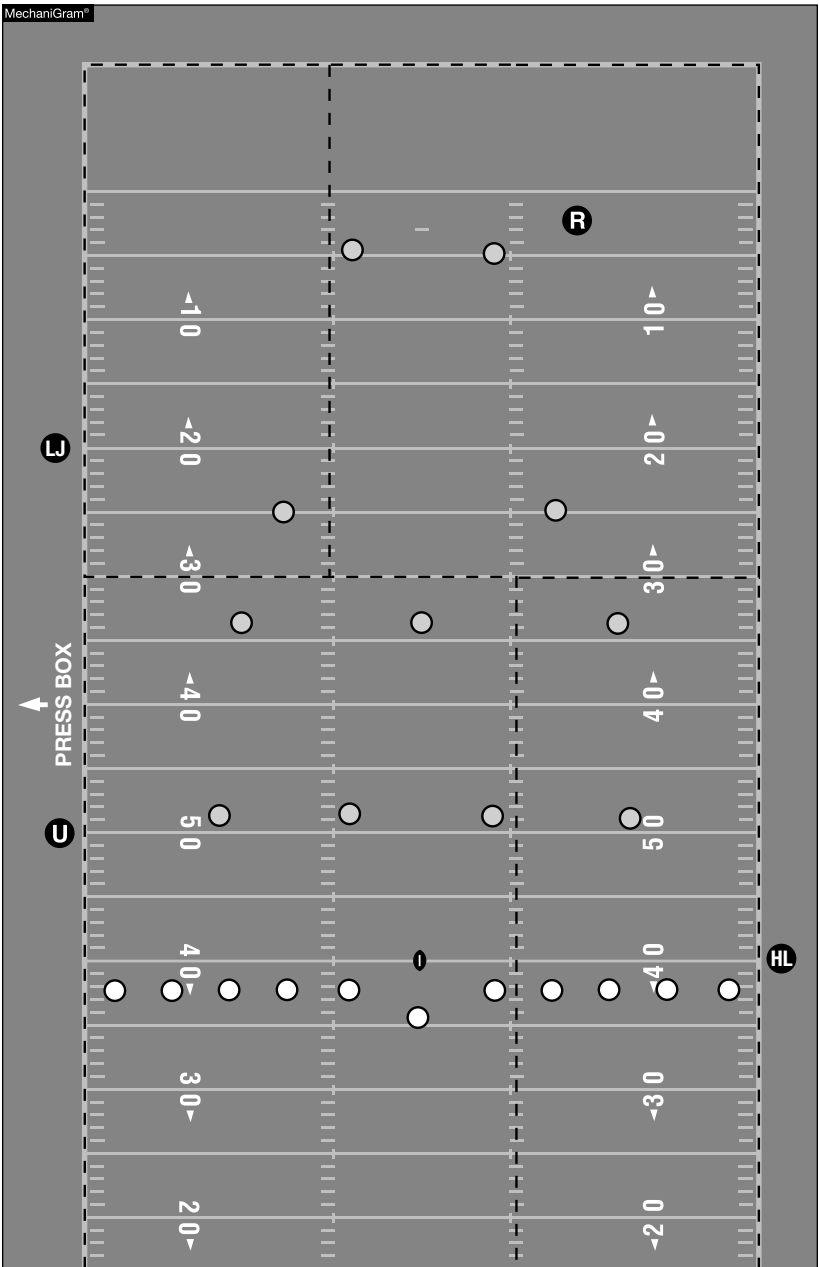
Scoring Kicks

If the kick fails because it goes under the crossbar or strikes an upright, the umpire signals the kick no good, then follows with the touchback signal. If the kick clears the crossbar, the umpire blows his whistle and gives a predetermined signal to the referee (a thumb's up is a common signal), but the referee rules on whether the ball went through the uprights. If the kick is good, only the referee signals.

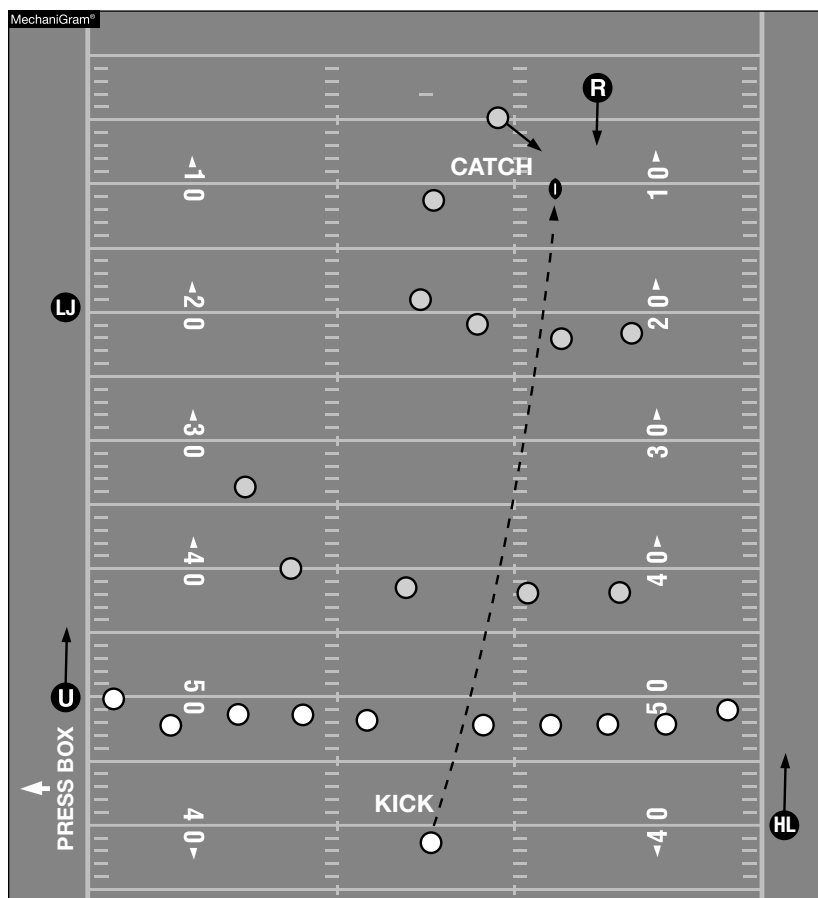
The line judge moves 5 yards behind and directly between the uprights and is the sole judge whether the kick is good or no good.

If the kick is no good and breaks the plane of the goal line, the umpire signals the kick no good, followed by the touchback signal. If a field goal is blocked and does not break the plane of the goal line, the ball remains live and no signal is given.

FREE KICK COVERAGE ZONES



FREE KICK PART 1



Action on the field: Receiver catches kick.

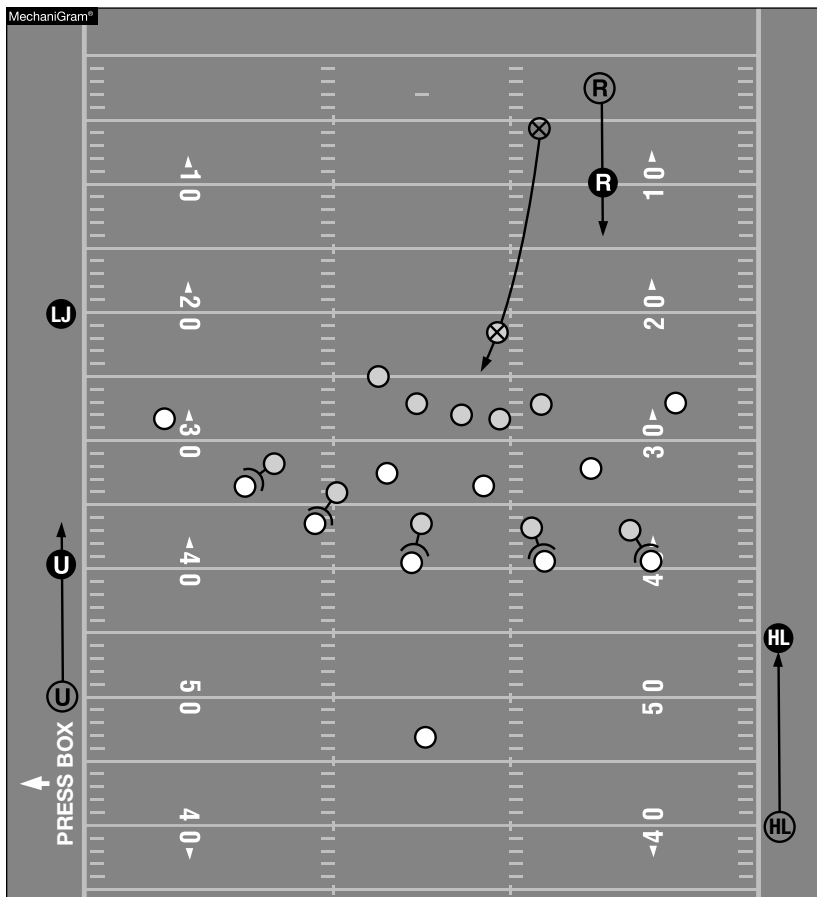
Referee: Observes action in front of receiver on his side of field. Moves slowly upfield.

Umpire: Watches for infractions involving free-kick lines. After kick, moves downfield and observes action in front of receiver on his side of field.

Head linesman: Watches for infractions involving free-kick lines. After kick, moves downfield and observes action in front of receiver on his side of field.

Line judge: Retreats to observe catch. Signals clock to start when ball is caught by receiver. Moves to stay ahead of receiver and observes action of runner during return.

FREE KICK PART 2



Action on the field: Receiver advances.

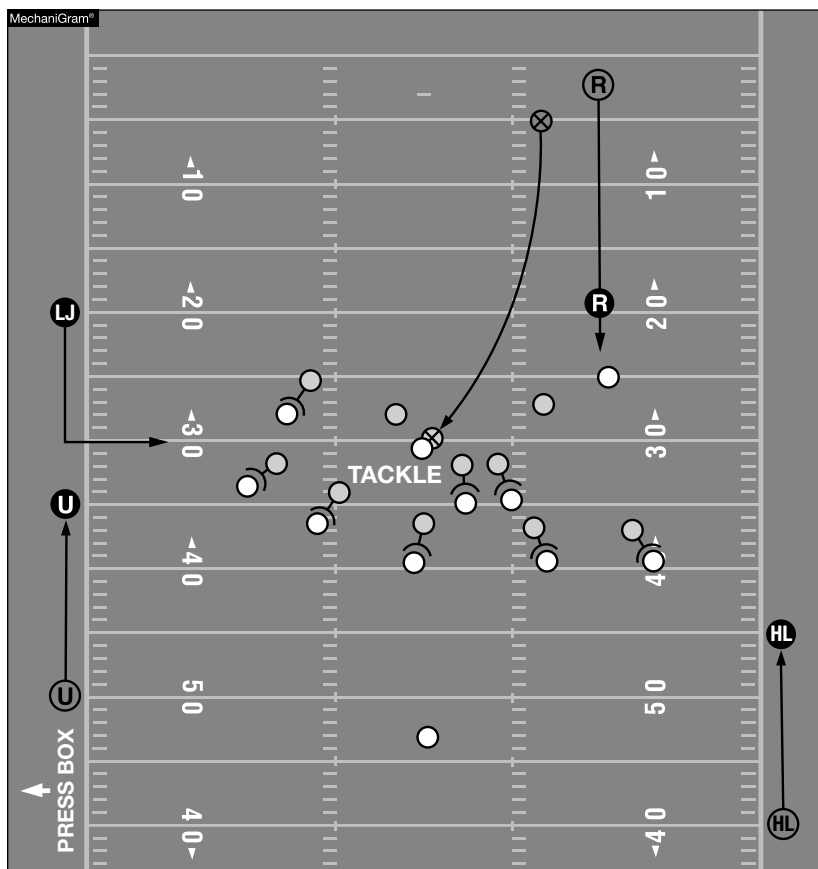
Referee: Observes action in front of receiver on his side of field. Moves slowly upfield.

Umpire: Stops 15 yards downfield from Team R's free-kick line. Observes action in front of receiver on his side of field.

Head linesman: Stops 15 yards downfield from Team K's free-kick line. Observes action in front of receiver on his side of field.

Line judge: Moves to trail runner and observes action by and in front of runner during return.

FREE KICK PART 3



Action on the field: Receiver continues advance and is downed.

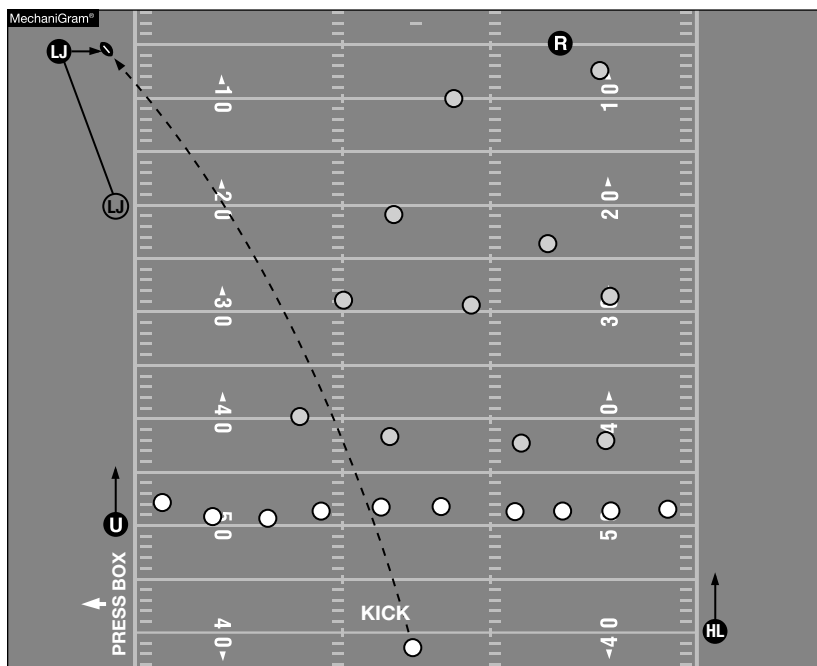
Referee: Moves upfield and observes action of players. Takes coverage of runner when runner enters his area (halo coverage). Blows whistle and gives stop-the-clock signal when runner is downed. Squares off and holds spot until umpire can mirror spot.

Umpire: Observes players.

Head linesman: Observes players. When referee signals possession for Team R, instructs line-to-gain crew to set chains for new series.

Line judge: Moves upfield and observes runner until runner leaves coverage area (halo coverage). Squares off to mirror referee's spot.

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 1



Action on the field: Kick becomes dead out-of-bounds.

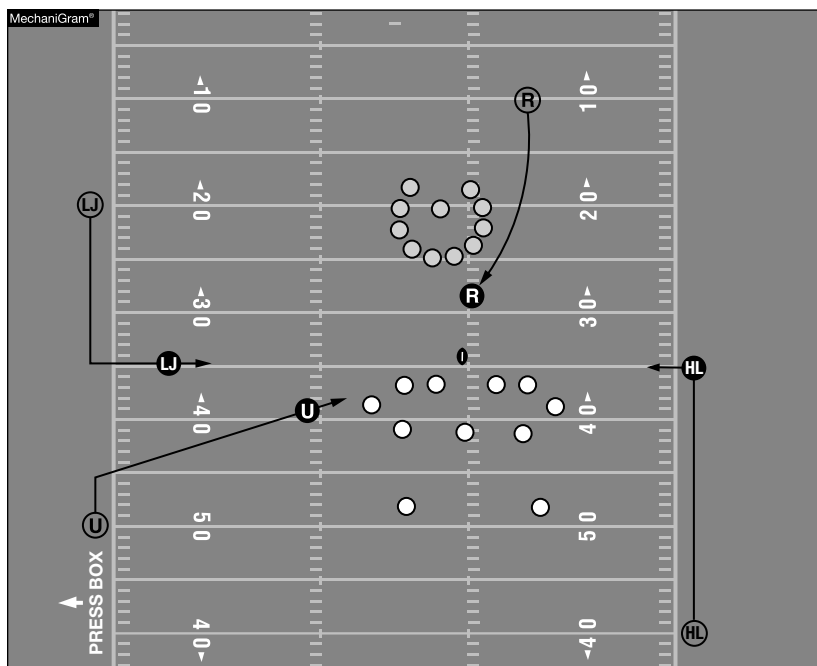
Referee: Observes action in front of receiver on his side of field.

Umpire: Watches for infractions involving free-kick lines. After kick, moves downfield and observes action in front of receiver on his side of field.

Head linesman: Watches for infractions involving free-kick lines. After kick, moves downfield and observes action in front of receiver on his side of field.

Line judge: Retreats to observe ball. Signals clock to stop when ball is out-of-bounds.

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 2



Action on the field: Team R chooses to take ball at its own 35-yard line (25 yards beyond the previous spot).

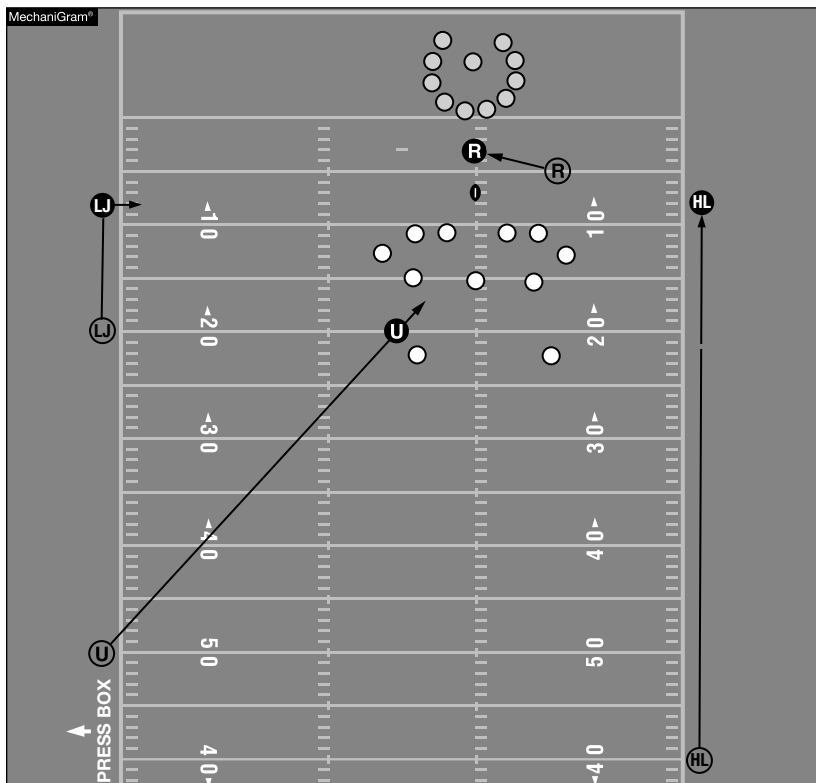
Referee: Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play with umpire. Obtains choice from Team R designated team representative. Signals Team K's foul and points toward Team R's 35-yard line, where ball will next be put in play. (If Team R chooses a rekick after enforcement, returns to position for rekick.)

Umpire: Mirrors spot at Team R's 35-yard line, where new series will begin. (If Team R chooses a rekick after enforcement, returns to position for rekick.) Moves to hash mark at Team R's 35-yard line to set ball for new series. (If Team R chooses a rekick after enforcement, returns to position for rekick.)

Head linesman: Moves downfield and observes action in his area. Moves to Team R's 35-yard line, where Team R will begin new series, assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains. (If Team R chooses a rekick after enforcement, signals Team K's foul, walks off penalty and returns to position for rekick.)

Line judge: Moves downfield and observes action in his area. Gives stop-the-clock signal when ball goes out-of-bounds. Communicates result of play with referee.

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 3



Action on the field: Team R caused kick to go out-of-bounds.

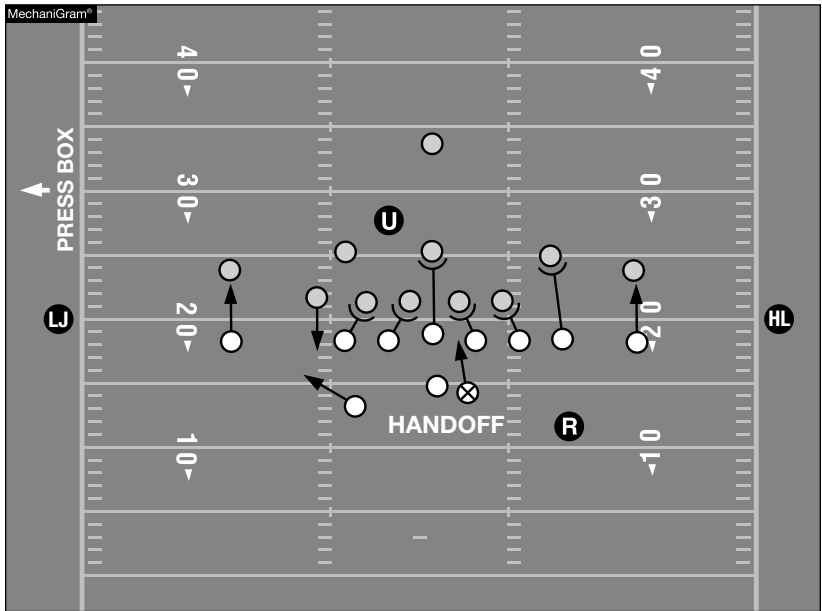
Referee: Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play with umpire. Signals new series will begin at spot where kick went out-of-bounds.

Umpire: Moves downfield and observes action in his area. Mirrors head linesman's spot where new series will begin. Moves to hash mark where new series will begin and sets ball.

Head linesman: Moves downfield and observes action in his area. Takes spot where new series will begin from umpire and assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains.

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Gives stop-the-clock signal when ball goes out-of-bounds. Communicates result of play with referee.

RUNNING PLAY UP THE MIDDLE PART 1



Action on the field: Handoff to back.

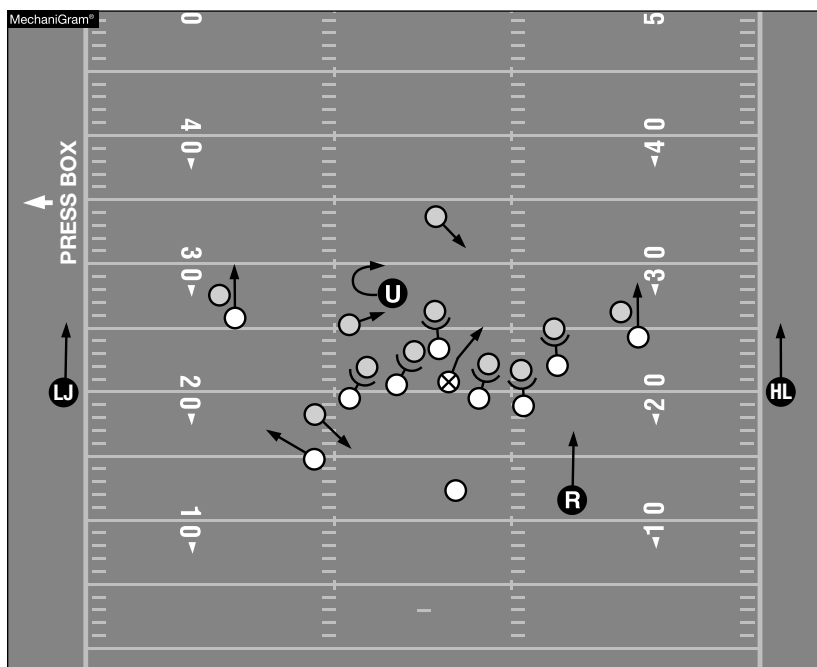
Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Observes handoff and action around quarterback after handoff.

Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there.

Head linesman: Reads blocking of split end and reads run. Observes initial line charge.

Line judge: Reads blocking of split end and reads run. Observes initial line charge.

RUNNING PLAY UP THE MIDDLE PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances.

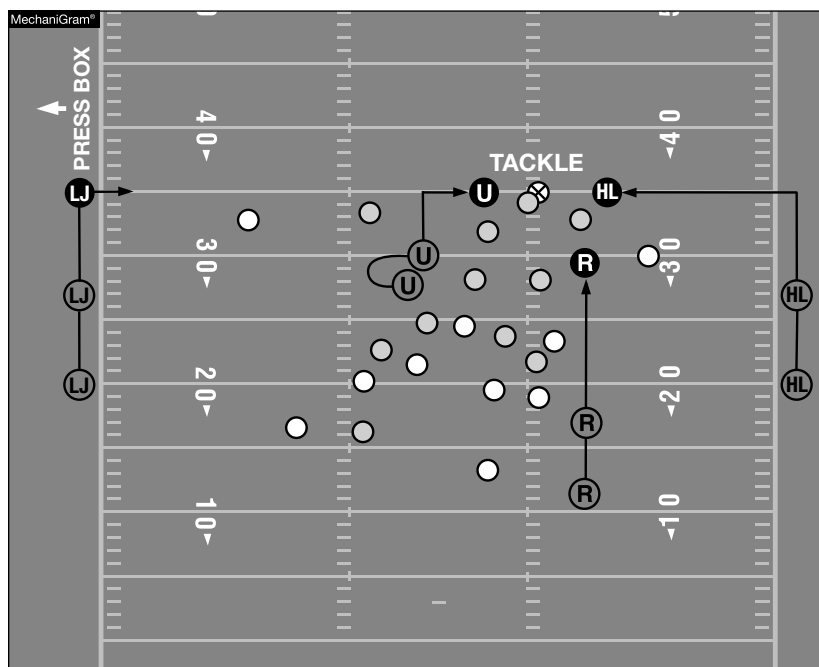
Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes action behind runner.

Umpire: Steps back to avoid interfering with play and pivots to observe play. Observes runner and action around runner (halo principle).

Head linesman: Moves slowly downfield and observes action in front of runner.

Line judge: Moves slowly downfield and observes action in front of runner.

RUNNING PLAY UP THE MIDDLE PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and is downed.

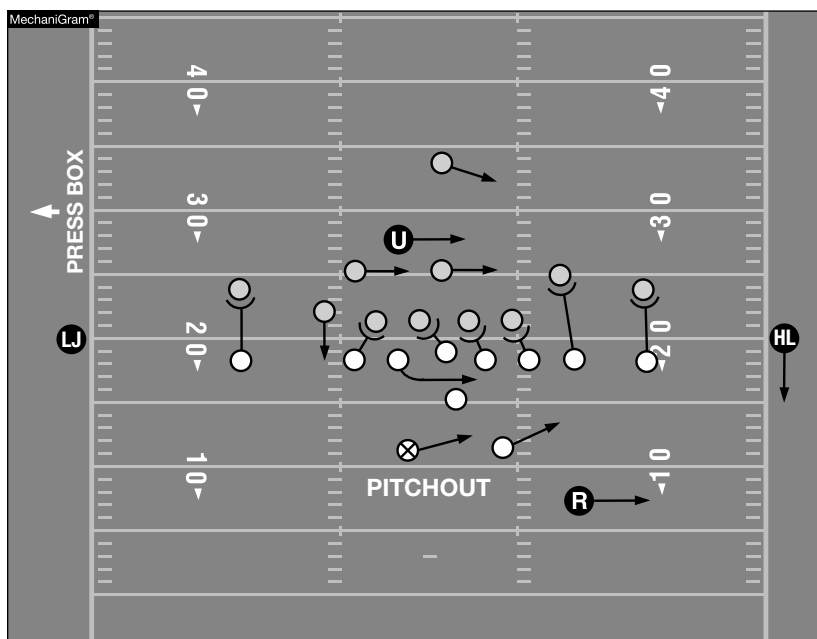
Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in his area. If first down has been achieved and no penalty markers are down, signals head linesman to have line-to-gain crew move the chains.

Umpire: Moves quickly downfield and observes action in front of runner. Squares off to mirror spot. Observes players. Sets ball for next down.

Head linesman: Moves quickly downfield and observes action around runner. Blows whistle when runner is downed. (If first down is achieved, also gives stop-the-clock signal.) Observes players. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. If first down has been achieved, gets signal from referee and instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot. Assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains for new series.

Line judge: Observes action in front of runner in his area. Squares off to mirror spot of forward progress. Observes players in his area.

SWEEP PART 1



Action on the field: Pitchout to back.

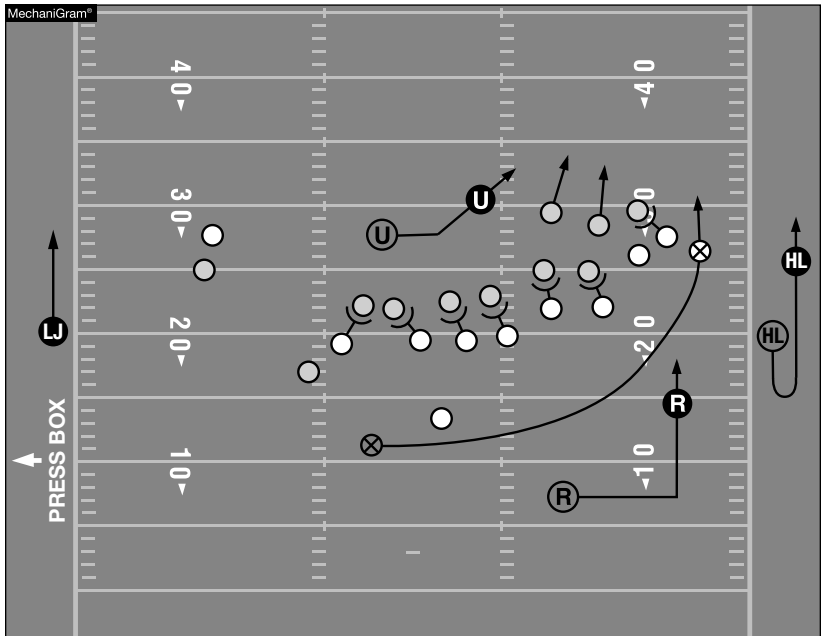
Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

Umpire: Reads blocking of pulling guard and reads sweep. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: Reads blocking of split end and reads run. Steps into offensive backfield. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Line judge: Reads blocking of split end and reads run. Moves slowly toward play. Observes blocking and action of players not involved in flow of play.

SWEEP PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances.

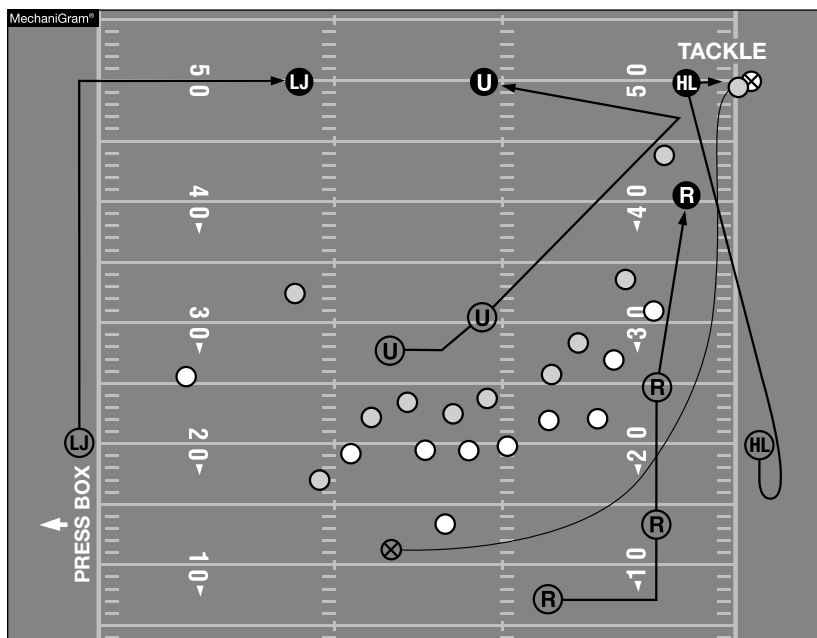
Referee: Gives up coverage of runner to head linesman (halo principle). Moves slowly downfield trailing flow and cleans up after the play.

Umpire: Pivots and moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: Takes coverage of runner (halo principle) and moves up the sideline trailing the runner. Observes runner and action around runner.

Line judge: Moves slowly downfield and cleans up after the play.

SWEEP PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and is downed out-of-bounds.

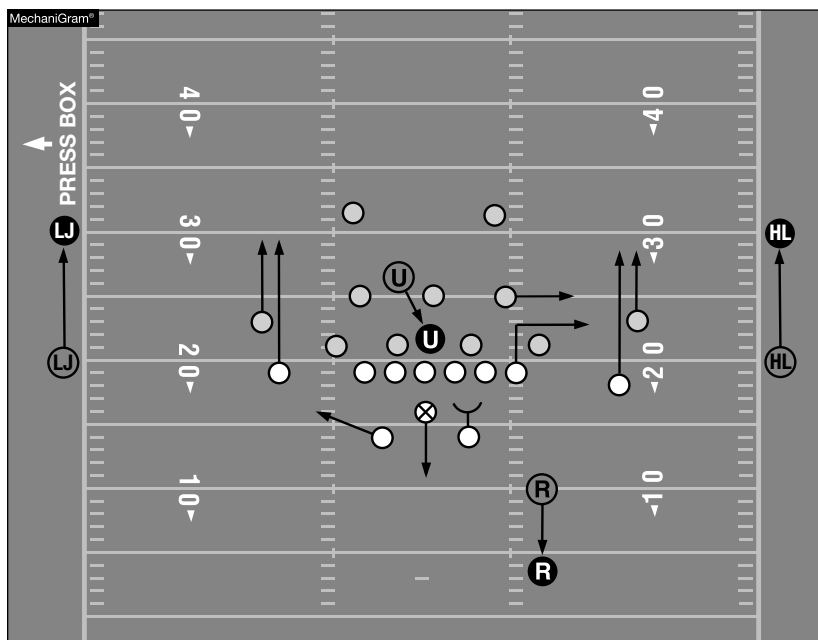
Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. If first down has been achieved and no penalty markers are down, signals head linesman to have line-to-gain crew move the chains.

Umpire: Moves downfield and observes players in front of the ball. Hustles to dead-ball spot to prevent post-play action. Once all players have returned to field, hustles to hash mark to set ball for next down.

Head linesman: Continues to move downfield and observes runner and action around runner all the way down sideline. Blows whistle and gives stop-the-clock signal when runner steps out-of-bounds. Uses inside-out look to observe players and squares off to mark spot of forward progress. If necessary, drops beanbag to indicate spot and moves out-of-bounds to stop post-play action. Holds spot until umpire arrives to set ball for new series. If first down has been achieved, gets signal from referee and instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot. Assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains for new series.

Line judge: Moves downfield with flow of play and cleans up after the play. Squares off to mirror spot of forward progress. Observes players in his area. Holds spot until released by umpire.

DEEP PASS PART 1



Action on the field: Quarterback drops back.

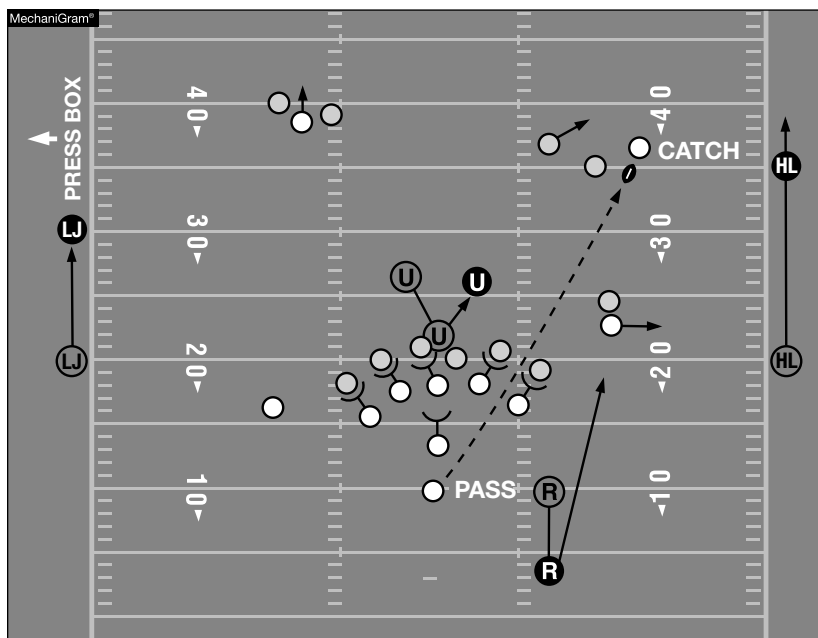
Referee: Keys on opposite-side tackle; reads pass when tackle retreats. As quarterback drops back, moves back to maintain distance between himself and quarterback. Observes blocking by backs.

Umpire: Observes presnap adjustments and legality of snap. Keys on center and guards; reads pass when linemen retreat. Steps up to the line of scrimmage and observes blocking.

Head linesman: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. Uses extended arm signal to alert line judge that end is in offensive backfield. Keys action of tight end and reads pass. Uses shuffle step to move slowly downfield and watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

Line judge: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. Keys split end and reads pass. Uses shuffle step to move slowly downfield and watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

DEEP PASS PART 2



Action on the field: Receiver catches pass and advances.

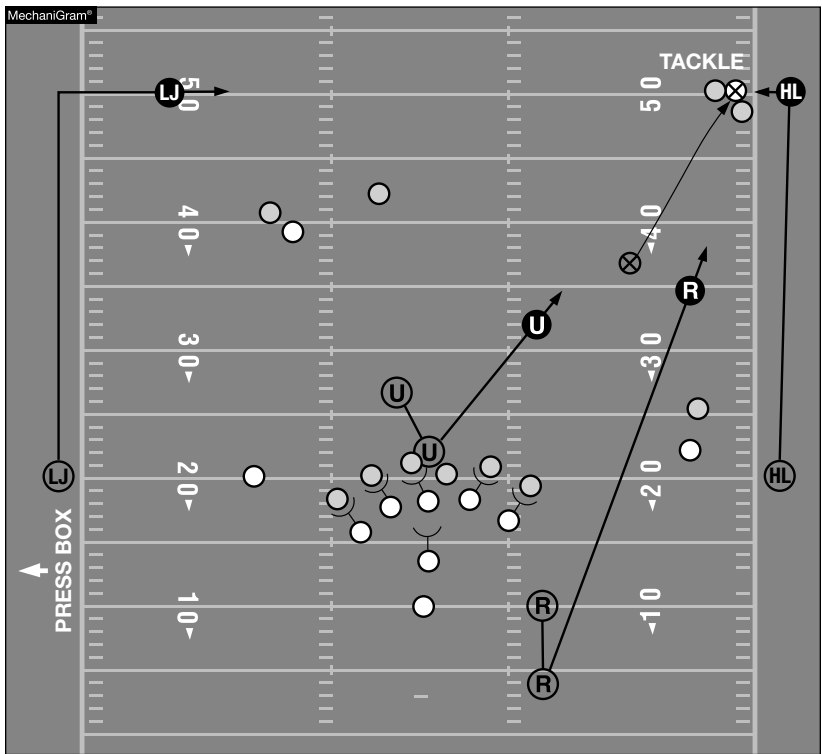
Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. If players land in team area, hustles to sideline to observe action.

Umpire: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. Once spot is established, hustles to hash mark to set ball for next down.

Head linesman: Blows whistle when receiver is downed. Gives stop-the-clock signal if first down has been achieved. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. Observes any players who may land in team area.

Line judge: Continues moving downfield and observes players in his area. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress.

DEEP PASS PART 3



Action on the field: Runner advances and is downed.

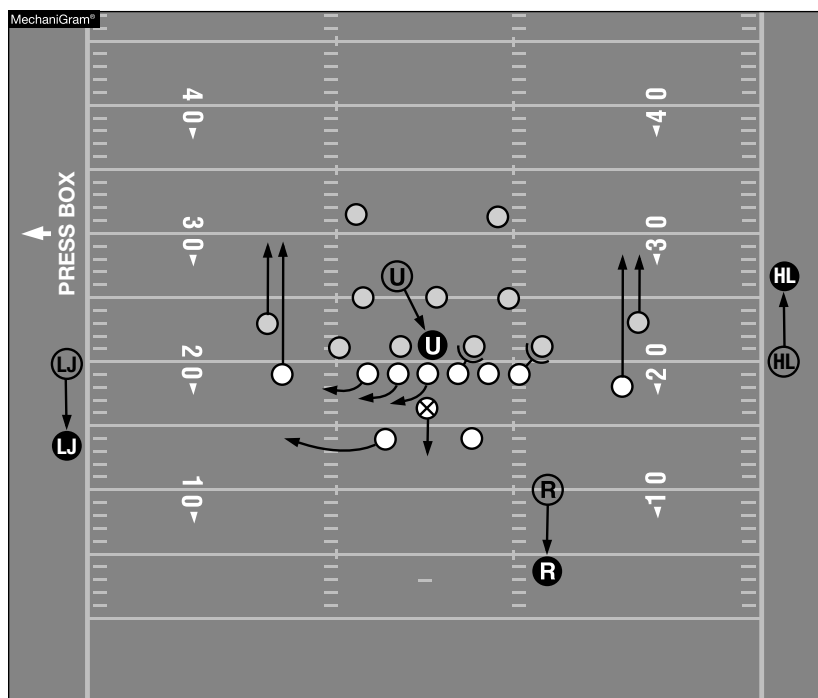
Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. If players land in team area, hustles to sideline to observe action.

Umpire: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. Once spot is established, hustles to hash mark to set ball for next down.

Head linesman: Blows whistle when receiver is downed. Gives stop-the-clock signal if first down has been achieved. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. Observes any players who may land in team area.

Line judge: Continues moving downfield and observes players in his area. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress.

SCREEN OR PASS TO FLAT PART 1



Action on the field: Quarterback drops back.

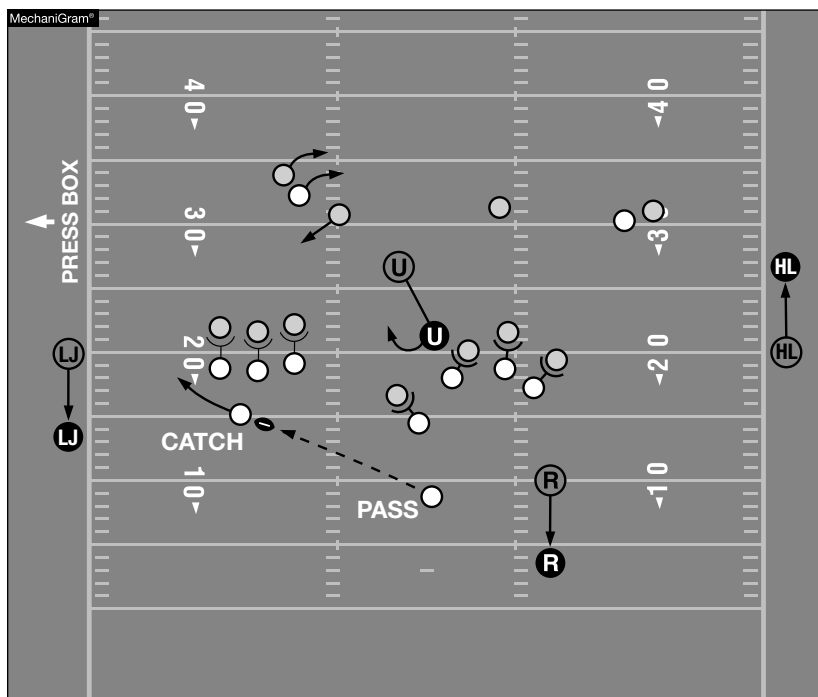
Referee: Keys on opposite-side tackle; reads screen or draw when tackle pulls. As quarterback drops back, moves back to maintain distance between himself and quarterback. Observes blocking by backs.

Umpire: Observes presnap adjustments and legality of snap. Keys on center and guards; reads screen or draw when linemen pull. Steps up to the line of scrimmage and observes blocking.

Head linesman: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. Uses extended arm signal to alert line judge that end is in offensive backfield. Reads blocking of tight end and reads run. Moves slowly downfield and watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

Line judge: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. After snap, observes initial blocking; reads screen or draw when tackle pulls. Moves into offensive backfield to cover receiver out of backfield.

SCREEN OR PASS TO FLAT PART 2



Action on the field: Back catches pass and begins advance.

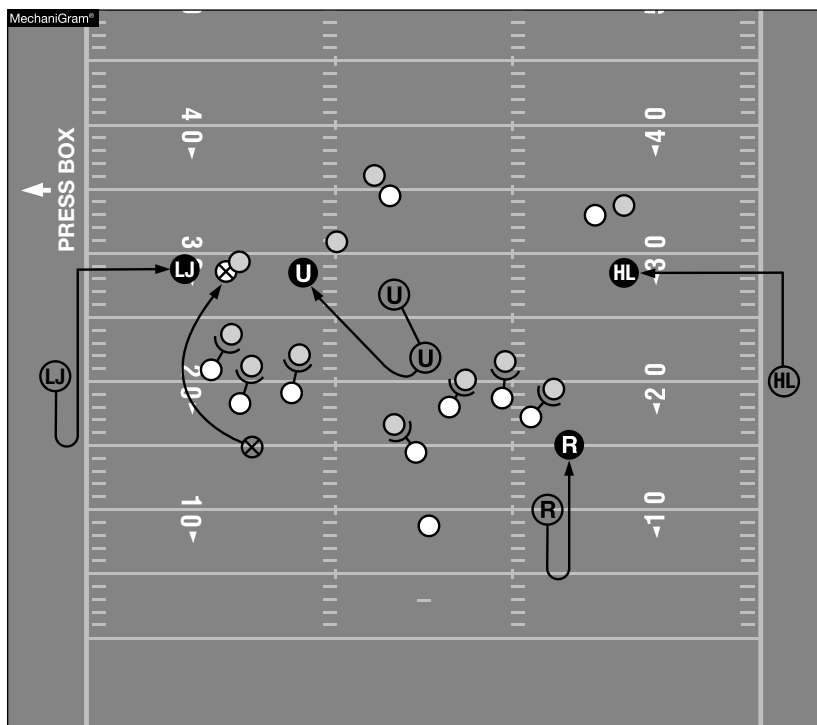
Referee: Observes passer. Looks to line judge for either backward pass signal, incomplete pass signal or no signal (complete forward pass).

Umpire: Pivots to follow flight of the ball. Observes blockers in front of ball.

Head linesman: Moves slowly downfield and observes action of players in his area.

Line judge: Rules on whether pass is backward or forward. Observes action in front of runner.

SCREEN OR PASS TO FLAT PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and is downed.

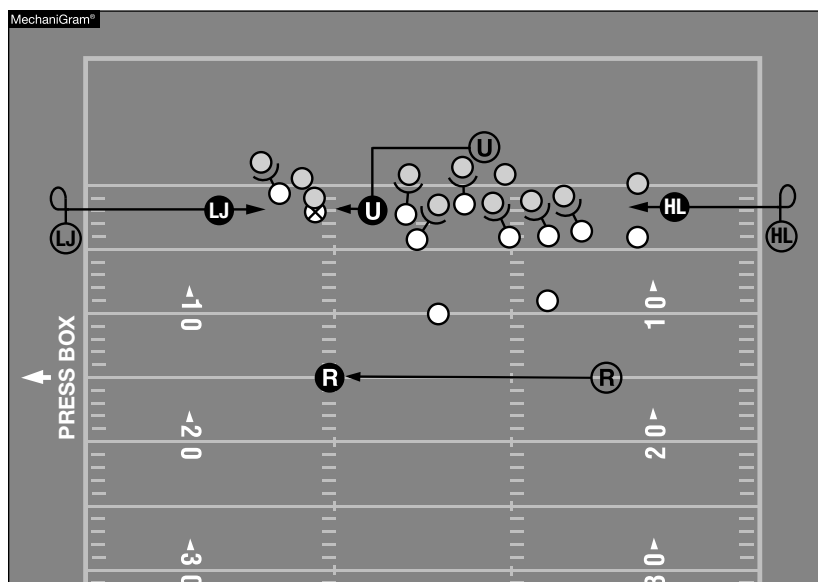
Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball.

Umpire: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. When runner is downed, hustles to hash mark to set ball for next down.

Head linesman: Continues to move slowly downfield and observes players in his area. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress.

Line judge: Moves downfield with runner. Observes action of runner and players around runner (halo principle). Blows whistle when receiver is downed. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. Stops clock if first down has been achieved.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN



Action on the field: Handoff to back.

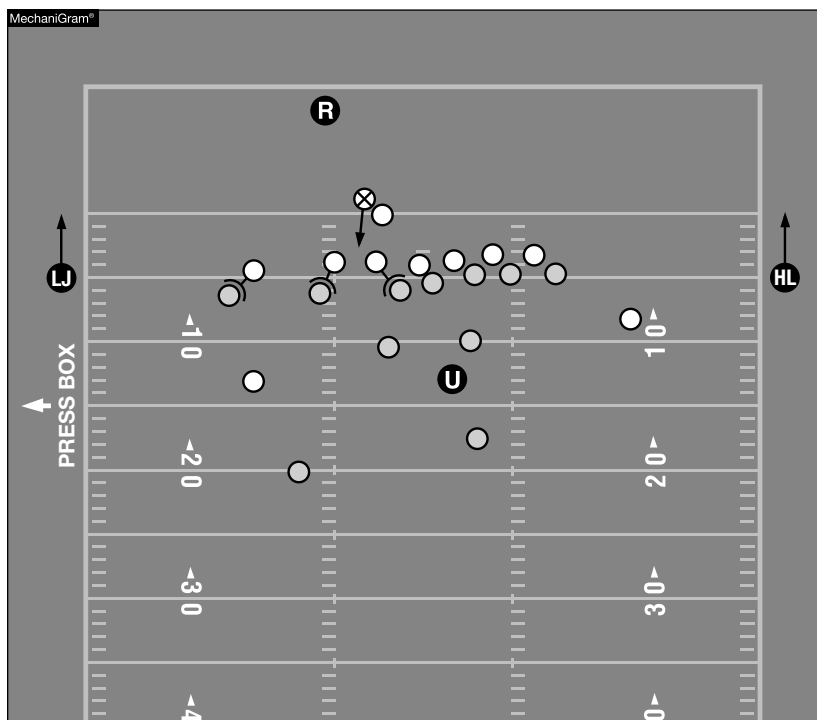
Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner. If run results in a touchdown, observes signal of covering game official and signals touchdown to press box.

Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: On plays snapped outside the 7-yard line, line of scrimmage officials are responsible for the goal line. When the ball is snapped on or inside the 7-yard line, line of scrimmage officials move immediately to the goal line at the snap. Reads blocking of tight end and reads run. Observes initial blocking. If ball in runner's possession breaks plane of the goal line in coverage area, signals touchdown. If runner downed short of goal line, officiates back to the ball and marks progress.

Line judge: On plays snapped outside the 7-yard line, line of scrimmage officials are responsible for the goal line. When the ball is snapped on or inside the 7-yard line, line of scrimmage officials move immediately to the goal line at the snap. Reads blocking of split end and reads run. Observes initial blocking. If ball in runner's possession breaks plane of the goal line in coverage area, signals touchdown. If runner downed short of goal line, officiates back to the ball and marks progress.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE COMING OUT



Action on the field: Handoff to running back.

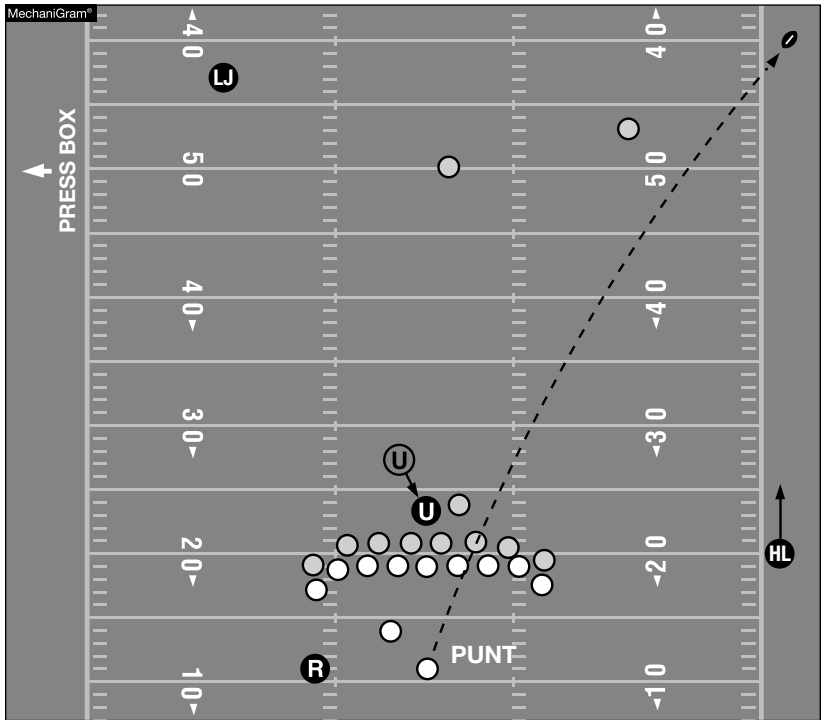
Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: On plays snapped between the 10-yard line and the goal line, moves immediately to the goal line at the snap. Observes initial blocking. If runner is in coverage area and is downed in end zone, signals safety. If runner advances beyond goal line, officiates back to the ball and covers play as usual.

Line judge: On plays snapped between the 3-yard line and the goal line, moves immediately to the goal line at the snap. Observes initial blocking. If runner is in coverage area and is downed in end zone, signals safety. If runner advances beyond goal line, officiates back to the ball and covers play as usual.

SCRIMMAGE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 1



Action on the field: Punt to head linesman's side.

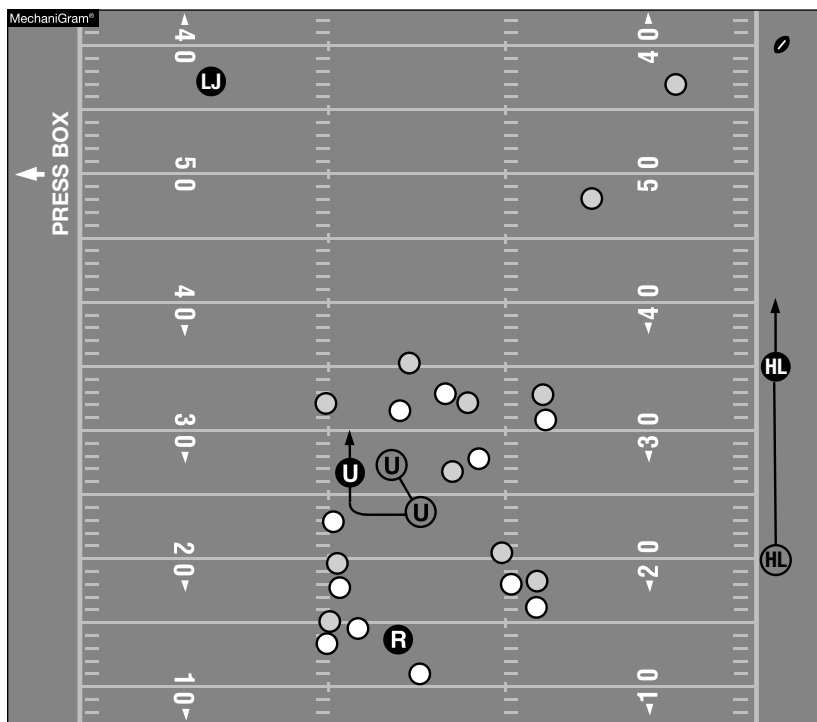
Referee: Observes snap and action around kicker.

Umpire: Moves toward the line at the snap, observing initial charge of linemen and contact on the snapper.

Head linesman: Observes initial line charge and remains on the line to rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. Moves downfield when kick crosses the neutral zone.

Line judge: Observes receivers. Moves to keep the receiver and the ball in front.

SCRIMMAGE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 2



Action on the field: Ball becomes dead out-of-bounds.

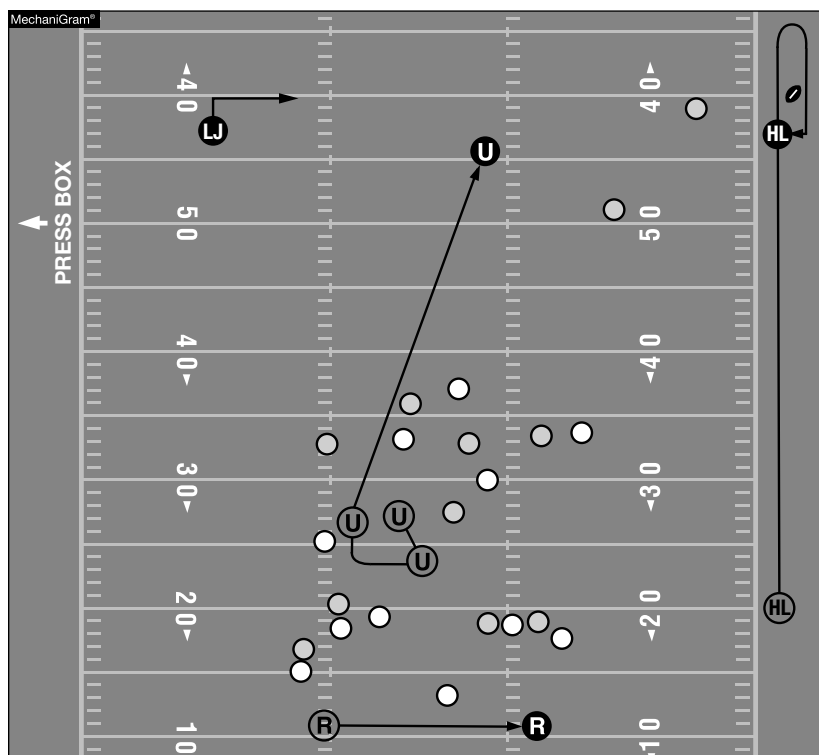
Referee: Observes flight of ball, adjusting position if necessary.

Umpire: Pivots toward the line judge's side of the field, moves downfield with flow of players and observes players as they move downfield.

Head linesman: Moves quickly down sideline, observing action of players moving downfield. Stops clock when he sees ball go out-of-bounds.

Line judge: Observes action of players in front of ball.

SCRIMMAGE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 3



Action on the field: Ball spotted for next down.

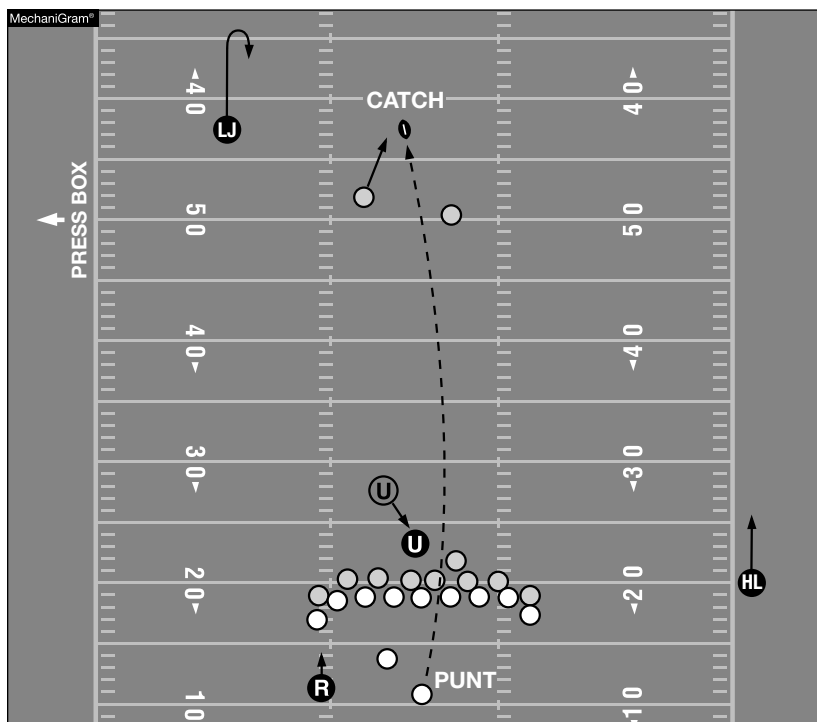
Referee: Moves parallel to line of scrimmage to ensure eye contact with head linesman. With arm above head, observes head linesman walking toward spot. When head linesman reaches spot, drops arm with chopping motion. When certain there are no penalty markers down, signals head linesman to move line-to-gain crew.

Umpire: Continues to move downfield and observes action of players in his area. Moves to hash mark to set ball for new series.

Head linesman: Moves 5 to 7 yards beyond spot where ball apparently went out-of-bounds, pivots and makes eye contact with referee. Walks slowly toward referee, stopping when referee drops arm with chopping motion. Signals first down for Team R. Upon signal from referee, instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot.

Line judge: Observes action of players in front of ball. Squares off and mirrors head linesman's spot.

SCRIMMAGE KICK TO LINE JUDGE'S AREA PART 1



Action on the field: Receiver catches kick in line judge's area.

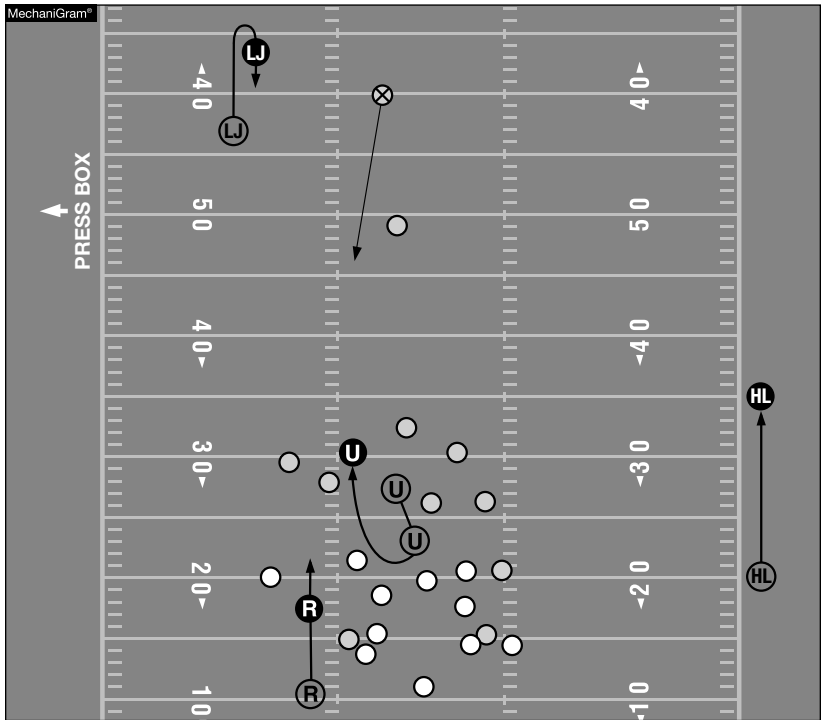
Referee: Observes snap and action around kicker. Moves slowly downfield with flow of players.

Umpire: Moves toward the line at the snap, observing initial charge of linemen and contact on the snapper.

Head linesman: Observes initial line charge and remains on the line to rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. When ball crosses neutral zone, moves downfield and observes players in his area.

Line judge: Retreats to observe catch. Drops beanbag to indicate spot where kick ended. Moves upfield behind runner, observing runner and action in front of runner.

SCRIMMAGE KICK TO LINE JUDGE'S AREA PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances.

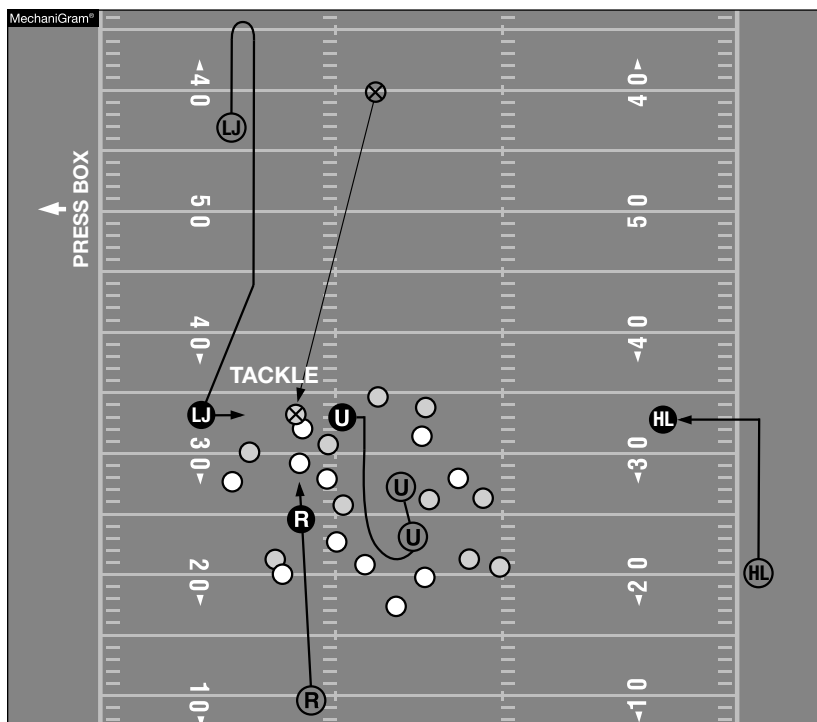
Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes action of players in his area.

Umpire: Pivots toward line judge's side. Moves with flow of players downfield and observes action of players in his area.

Head linesman: Moves down sideline and observes action of players in front of ball.

Line judge: Moves to stay no more than 10 yards behind runner as runner moves upfield. Observes action in front of runner. Line judge has sideline responsibilities.

SCRIMMAGE KICK TO LINE JUDGE'S AREA PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and is downed.

Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes action of players in his area. Hustles toward dead-ball spot. If no penalty markers are down, signals head linesman to have line-to-gain crew move the chains.

Umpire: Continues to move downfield and observes players in his area. Hustles to hash mark to set ball for next down.

Head linesman: Observes action of players in front of ball. Squares off to mirror spot of forward progress. When runner is downed, practices dead-ball officiating. Upon signal from referee, instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot. Assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains for new series.

Line judge: Blows whistle and gives stop-the-clock signal when runner is downed. Squares off to indicate spot of forward progress and practices dead-ball officiating. Holds spot until released by umpire.

Part 4

Crew of Five

4.1 Philosophy

Movement and compromise are the characteristics of football officiating. Twenty-two players are moving around, competing for space and position; the game officials must utilize hustle, angles, distance and planned compromises to observe and control the action.

Hustle

Hustle is an overused word today. Everyone knows it's needed to succeed, but what does it really mean when relating it to football officiating? Hustle to cover plays and to get into position is important regardless of how many game officials work a game. The fifth game official allows a crew to devote extra attention to players well downfield, such as those running pass routes or blocking ahead of the runner. But that does not diminish the need for all game officials on the crew to use their keys to anticipate plays and get into proper position to cover them.

Significant movement by all game officials is critical for proper field coverage. Hustle gives you a chance. That equates to more running and a well-placed concern for angles.

Movements

All game officials must work hard at understanding then obtaining proper angles. Your line of sight must provide you with an opportunity to view a developing play or part of a play. You must be able to see completely through the play, which means your vision must be unobstructed by the players directly involved in the play and others near the play.

When the ball is snapped, all 22 players are in motion. A game official's angle and distance adjustments are constant as play is in motion. A step or two in the right direction may open up a whole new viewing experience, free from obstruction; a step in the wrong direction will screen you from the critical game action.

A good back judge, for instance, works sideline to sideline. That improves dead-ball coverage when a runner goes out-of-bounds. On plays between the hash marks and the sidelines, a back judge gives the crew a second angle — one from the inside of the field looking out — to complement the wing official's outside-in view.

Movement also allows the non-covering officials to watch players away from the ball, the critical component to combating physical play. When a wing official moves off the sideline, he can watch the areas behind the run, where rough play often occurs.

The covering wing official also moves along the sideline to improve angles. There's usually at least three and sometimes six or seven players around the ball, either trying to throw blocks or attempting to make the tackle. Movement is critical to watching action around the ball. It's also paramount to game control.

Proper movements when the play is over are also important. Because the ball is live for only a few seconds every play, there is a tendency to think about spotting or retrieving the ball for the next play and forgetting about the players. If game officials ignore post-play action, players get physical with each other and game control suffers. All game officials must observe player action after the ball has been whistled dead.

Field coverage

Proper coverage is enhanced by good eye contact and a “feel” for where your crewmates are looking. You must learn about all aspects of football officiating to know what areas all members of the crew are covering. Once you've mastered that, practical onfield application develops through communication, including eye contact and understanding. At the risk of being obvious, you've got to know exactly what both you and your crewmates are expected to do in specific situations — then effectively communicate with your crewmates — to truly master football officiating. When you understand why angles and distance are important and how and when to obtain them, you'll find yourself in great position throughout each game.

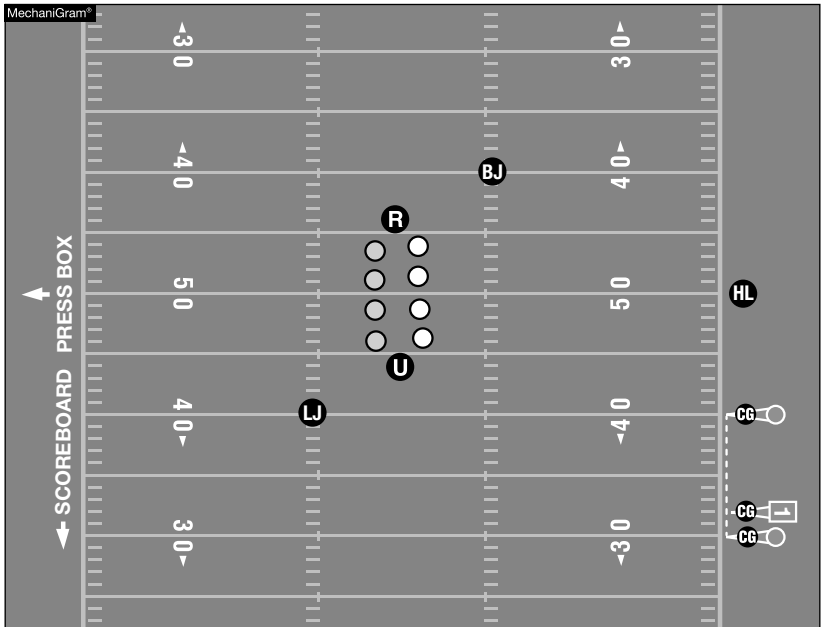
4.2 Coin Toss

The coin toss is conducted in the center of the field 20 minutes before the game. The toss may be held at an earlier time off the field if both coaches agree. In such a case the results may be simulated in the center of the field 3 minutes before the game.

When they reach the center of the field, the referee and umpire will be across from each other. The back judge remains on the hash mark on the side of the field with the chains; the line judge assumes a similar position on the opposite side. The head linesman remains on his sideline. If each team is using its own game balls, the back judge and line judge should each have an approved game ball from the team on their sideline.

Players who are not involved in the toss should be kept out of the area between the top of the numbers on both sides of the field. The captains are asked to introduce themselves to each other.

The referee should allow all captains to view both sides of the coin, identifying which side is heads and which is tails. The visiting captain is instructed to call heads or tails before the coin is flipped. The umpire repeats the choice loudly enough for all to hear.



Once the winner is determined, the winner is offered his choice: defer, receive, choose a goal to defend or kick. If the choice is to defer, the referee immediately faces the press box, taps the shoulder of the deferring captain and signals the declination. The remaining choices are then presented to the other captain and the final selection is made by the deferring captain. If the winner of the coin toss does not defer, no signal is immediately given.

When the final selections are made, the captains are asked to put their backs to the goal line their team will defend and the referee gives the appropriate signal. If the choice is to kick or receive, only the first selection is signaled. If the choice is to defend a goal, two signals are given: pointing both arms toward the goal line being defended, followed by the appropriate signal for the other captain.

If at any time during the toss the referee errs or gives incorrect information (for instance, giving the wrong team an option), the umpire should speak up immediately.

When the toss is completed, the other game officials join the referee and umpire in the center of the field and record the results of the toss. All game officials simultaneously move to their kickoff positions.

It is recommended as the teams are entering the field prior to the beginning of the second half, the head linesman and line judge obtain the second-half choices from the respective head coaches. The choices are communicated to the opposing coaches during the 3-minute warmup period.

Overtime Procedure

If overtime is necessary, the game officials wait for the 3-minute intermission to end. The referee and umpire go to their respective sidelines and once again escort the captains to the center of the field while the other game officials assume the same positions as for the pregame toss. The coin toss is repeated with the visiting team again calling it. When the winner is determined, the following options are explained: start the overtime period on offense, defense or choose which goal to be used.

When the selections are completed, the captains of the team on offense are asked to face the goal line in the direction their team will advance and the opposing captains stand with their backs to that goal line. The referee then taps the shoulder of the captain of the team that won the toss and gives the first down signal in the appropriate direction.

4.3 Keys

Football game officials should develop a field and situational awareness to help them determine what's going to happen before it occurs. These hints are called keys. There are two basic types of keys: "situational" and "positional" keys.

Situational Keys

Situational keys are partially based on the down, distance, score, time remaining, offensive and defensive formations and actions of players at the snap. For example, it's third down and 11. Team A trails by two points with 1:37 to play in the fourth quarter and has the ball on its own 44-yard line. Going without a huddle, Team A lines up in a shotgun formation with three receivers on the right side of the formation. All of that adds up to a pass. That hunch is confirmed when, at the snap, the offensive linemen drop back to pass block, the quarterback retreats into the pocket and the receivers run pass patterns rather than block Team B's linebackers and defensive backs.

In addition to down, distance and other game factors, offensive and defensive formations provide hints as to what type of play a game official can expect in a given situation. Most teams using the wishbone formation, for instance, are predominantly running teams. Teams using four-receiver sets and shotgun formations pass more times than not.

Linemen provide situational keys. For example, pulling linemen indicate a sweep or trap block. Linemen's splits may indicate certain types of plays. Retreating linemen indicate a pass. Charging linemen indicate a running play. Lineman splits may indicate certain types of plays. When offensive linemen provide only passive resistance, allowing defensive linemen to penetrate the neutral zone, a screen pass often follows.

Positional Keys

Positional keys are predetermined by the position you are working in the game. Positional keys deal more with the back judge and wing officials. The back judge's main positional key is the widest eligible receiver on the strong side of the formation (that will usually be the split end or the flanker). At the snap, the back judge first observes the tackle to see if he's

run-blocking or pass-blocking, then observes the actions of his key receiver. If that player moves into another game official's coverage area, the back judge shifts his attention to players who have entered his coverage area.

In order to determine positional keys, the game officials must recognize the strength of the formation (strong side vs. weak side). The strong side is the side on which there are more eligible receivers outside of the tackle.

When determining keys, it doesn't matter if a player is on or off the line of scrimmage. The widest receiver is the back judge's key whether the player is a flanker (a back usually positioned wider than the tight end) or a wide out (split outside the tackle). If players are stacked, the player nearest the line of scrimmage is considered to be the widest. For example, if a flanker is stacked directly behind the tight end, the tight end is considered the widest and is the back judge's key.

A balanced formation is one in which there are the same number of eligible receivers outside the tackles on both sides of the formation. An unbalanced formation is when one side has more eligible receivers on one side than the other.

The back judge has priority in determining keys, followed by the wing men. Wing officials should not key the same player as the back judge.

The positional keys:

- Unbalanced formation — The wing official on the strong side has the widest receiver while the back judge has the inside receiver on the strong side, normally a flanker and/or wing back.
- Balanced formation — The wing officials have the widest receivers, while the back judge has the inside receivers.
- Three-receiver (trips) formation — The wing official has the widest receiver and the back judge has the two inside receivers.
- Double wing formation — The wing official has the widest receiver while the back judge takes the inside wing receiver on the strong side (line judge's side). Opposite wing official has the two receivers on the weak side.

Motion

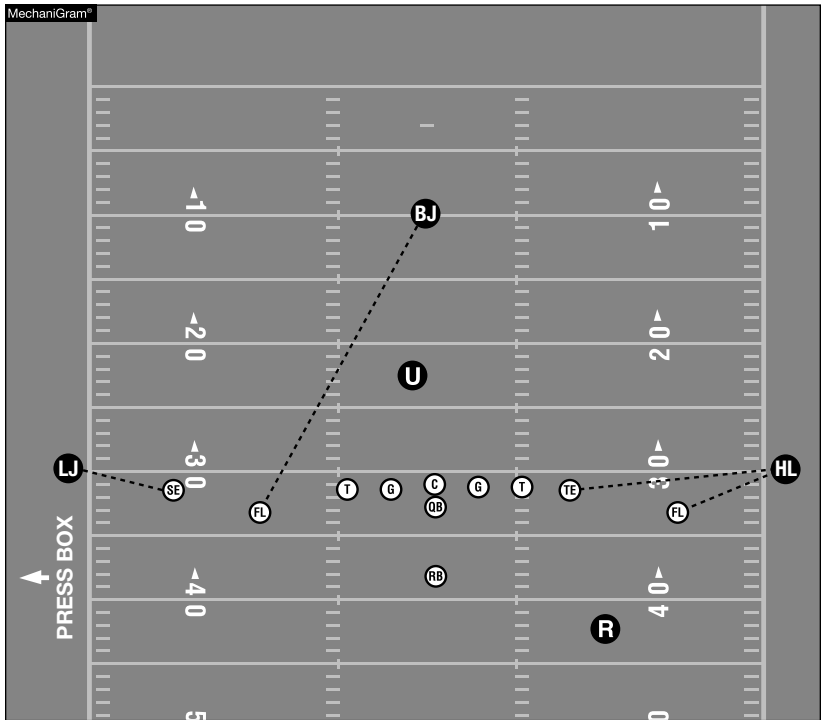
An offensive player in motion can affect positional keys. It is crucial that the back judge and wing officials know where the motion man is at the snap because the strength of the formation (and therefore the keys) may change. The legality of motion is always the responsibility of the line of scrimmage official from where the motion originates. Once the player crosses the snapper, the opposite line of scrimmage official assumes responsibility for the legality of the motion. If the player doubles back toward his original position, the line of scrimmage official initially responsible remains responsible.

Say Team A lines up strong to the head linesman's side, but the flanker on the head linesman's side goes in motion toward the line judge. If the motion man gets to the line judge's side of the snapper at the snap, the strength of the formation is now on the line

judge's side, and the keys change. The line judge still has the wideout on his side, the back judge has the motion man, and the head linesman has the end on his side of the line. Although the line judge is keying on the motion man's action after the snap, the head linesman is responsible for watching to ensure the motion man does not cut up field before the snap. If the motion man does not get beyond the snapper before the snap, the keys do not change because the strength of the formation has not changed.

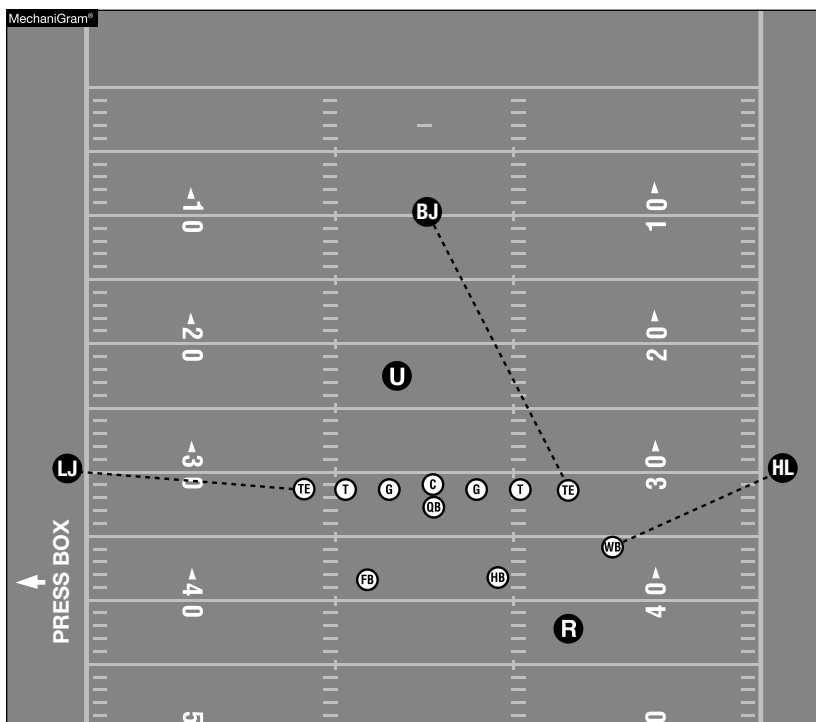
If motion turns a formation into trips, the keys for trips apply: the back judge keys on the two inside receivers and the strong side wing official keys on the widest receiver.

BALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH DECLARED TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE



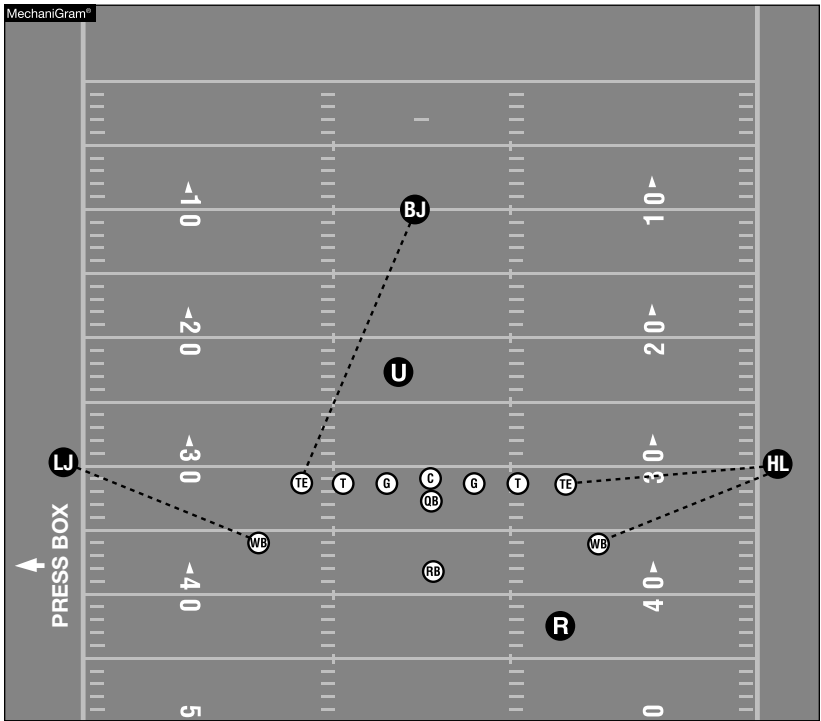
In a balanced formation, strength is always considered to be on the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the inside receiver to the strong side. The line judge keys on the widest receiver while the head linesman has both the split end and flanker on his side. Either wing official may also have the back if he runs a pass route.

DOUBLE TIGHT ENDS, STRENGTH TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE



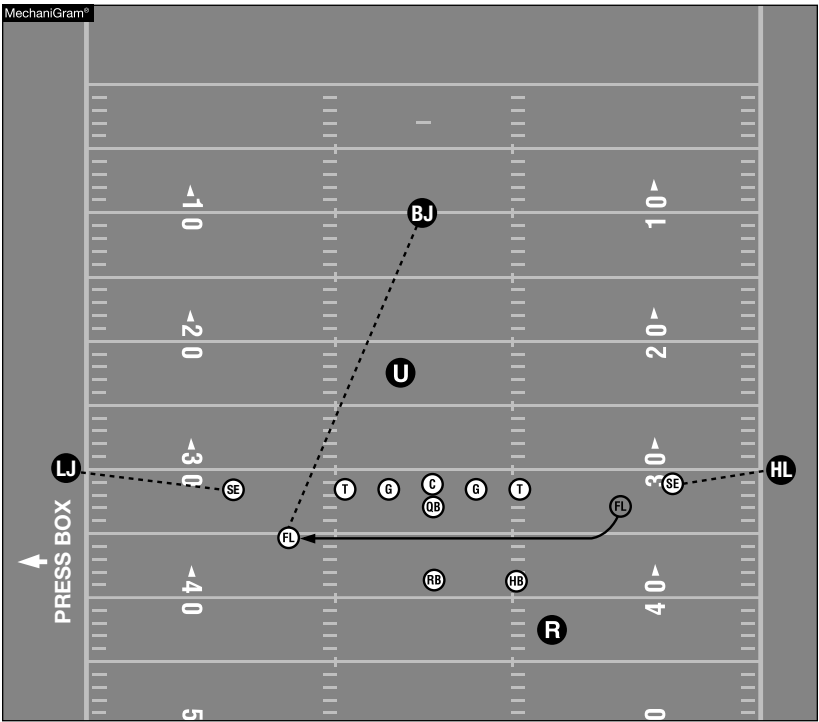
This is primarily a running formation used on short yardage, but teams sometimes throw quick passes out of this formation. The back judge keys on the inside receiver to the strong side. The head linesman keys on the widest receiver and the line judge keys on the tight end on his side. Either wing official may also have a back who runs a pass route.

DOUBLE WING, DOUBLE TIGHT END FORMATION



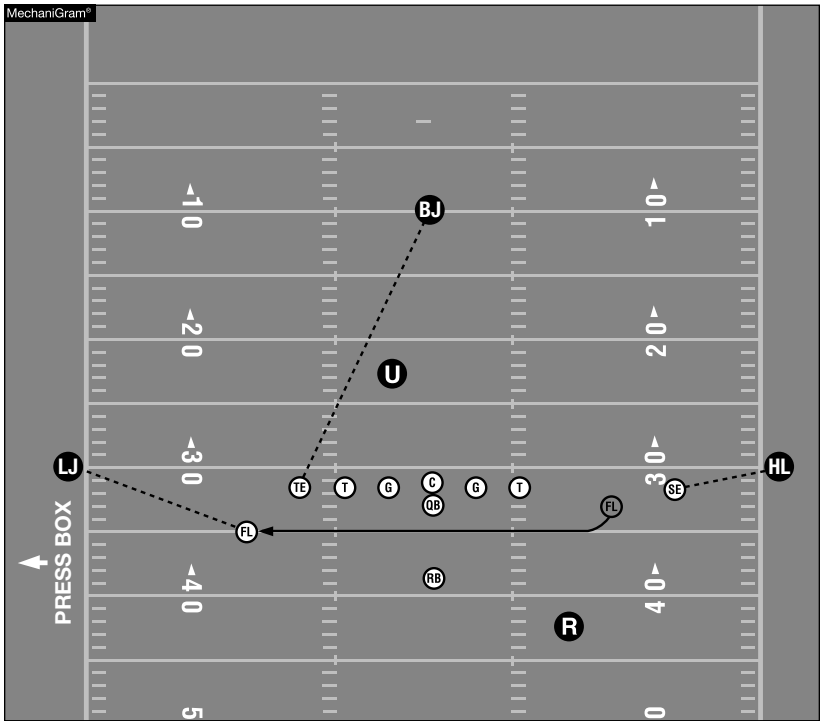
Strength is declared to the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the inside receiver to the strong side. The line judge keys on the widest receiver to his side. The head linesman has the tight end and wingback on his side. Either wing official may also have the back if he runs a pass route.

MOTION CHANGES STRENGTH



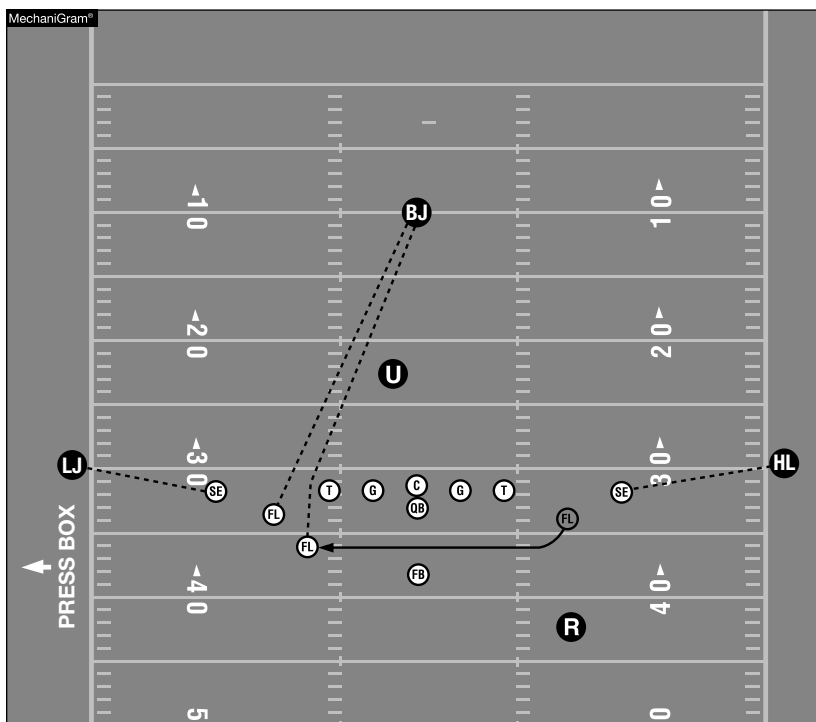
Strength was to the head linesman's side, but motion changed the strength to the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the strong side motion man. The line judge keys on the widest receiver to his side and the head linesman keys on the split end on his side.

MOTION CHANGES FORMATION FROM UNBALANCED TO BALANCED



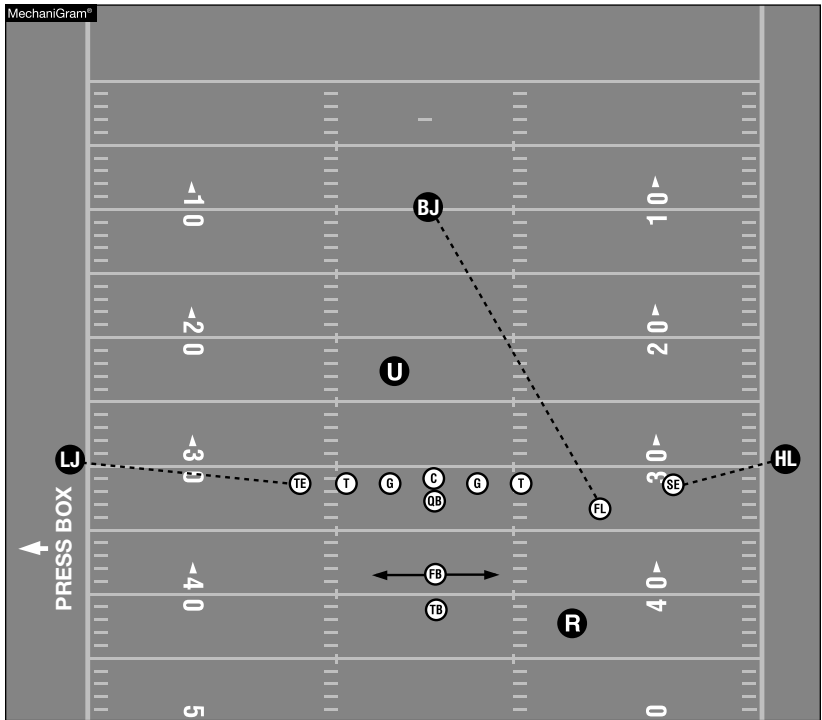
Strength was to the head linesman's side, but motion changed the formation from unbalanced to balanced. In a balanced formation, strength is declared to the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the inside receiver to the strong side. The line judge keys on the widest receiver and the head linesman keys on the split end and flanker on his side.

MOTION INTO TRIPS



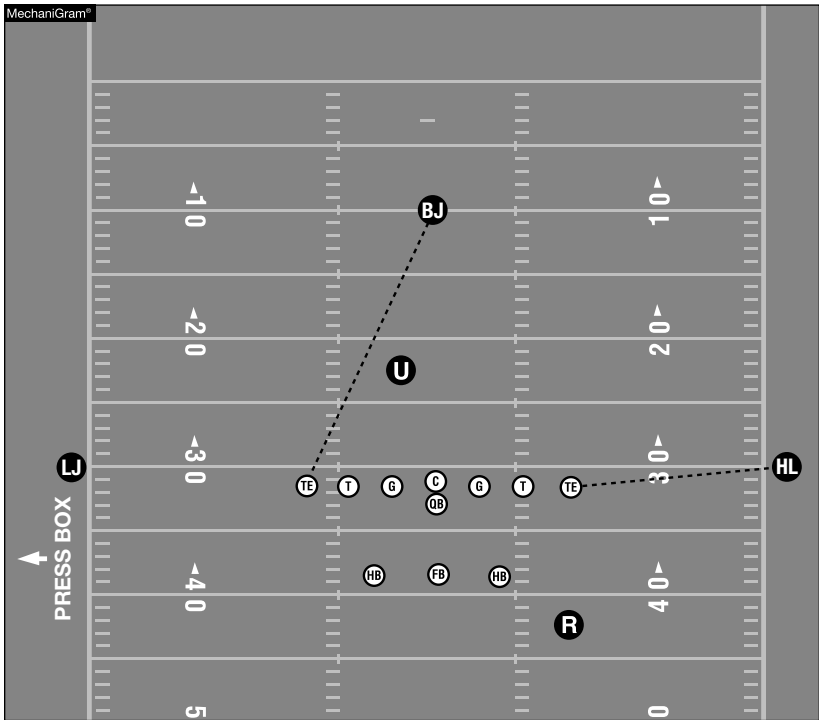
Motion by the flanker turned a balanced formation into a trips formation to the line judge's side. The back judge keys the two inside receivers to the strong side. The line judge keys on the widest receiver and the head linesman keys the end on his side of the line.

MOTION DOESN'T CHANGE STRENGTH



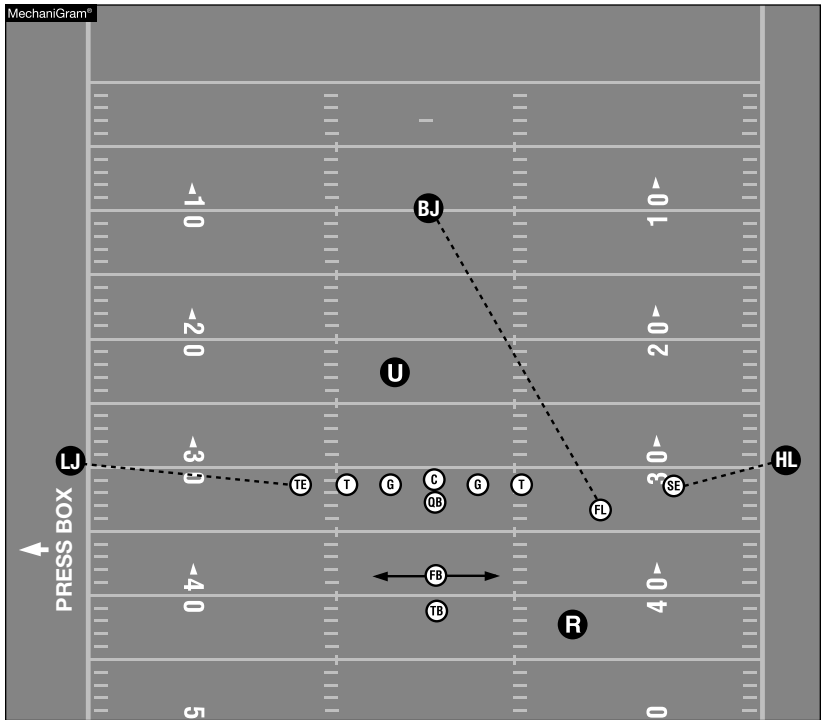
Strength is to the head linesman's side. Even if the back goes in motion to the line judge's side, strength is not considered to have changed. The back judge keys the inside receiver to the head linesman's side and the head linesman keys on the widest receiver. The line judge keys on the tight end to his side. Either wing official may also have the back if he runs a pass route.

STRAIGHT T OR WISHBONE



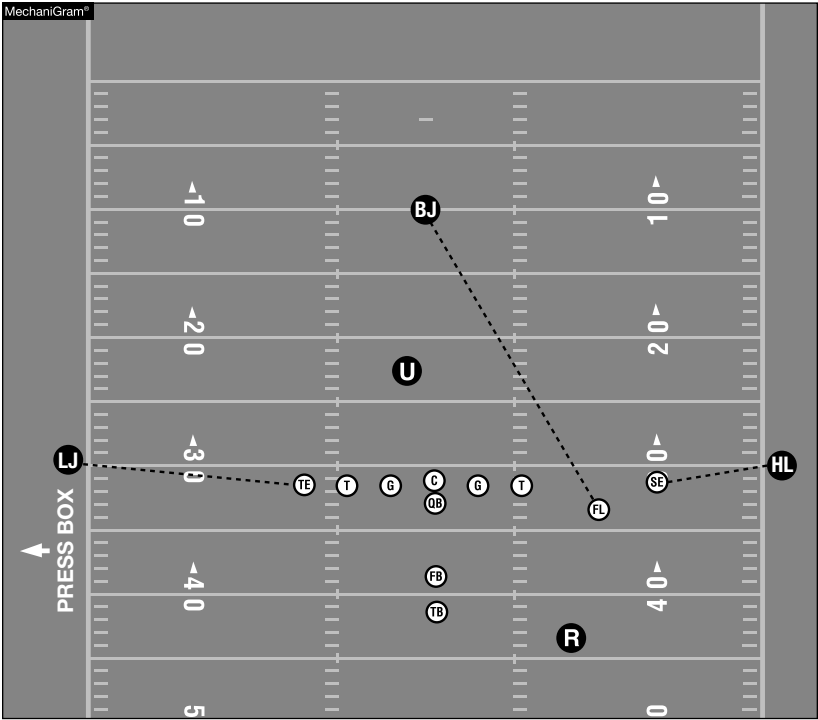
This is primarily a running formation, but on passing downs teams sometimes move a tight end to split end. It's a balanced formation, so strength is declared to the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the tight end on the line judge's side. The head linesman keys on the weak side tight end. The line judge keys the backs, and should look through the tight end to observe the tackle on his side to read run or pass. Either wing official may have a back who runs a pass route.

STRENGTH TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE SPLIT END



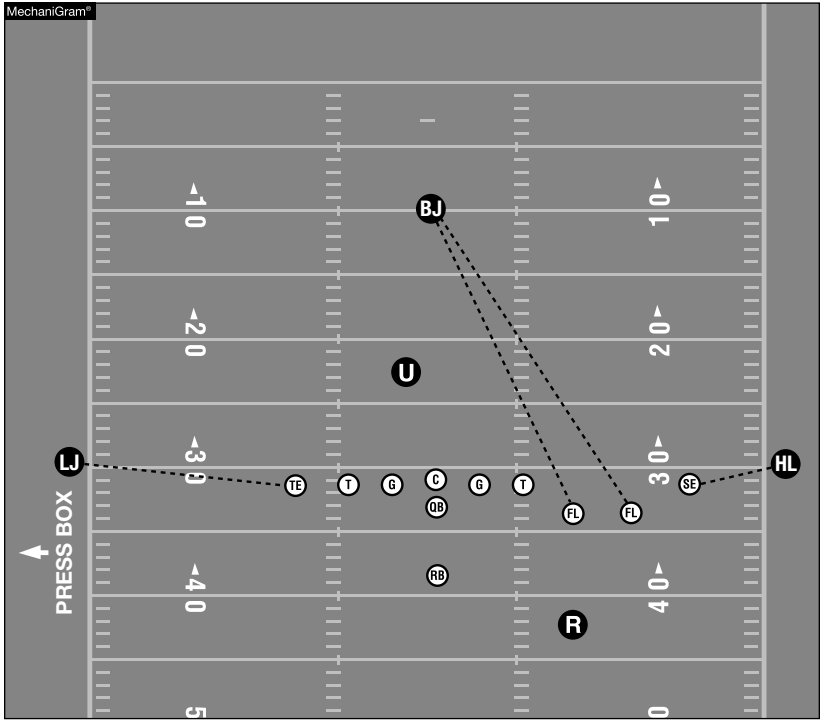
The back judge keys on the inside receiver to the strong side and the head linesman keys on the widest receiver. The line judge keys the tight end on his side. The fullback will likely stay in the backfield for pass protection, but the halfback may run a pass route. If the route is to the line judge's side, the line judge takes him.

STRENGTH TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE TIGHT END



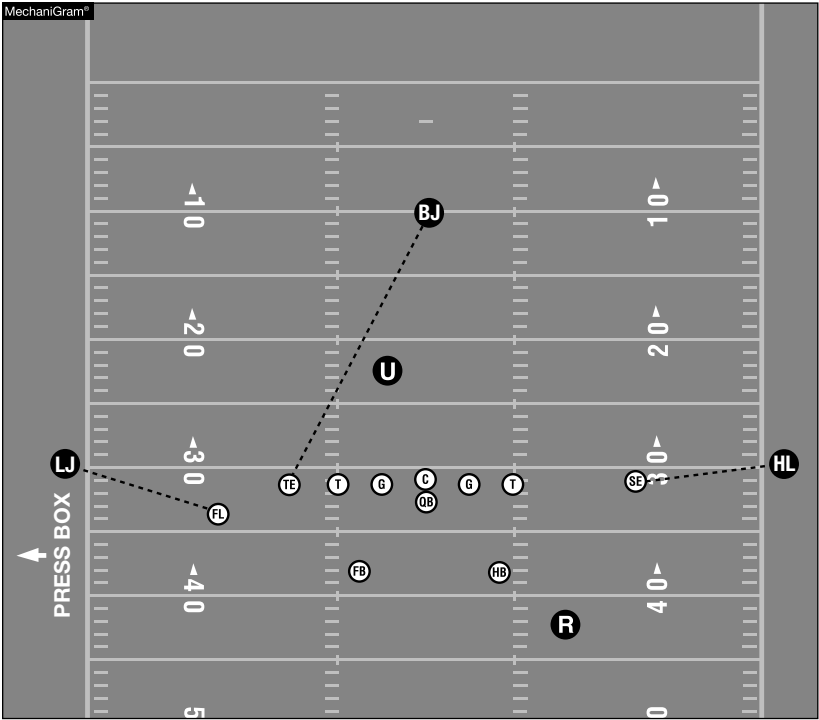
The back judge keys on the inside receiver to the strong side and the head linesman keys on the widest receiver. The line judge keys the tight end on his side. The fullback will likely stay in the backfield for pass protection, but the tailback may run a pass route. If the route is to the line judge's side, the line judge takes him.

TRIPS TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE



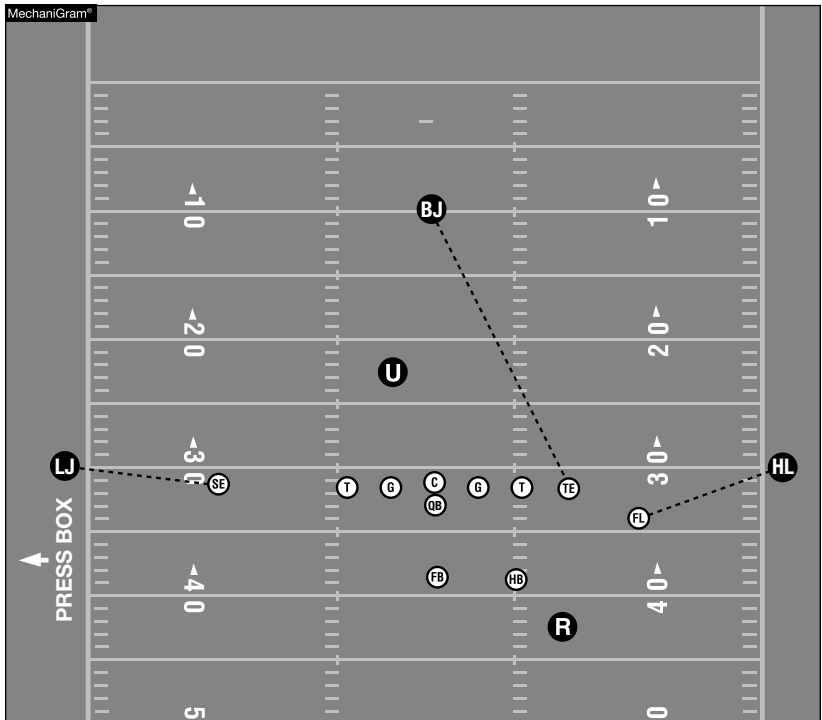
The back judge keys on the inside two receivers on the strong side and the head linesman keys on the widest receiver. The line judge keys on the tight end on his side. Either wing official may also have the back if he runs a pass route.

UNBALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE



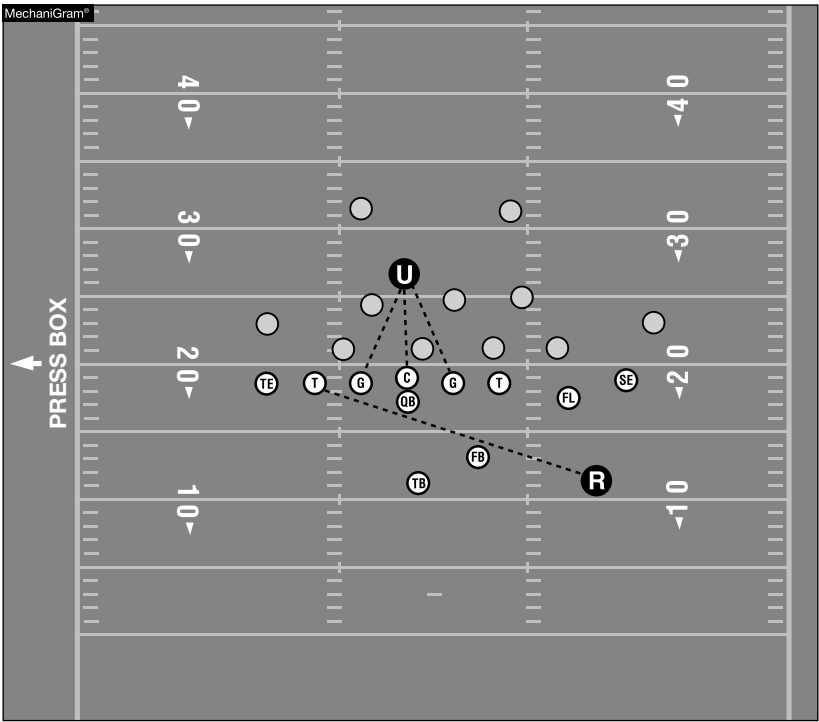
The back judge keys on the strong side tight end and the line judge keys on the widest receiver. The head linesman keys on the split end on his side. Either wing official may also have a back running a pass route.

VEER



Although primarily a running formation, teams will occasionally throw to the flanker or split end. In this example, strength is to the head linesman's side. The back judge keys the tight end and the head linesman keys the flanker. The line judge keys on the split end on his side. The fullback's primary function is as a blocker.

REFEREE AND UMPIRE KEYS



In all but the rarest cases, the referee will key on the opposite side tackle. In all cases the umpire will key on the center and both guards.

4.4 Before and After the Snap

The referee is responsible for observing the huddle to ensure Team A is not violating substitution rules, identifying eligible receivers in the backfield, observing shifts and watching for false starts and other pre-snap violations by the offense. He also counts Team A on scrimmage downs.

The umpire is responsible for ensuring that Team A has five players numbered 50 to 79 on the offensive line. The umpire should listen for defenders interfering with the offense's snap count, observe the snapper for snap infractions and observe the guards for false starts. He also counts Team A on scrimmage downs.

Before the snap, the wing officials identify the eligible receivers on their side of the field, assist the referee in monitoring substitutions, count to ensure Team A has no more than four backs and assist the umpire in checking the legality of uniform numbers of offensive linemen and receivers. If the receiver nearest the game official is in the offensive backfield, the wing uses the extended arm signal to alert the opposite wing. The head linesman and line judge count Team B players on scrimmage downs.

The back judge is responsible for the play clock. If the count gets to 10 seconds, the back judge should raise a hand and at 5 seconds use a visible count.

The back judge counts Team B on scrimmage plays.

Forward Progress

The wing officials are primarily responsible for forward progress. On long runs or passes, the back judge may assist with forward progress.

Progress should be indicated by using the downfield foot. Keep your head up and observe players while marking a spot. Do not go around or jump over players to mark progress. Move into the field until you approach players, then stop.

If a spot is close to the line to gain, the spotting game official must come all the way to the spot where the play ended. Wait for players to clear your path and then continue to spot the ball.

The primary game official responsible for determining the forward progress spot is the game official who can actually see the ball when the play is declared dead — not based on what side of the field the play ends — usually from hash mark to hash mark.

4.5 Time-outs

Any game official should grant a valid time-out request and immediately stop the clock if it is running. That game official reports the time-out to the referee. The referee indicates the time-out by repeating the stop-the-clock signal and indicating the team being charged the time-out by facing the team and extending both arms shoulder high, giving two “chucks” in that team’s direction.

All game officials must record the number and team of the player requesting the time-out, the quarter and the time remaining on the game clock. The referee confirms the number of time-outs each team has remaining. The head linesman and line judge inform the coaches on their respective sidelines of the time-outs remaining.

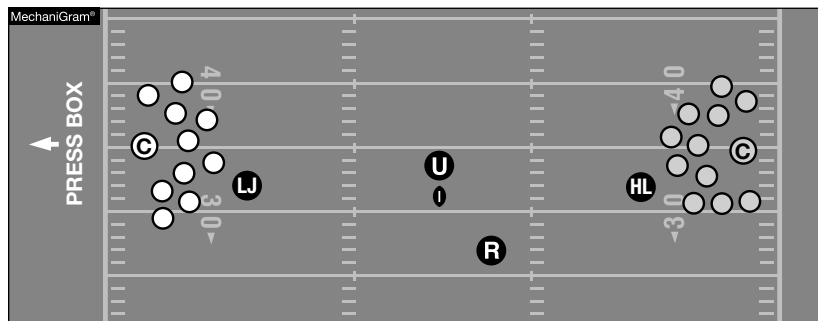
The back judge is responsible for timing the time-out. The one-minute count begins when the referee is informed of the time-out. When 45 seconds have expired, the back judge sounds his whistle twice so the head linesman and line judge can inform their teams. When the minute has expired, the referee whistles the ball ready-for-play.

The procedure for signaling an official’s time-out is the same as for a charged time-out. After stopping the clock, the referee has the option of tapping his chest to indicate it is an official’s time-out. Play should resume as quickly as possible.

If the official’s time-out is for injury, any team conference must be an “Outside 9-yard Mark Conference” if approved by the referee.

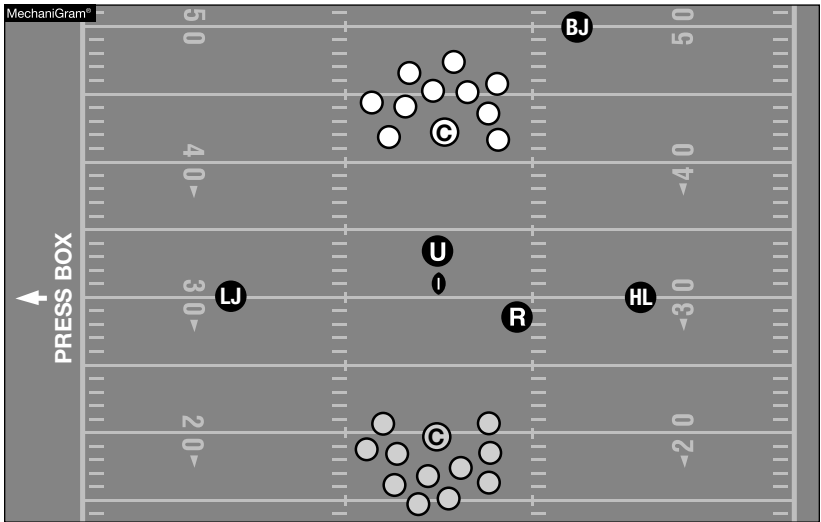
During time-outs, wing officials are responsible for monitoring conferences near your sideline. Help get players promptly back onto the field.

TIME-OUT WITH BOTH TEAMS AT THE SIDELINES



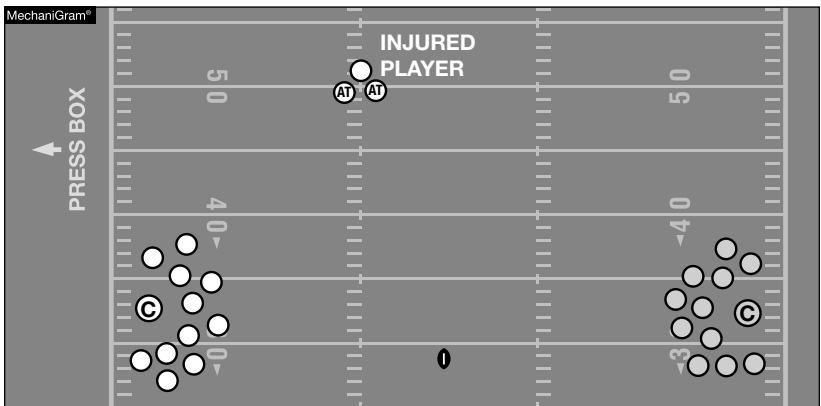
During the time-out, the referee and back judge remains in their positions in the offensive and defensive backfield respectively, the umpire stands over the ball and the head linesman and line judge should take positions midway between the ball and their respective sidelines.

TIME-OUT WITH ONE OR BOTH COACHES ON THE FIELD



During the time-out, the referee and back judge remain in their positions in the offensive and defensive backfield respectively, the umpire stands over the ball and the head linesman and line judge should take positions midway between the ball and their respective sidelines.

INJURY TIME-OUT



When an injury occurs and the referee grants an authorized conference, it must be an “outside the 9-yard marks conference.” That conference provides an opportunity for players to get water. If the injured player is between the hash marks and the numbers, the team whose sideline is affected should move away from the injured player.

4.6 Measurements

When the referee calls for a measurement, the line of scrimmage official should have the down indicator moved behind the lead rod. That is a reference point in case the line to gain should somehow become lost during the process. As the chains are being brought onto the field, the line of scrimmage official should use their foot to indicate the intersection of the 5-yard line where the chain is clipped and a line through the ball parallel to the sideline. That is the spot where the line of scrimmage official will place the clipped part of the chain.

The line of scrimmage official brings the chain in from the sideline with the line-to-gain crew members. Putting one hand on the links on each side of the clip improves the line of scrimmage official's chances of keeping track of the proper link in case the clip falls off the chain. The clip must be placed on the back edge of the line for the measurement. A good double-check is for the head linesman to state that the next down will be first if the ball is beyond the rod or the next down of the series if it is short. (Example: "It will either be first or fourth.")

Depending on which team has the ball, the line of scrimmage official can obtain another game ball from the offensive team's ball helper. If the back judge has the ball, they can toss it to the line judge before the measurement.

The back judge holds the ball in place from the downfield side (the side of the ball closer to Team B's goal line) while facing Team A's goal line. Once the line of scrimmage official tells the referee he has the chain on the proper mark, the umpire takes the forward rod from the line-to-gain crew member, then pulls the rod to ensure the chain is taut. The referee rules whether or not the ball is beyond the front rod.

Short of a First Down

If the measurement is in a side zone and does not result in a first down, the umpire should keep control of the rod. The referee uses his hands (or thumb and index finger if the ball is inches short of the front rod) to inform both benches how short the play ended of a first down (see PlayPic).

The back judge continues to hold the ball in place. The referee grasps the chain at the link in front of the ball and rises. The referee should grasp the chain with two hands with the link that will be used to place the ball between his hands; that will ensure the proper link is maintained. The back judge continues to hold the ball in place. Referee, umpire, line judge and head linesman walk to the nearest hash mark. The spare ball (the one the line judge is holding) is then placed at the proper spot.

Once the ball is placed, the back judge may remove the ball that was used in the measurement and return it to the ball helper.



If the measurement occurred on fourth down and Team A is short, the referee signals the change of possession by giving the first down signal toward Team A's goal line. The referee then sets the ball in the same position as it was when it became dead so its foremost point becomes the rear point when the direction is changed. The new rear rod is then moved to the new foremost point of the ball.

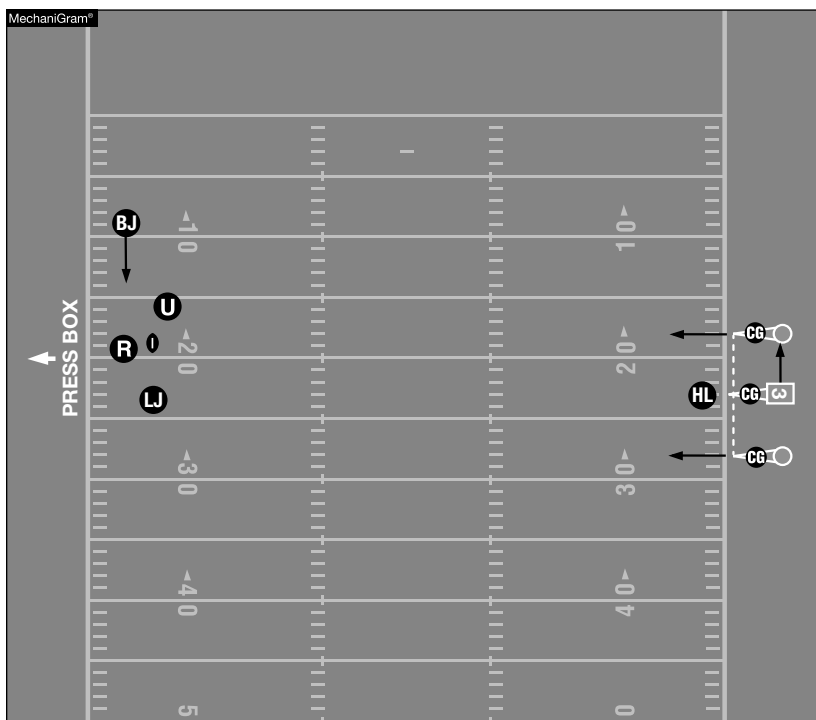
First Down

If the measurement results in the award of a new series, the referee signals the first down. The head linesman need not hold the chain as he accompanies the line-to-gain crew back to the sideline, but he must go all the way to the sideline and indicate to the line-to-gain crew where the new series will begin.

If the measurement occurred in a side zone, the back judge should remain with the ball on the ground as a double-check to ensure the ball is spotted properly for the next play.

Whether or not the result is a first down, the referee must wait for the head linesman's signal that the line-to-gain crew is back in position before giving the ready-for-play signal.

MEASUREMENT IN SIDE ZONE OPPOSITE THE CHAINS



Action on the field: Play ends in side zone close to a first down.

Referee: Stops clock after seeing that measurement is necessary. Waits at spot for arrival of line-to-gain crew.

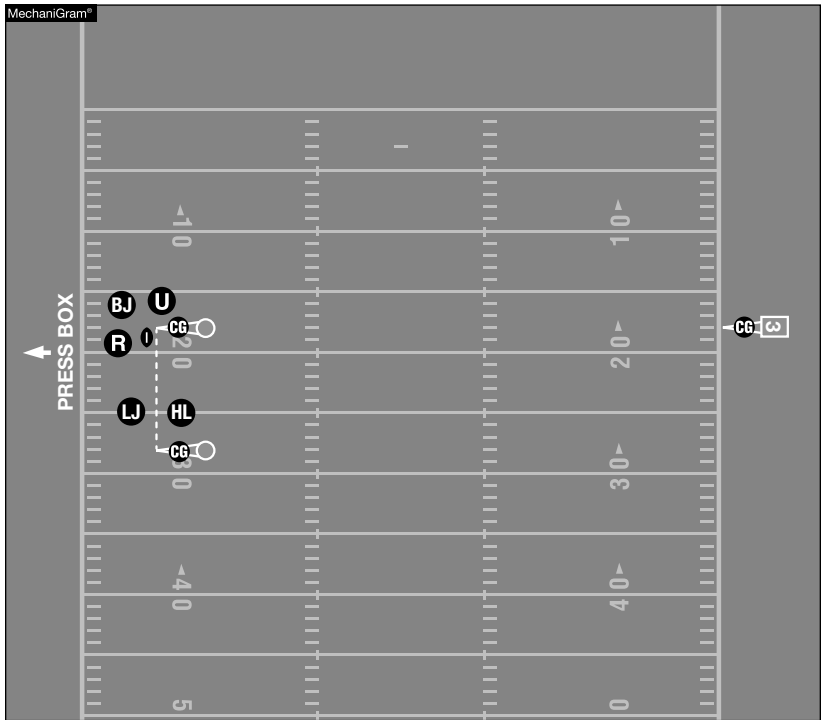
Umpire: Waits at spot for arrival of line-to-gain crew.

Head linesman: Has down indicator holder move down indicator behind lead rod. Brings chain in from sideline with line-to-gain crew members to spot indicated by line judge.

Line judge: Indicates intersection of the 5-yard line where chain is clipped and line through ball parallel to sideline with beanbag or foot.

Back judge: Secures the ball in place on ground facing Team A's goal line.

SHORT OF A FIRST DOWN PART 1



Action on the field: Team A is short of a first down.

Referee: Rules whether or not ball is beyond front rod. Uses hands or fingers to inform both benches how short the play ended of first down.

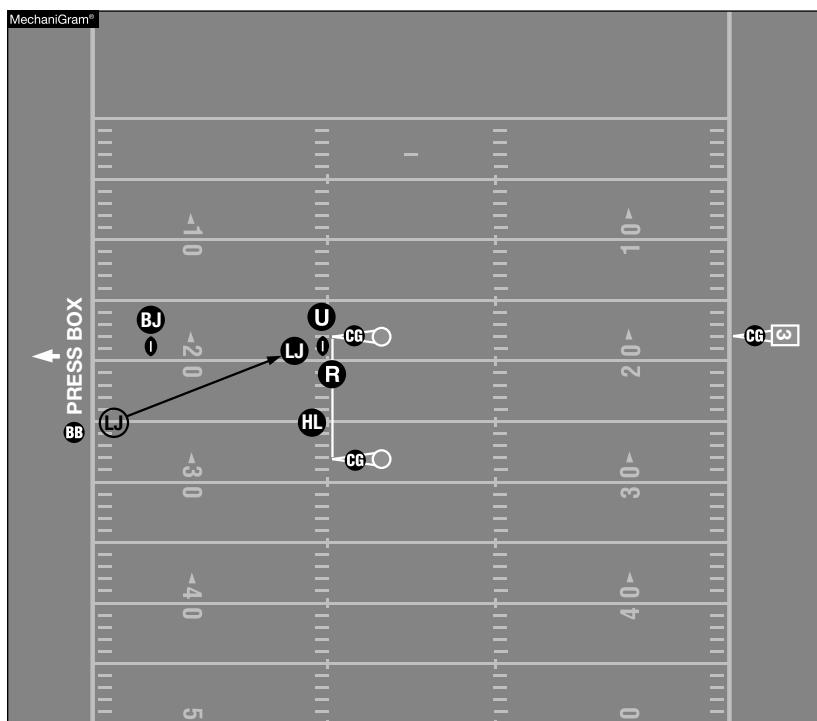
Umpire: Holds lead rod.

Head linesman: Holds chain in place.

Line judge: Gets spare ball from ball helper.

Back judge: Secures the ball in place on ground facing Team A's goal line.

SHORT OF A FIRST DOWN PART 2



Action on the field: Chains are moved to hash mark for ball placement.

Referee: Grasps chain at link in front of ball and rises. Walks to nearest hash mark. Gets ball from line judge and places it. Waits for head linesman's signal that line-to-gain crew is back in position and other game officials are ready before giving ready-for-play signal.

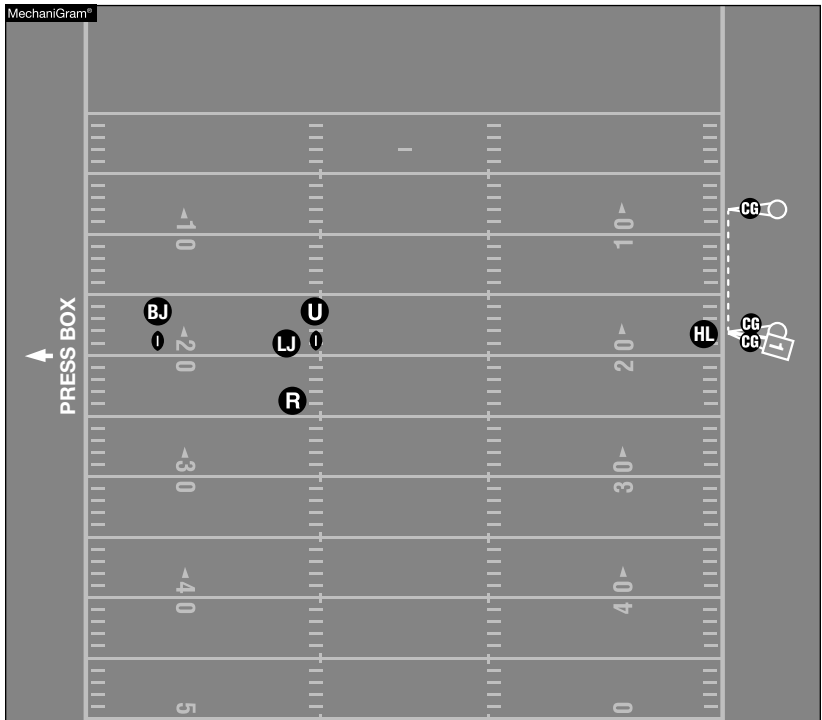
Umpire: Maintains control of front rod and walks to nearest hash mark.

Head linesman: Maintains control of clip and walks to nearest hash mark. Accompanies line-to-gain crew back to sideline and sets chains for next down.

Line judge: Delivers new ball to referee for placement.

Back judge: Holds ball in place on ground.

Team A AWARDED A FIRST DOWN



Action on the field: Team A is awarded a new series.

Referee: Signals first down. Waits for head linesman's signal that line-to-gain crew is back in position and other game officials are ready before giving ready-for-play signal.

Umpire: Moves to hash mark where ball will next be snapped. Gets ball from line judge and places it.

Head linesman: Returns to sideline with line-to-gain crew and indicates where new series will begin.

Line judge: Delivers new ball to umpire for placement.

Back judge: Holds ball in place on ground.

4.7 Positioning

Free Kicks

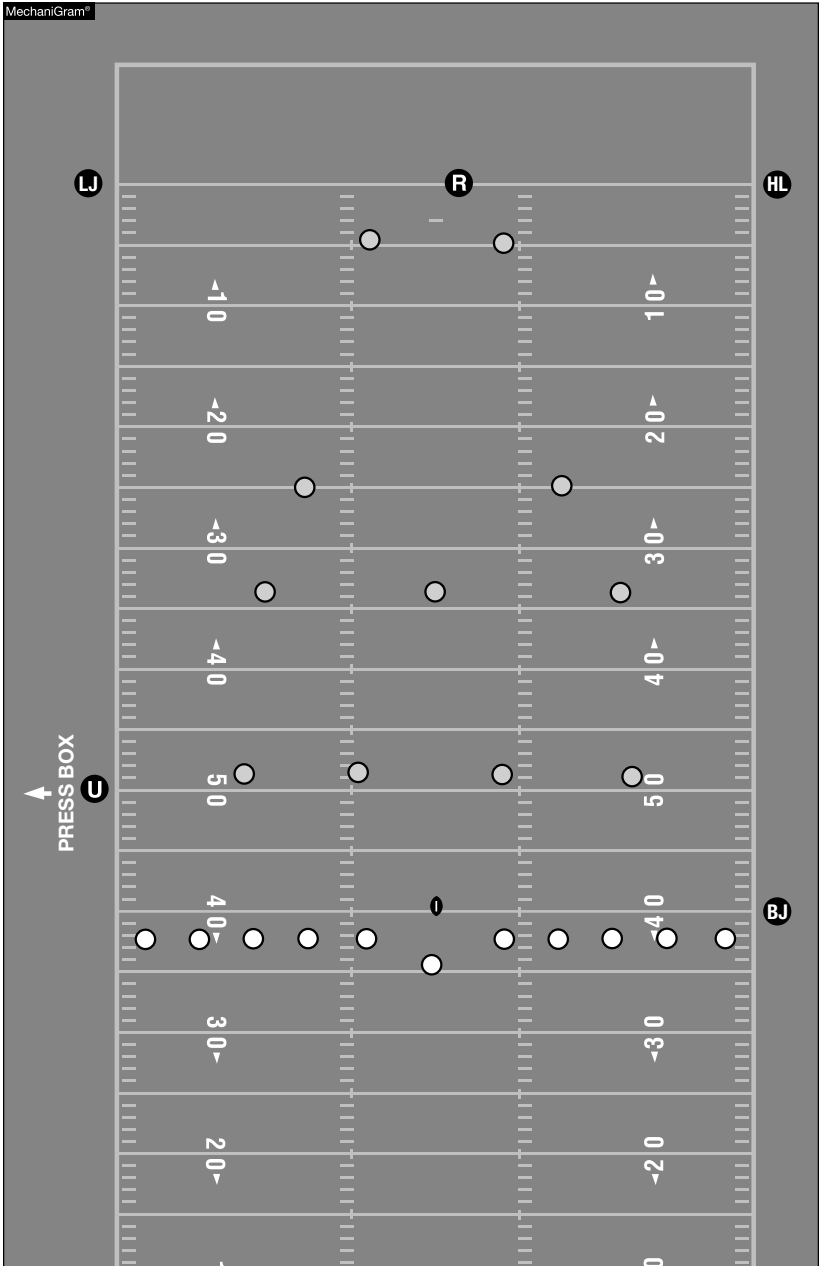
Referee: Starting position is on the goal line between the hash marks and in the center of the field. The referee is responsible for noting whether Team K has at least four players on either side of the kicker. Once he sees a ready signal from each game official, the referee blows the whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal.

Umpire: Ensures sideline personnel on their side are properly positioned. Moves to the numbers on their side of the field once the players are on the field. Starting position is outside the sideline on the side opposite the chains, on Team R's free-kick line. When in position and ready for the kick, the umpire should raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee.

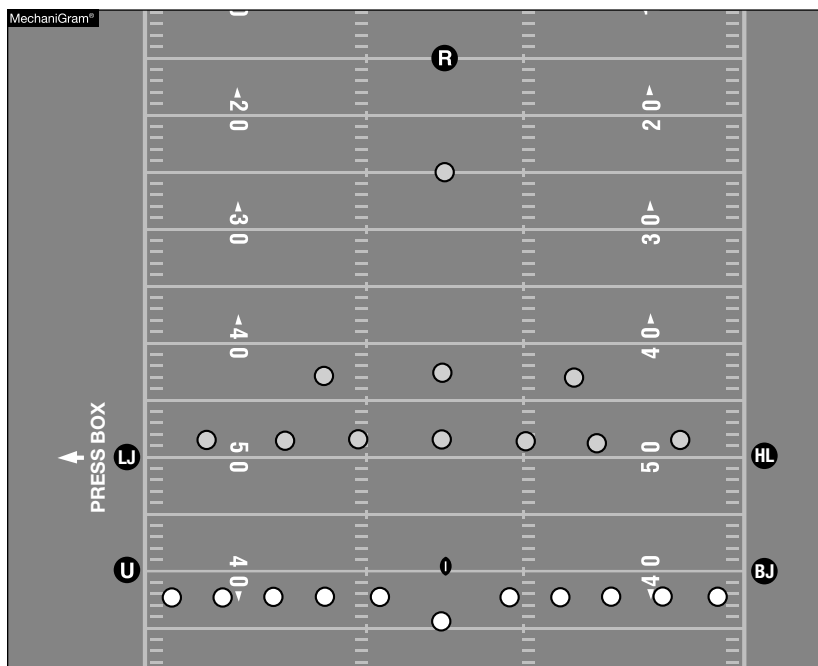
Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is on Team R's goal line extended but can be adjusted based on the deepest receiver. If starting position is adjusted, both line of scrimmage officials must be on the same yard line and deeper than the deepest receiver. When in position and ready for the kick, raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee.

Back judge: Moves on the field toward the kicker after checking legality of kicking tee. Do not give the ball to the kicker until Team K has 11 players on the field, remind the kicker not to kick the ball until the referee has sounded their whistle and note whether no Team K player other than the kicker is more than 5 yards from Team K's free-kick line. Identifies Team K's free-kick line and jogs off to the sidelines. Starting position is outside the sideline on Team K's free-kick line. When in position and ready for the kick, raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee. If the football falls or blows off tee just prior to free kick, sound the whistle to prevent action and move to the kicker to give instructions.

FREE KICK



ON-SIDE KICK



Referee: Starting position is in the middle of the field, deeper than the deepest receiver.

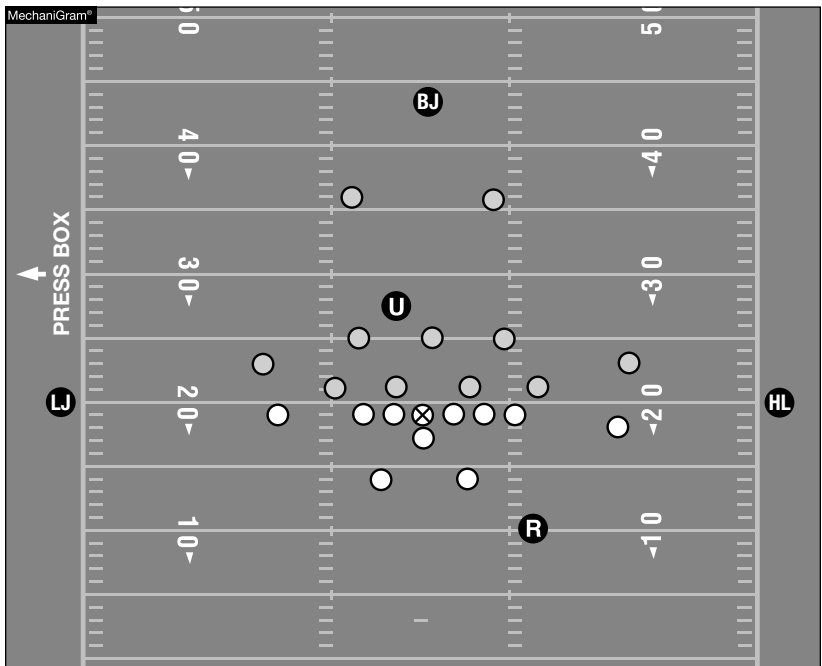
Umpire: Starting position is on Team K's free-kick line. The umpire should have his beanbag in hand to mark the spot if Team K first touches the kick and should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

Head linesman: Starting position is on Team R's free-kick line. The head linesman should have his beanbag in hand to mark the spot if Team K first touches the kick and should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

Line judge: Starting position is on the same side of the field as the umpire, on Team R's free-kick line. The line judge should have his beanbag in hand to mark the spot if Team K first touches the kick and should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

Back judge: Starting position is on the head linesman's side of the field and on Team K's free-kick line. The back judge should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

SCRIMMAGE PLAY



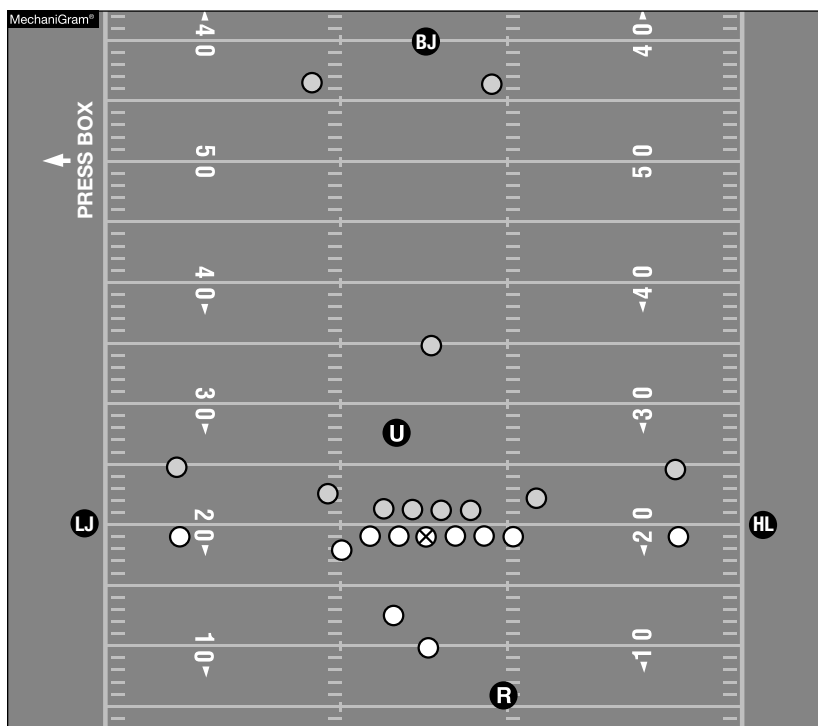
Referee: While Team A is in the huddle, take a position approximately 10-15 yards from the line of scrimmage and 5 yards wide of the huddle to be more visible to the clock operator. Once Team A is at the line, starting position is on the passing-arm side of the quarterback, approximately 10 to 12 yards deep and at least as wide as the tight end.

Umpire: Starting position is 5 to 8 yards behind Team B's line and between the defensive ends. The umpire must be able to see the ball from the time the snapper handles the ball until the time it is snapped.

Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage and on the sideline.

Back judge: Starting position is in the middle of the field with focus on the strong side of the formation, approximately 20 to 25 yards beyond the line of scrimmage and deeper than the deepest defender.

SCRIMMAGE KICK



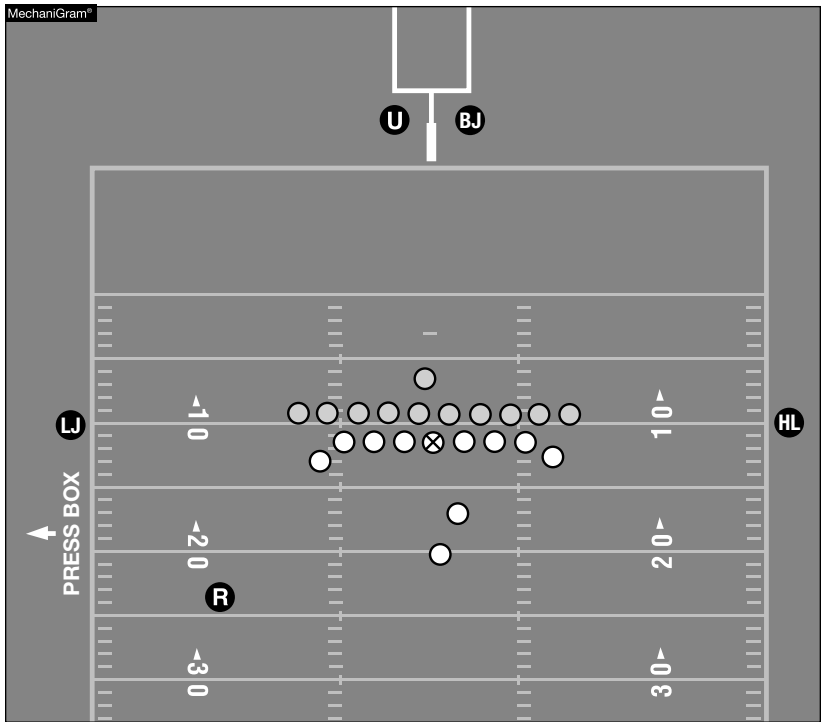
Referee: The referee's position is 3 to 5 yards outside the tight end and 2 to 3 yards behind the kicker, on kicking-leg side. That position allows the referee to view the snap as well as the action around the kicker before, during and after the kick. The referee must be ready to move in the appropriate direction if an errant snap leads to a loose ball in the offensive backfield.

Umpire: The umpire sets up 8 to 10 yards deep and favoring the line judge's sideline. Favoring the line judge's side compensates for the line judge moving downfield immediately at the snap. Say, "Don't charge directly into the snapper," to remind Team R players about rules regarding to contact on the snapper.

Head linesman and line judge: The wing officials' starting position on scrimmage kicks is the same as for other plays from scrimmage.

Back judge: The back judge begins the play in the middle of the field and 5 yards behind the deepest receiver. The back judge must be prepared to move upfield if the kick is short or downfield if the receiver has to retreat.

SCORING KICK



Referee: Starting position is 2 to 3 yards to rear and 3 to 5 yards to side of potential kicker, facing holder.

Umpire: Starting position is beyond the end line and behind the upright.

Wing officials: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage.

Back judge: Starting position is beyond the end line and behind the upright.

NOTE: On a field-goal attempt by free kick, the chains are set to establish the 10-yard neutral zone. Referee is behind the upright. Umpire is behind the upright and rules on crossbar. Both game officials determine whether kick is successful. All other game officials' mechanics are the same as for a kickoff.

4.8 Coverage

Free Kick

Since the play clock for a free kick does not start until the Referee's ready-for-play signal and whistle, a kick should never be permitted without the proper number of players on the field for both teams.

Referee:

Play Coverage

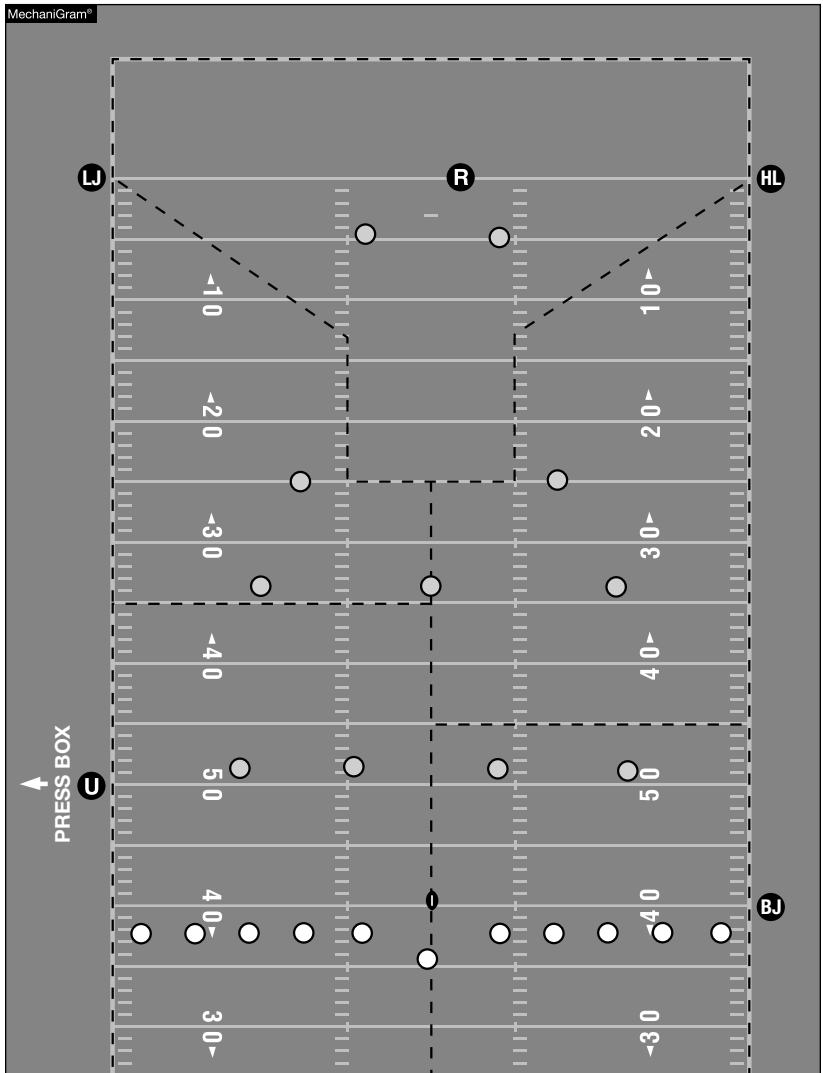
- a. The Referee will ensure that Team K has at least four players on either side of the kicker at the time of the kick – if not, he will flag the play and shut it down immediately.
- b. Once the ball is kicked, the Referee may move up into a position using proper angle to see in front of the receiver (while remaining behind him) based on where the ball is kicked.
- c. If the kick will threaten the goal line, he should hold his position to make decisions on whether a touchback has occurred or whether the momentum exception should be applied on a caught or recovered ball.
- d. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Referee will wind the game clock.
- e. If the receiver advances with the ball, the Referee will continue up field while observing blocks in front of the ball carrier and in the middle of the field until the ball reaches the R-30. As the ball carrier reaches the R-30, the Referee should move his focus to players trailing the play and continue up field behind the deepest combination of Team R and Team K players.
- f. When the play ends, the Referee may assist with retrieving the proper ball to be put in play for the new series or try.

Umpire:

Play Coverage

- a. After the kick occurs without foul, the Umpire will direct his attention on the initial blocks made by/on the second-inside blocker nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.
- b. Once the Team K players pass his position, the Umpire will move into the field of play, approximately 8-10 yards downfield and at the near-side hash marks.
- c. As the ball is being returned, the Umpire will observe action in the middle of the field in front of the runner. He should be especially alert to Team R players moving back toward their own goal line.

FREE KICK COVERAGE ZONES



- d. The Umpire will allow the play to come to his position and continue to officiate the play using an inside-out technique, particularly looking for fouls away from the ball as he moves up field behind the play.
- e. When the play ends, the Umpire will move to the ball and replace it with the proper ball for the next series or try.

Head Line Judge:

Play Coverage

- a. After the kick, the Head Line Judge will direct his attention on the blocks made by/on the farthest outside blocker nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.
- b. If the ball is kicked behind him on his half of the field or threatens the pylon in his primary coverage area, the Head Line Judge will retreat to cover the ball.
- c. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Head Line Judge will wind the game clock.
- d. For returns on his half of the field, the Head Line Judge is responsible for the spot for kicks out of bounds, blocks at the point of attack and forward progress all the way to the goal line.
- e. For returns on the opposite side of the field, the Head Line Judge is responsible for blocks in the middle of the field away from the ball.
- f. When the play ends, the Head Line Judge will mark forward progress on his side of the field. He will mirror the progress spot and clean up around the runner if the ball is on the opposite side of the field.

Line Judge:

Play Coverage

- a. After the kick, the Line Judge will direct his attention on the blocks made by/on the farthest outside blocker nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.
- b. If the ball is kicked behind him on his half of the field or threatens the pylon in his primary coverage area, the Line Judge will retreat to cover the ball.
- c. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Line Judge will wind the game clock.
- d. For returns on his half of the field, the Line Judge is responsible for the spot for kicks out of bounds, blocks at the point of attack and forward progress all the way to the goal line.
- e. For returns on the opposite side of the field, the Line Judge is responsible for blocks in the middle of the field away from the ball.
- f. When the play ends, the Line Judge will mark forward progress on his side of the field. He will mirror the progress spot and clean up around the runner if the ball is on the opposite side of the field.

**Back Judge:
Play Coverage**

- a. After the kick occurs without foul, the Back Judge will direct his attention on the initial blocks made by/on the second- and third-inside blockers nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.
- b. Once the Team K players have moved downfield, the Back Judge will move into the field of play, approximately 8-10 yards downfield and at the near-side hash marks.
- c. As the ball is being returned, the Back Judge will observe action in the middle of the field in front of the runner. He should be especially alert to Team R players moving back toward their own goal line.
- d. The Back Judge should remain at least 20 yards in advance of the ball carrier as the play advances. He has the primary responsibility for coverage at the goal line and should be straddling the goal line in advance of the runner crossing it.
- e. If the play ends at the goal line, the Back Judge will rule on forward progress.
- f. When the play ends prior to reaching the goal line, the Back Judge may assist with retrieving the proper ball to be put in play for the new series or try.

Free Kicks After a Safety

The coverage areas and mechanics are the same for the free kick that follows a safety.

The back judge should be at Team K's 20-yard line, the umpire and head linesman at Team K's 30-yard line and the position of the remaining game officials is adjusted accordingly.

Field-Goal Attempt by Free Kick After a Fair Catch

If Team K attempts a field goal by free kick after a fair catch (or awarded fair catch), the referee and umpire move behind the upright. The umpire rules whether or not the kick cleared the crossbar while the referee determines if the kick was between the uprights. The remaining game officials assume their normal positions for a free kick.

Scrimmage Plays

On a running play, the referee focuses on the ball, the runner and the blocking around the runner. If the play goes to the opposite side, the referee should move toward or parallel to the line of the scrimmage. Overaggressiveness is to be avoided in case the play is a reverse. If the play is to the referee's side, the referee moves behind the play and is responsible for the runner until the runner crosses the neutral zone or turns upfield. The referee should watch the handoff or the pitchout, see the runner head outside the free-blocking zone, and watch to see that no one contacts the quarterback before drifting along to follow the play.

On passing plays, the referee observes blocking by his keys and is alert for defenders who threaten the quarterback. The referee should be wide and deep enough so he does not

have to move if the quarterback drops back into the pocket. If the quarterback rolls to either direction, the referee must move with him, keeping at least a 10-yard buffer.

If the quarterback scrambles away from the referee, the referee needs to keep pace to pursue the quarterback. If the quarterback scrambles toward the referee, the referee needs to keep his buffer as long as possible. The referee is responsible for the spot if the runner goes out-of-bounds behind the line of scrimmage on either sideline. If the runner goes out-of-bounds into the bench area, the referee follows the play into the bench area and help escort players out of the bench area.

The referee's main focus is the passer and the referee must stay with the passer until he is not threatened. Once the pass has been released, the referee continues to observe the passer. By maintaining spacing between himself and the quarterback, the referee will widen his field of vision.

If the flight of the pass is altered because the passer's arm is hit by a defender, the resultant loose ball is a forward pass. If the referee rules the play to be an incomplete pass, he must blow his whistle and signal emphatically. If the play results in a fumble, the referee may beanbag the spot where possession was lost and continue officiating.

Only the referee flags intentional grounding, but because he won't see where the ball landed, he'll need help from another game official. Other members of the crew should immediately volunteer information regarding whether or not the ball was thrown into an area occupied by an eligible offensive receiver. If the referee does not throw his flag and is told the ball went into an area not occupied by an eligible offensive receiver, it is appropriate to throw a late flag, which should be "soft tossed" to the spot of the pass.

As he trails the quarterback, the referee should move to the spot of the pass to judge whether it was thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage. If it is clearly a foul, he should drop his flag at the spot of the pass. If the spot is questionable, he should drop his beanbag. In either case, he must continue to officiate.

If the quarterback is sacked, the referee determines the progress spot and observes players as they unpile.

The play clock is set to 40 and is started when a running play ends, Team A gains a first down or after an incomplete pass. There is no whistle accompanying the ready-for-play signal.

Umpires must determine the point of attack because of the potential for holding, chop blocks and other fouls.

Plays that end in a side zone may require the umpire to move outside the hash mark and toward the sideline in order to clean up behind the play. When play swings around to one side, the umpire should turn his attention to the blocking ahead of the runner and should prepare to cross outside the hash mark if the runner is downed in the side zone near the sideline. The umpire can help get the ball back to the hash mark and set it at the progress spot.

On pass plays, the umpire must step up and reach the line of scrimmage. That takes the umpire out of short pass routes and puts him in a position to judge ineligible downfield and passes thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage.

When the pass is thrown, the umpire pivots to follow the flight of the ball. The umpire has catch/trap responsibility if the receiver is facing the umpire.

Before the snap, the wing officials identify the eligible receivers on their side of the field and count to ensure Team A has no more than four backs. If the receiver nearest the game official is in the offensive backfield, the wing uses the extended arm signal to alert the opposite wing. Illegal forward passes beyond the line of scrimmage are the primary responsibility of the wing officials, aided by the umpire.

Because they will mark forward progress the vast majority of the time, the line judge and head linesman must be especially alert for quick-hitting running plays into the line. On runs to the opposite side of the field, the off wing must clean up after the play.

The wings have to follow receivers downfield but should look back to see if a passer is truly setting up to pass. On quick passes in the flat, the wings must be ready to rule if the pass is forward or backward.

Wing officials have responsibility for the passer if he scrambles past the line of scrimmage. If the quarterback is tackled out-of-bounds the wing official must rule on the legality of the contact. If the runner is driven out-of-bounds less than 5 yards past the scrimmage line, the covering wing official can handle the play and supervise players outside the sideline. When a play is more than a 5-yard gain and the runner heads across the sideline, the covering wing official marks the spot while the referee or back judge escorts the players back to the field.

If the play ends beyond the line and in a side zone, the back judge should be the middle man in the V. The wing official tosses the ball to the back judge, who relays it to the umpire.

The back judge observes blocking ahead of the runner, or the runner himself if the runner should advance more than 10 yards downfield.

When a play is more than a 5-yard gain and the runner heads across the sideline, the back judge should hustle out-of-bounds to protect players. On a play gaining considerably more than 10 yards, the wing official maintains the spot while the back judge escorts the players who went out-of-bounds back to the field.

The back judge is responsible for Team B's goal line until the ball is snapped at or inside Team B's 15-yard line; in that case, the back judge's starting position is on the end line.

On pass plays, the back judge must retreat far enough so he is always deeper than the deepest receiver.

When the pass is in flight, the back judge must quickly determine the intended receiver and get into the best possible position to observe the play. Both the offensive and defensive players must be observed for possible interference.

When a play ends inbounds near a sideline but a first down has been achieved, the covering game official should give the stop-the-clock signal. It is not appropriate to give the wind-the-clock signal before the stop-the-clock signal if the play ended inbounds but a first down was achieved.

If the clock is to start on the ready-for-play signal, the covering game official should indicate that to the referee by twirling the index finger. If the clock starts on the snap, the covering game official crosses the wrists at waist level.

Goal Line Plays

When the ball is snapped between Team B's 15 yard line and the goal line, the wing officials release slowly downfield at the snap, staying ahead of the runner all the way to the goal line.

The touchdown signal is given only by a game official who actually sees the ball in possession of a runner break the plane of the goal line. Mirroring the signal can cause problems; if the covering game official is incorrect, the crew will find it difficult to overcome two game officials making a mistake. If the covering game official is correct, there is no need for a second signal.

When Team A snaps the ball at or inside its own 7-yard line, the wings move quickly to the goal line in order to see if the runner advanced the ball completely beyond the goal line. If so, they cover the play and mark forward progress as usual.

Scrimmage Kicks

The referee must be ready to move in the appropriate direction in case of an errant snap or blocked kick. Once the kick is away, the referee takes a quick look to see the flight of the ball. If the kick is short and toward a sideline, the covering sideline game official should be prepared to determine the spot the ball went out-of-bounds. If the kick is long and goes out-of-bounds, the covering game official moves past where he thinks it flew out before walking toward the referee with his hand up — along the sideline — until the referee chops downward, telling him to halt.

If the receivers begin a return, the referee should move slowly downfield; if the runner breaks a long return, the referee may assume responsibility for the runner. The referee will get an inside-out look regardless of which sideline is involved since the appropriate wing official has sideline responsibility from end line to end line.

On blocked kicks, the referee should be ready to rule on the recovery and observe the advance of any player who runs with a recovered ball.

The umpire should move toward the line at the snap. Once the ball has been kicked and players from both teams have run past, the umpire pivots to the line judge's side. After the pivot, the umpire should move slowly downfield and observe action in front of the runner.

On a return to the middle of the field, the back judge has responsibility for the runner until the umpire takes the coverage; the point at which the transfer occurs depends on how far downfield the umpire has drifted after the kick.

At the snap, the head linesman observes the initial line charge and remains on the line until the kick crosses the neutral zone while the line judge releases on the snap and observes action on his side of the field between the neutral zone and the receivers.

On the vast majority of punts, however, both wing officials are responsible for their sideline from end line to end line and for covering the runner when the return is to their area. If the run is to the opposite sideline, clean up behind the play.

All deep receivers are the responsibility of the back judge. Once the ball is kicked, he judges the validity of any fair catch signal. The back judge has coverage responsibilities until the runner breaks into a side zone, when coverage transfers to the appropriate wing official.

The covering game official, regardless of position, must beanbag the spot where the kick ends. That spot may be used for post-scrimmage kick penalty enforcement.

Scoring Kicks

After the snap, the referee observes the actions of the kicker and holder. If the holder has to leave a kneeling position to catch or recover a poor snap, the referee must know whether the rules allow the holder to return to a kneeling position. After the kick, the referee is responsible for ruling on contact on the kicker and holder. If a kick try is blocked, the referee should blow his whistle immediately; a blocked field goal remains live, however.

In cases of a fake or a broken play, the referee assists on sideline coverage on the open side of the field. Once he is confident the kicker and holder are in no danger of being roughed, the referee looks to the deep officials to learn the result of the kick. The signal should then be relayed to the press box.

If a blocked kick or fake results in a play toward the goal line on the line judge's side of the field, the umpire moves toward the goal line to assist on coverage of the runner. The umpire also helps rule whether or not a blocked kick crossed the neutral zone on his side of the field.

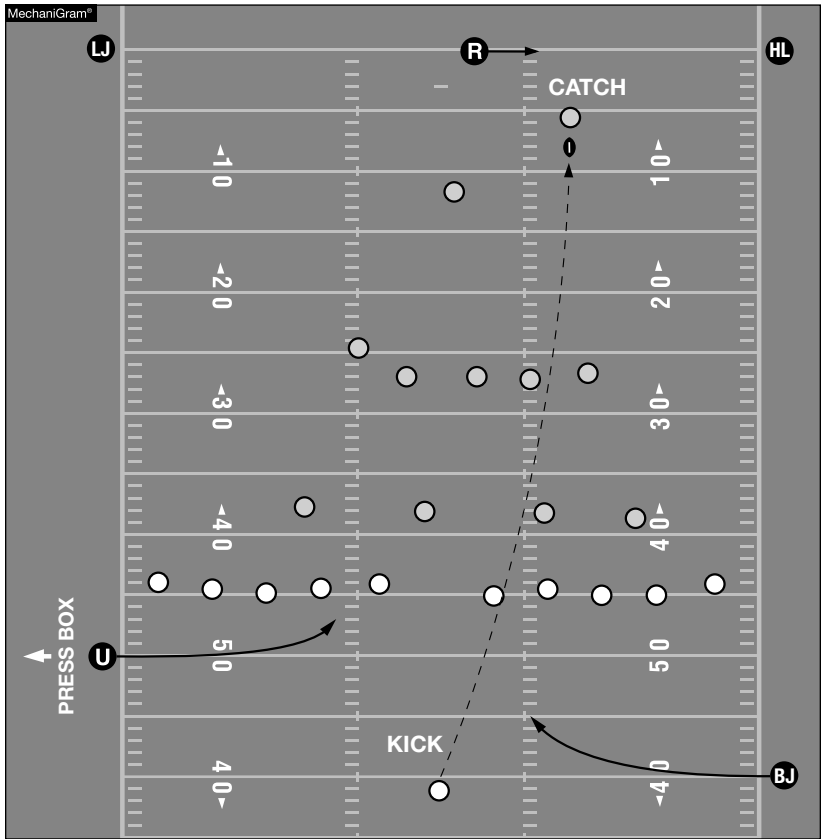
The wing officials on the line of scrimmage will rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. They can also help rule on ineligible downfield on fake kicks that lead to passes.

The umpire and back judge stand beyond the end zone and behind the upright on their side of the field. The positioning can be adjusted once the ball is kicked to provide the best look

possible. The umpire is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side; the back judge is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side as well as whether the ball cleared the crossbar.

When a successful kick passes the upright or when the ball breaks the goal line plane and it is obvious it will not score, the back judge sounds his whistle and gives the appropriate signals. If the kick is blocked, is obviously short or the play turns out not to be a kick (fake or busted play), the deep officials should move along the end line and toward the nearest sideline.

FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE PART 1



Action on the field: Receiver catches kick.

Referee: Observes catch. Signals clock to start when ball is caught by receiver. Moves to trail receiver and observes action of runner during return.

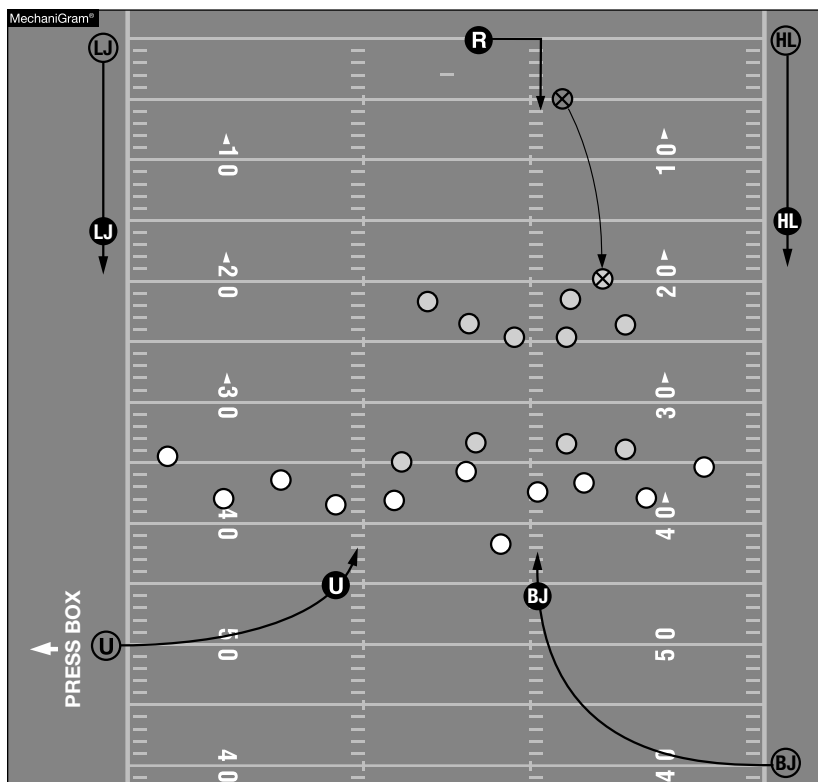
Umpire: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him while moving downfield no farther than Team R's 35-yard line.

Head linesman: Moves quickly downfield and observes action in his area.

Line judge: Observes players in his area.

Back judge: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him including kicker. Moves into field.

FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances.

Referee: Gives up coverage of runner to head linesman. Observes action in front of runner (halo principle).

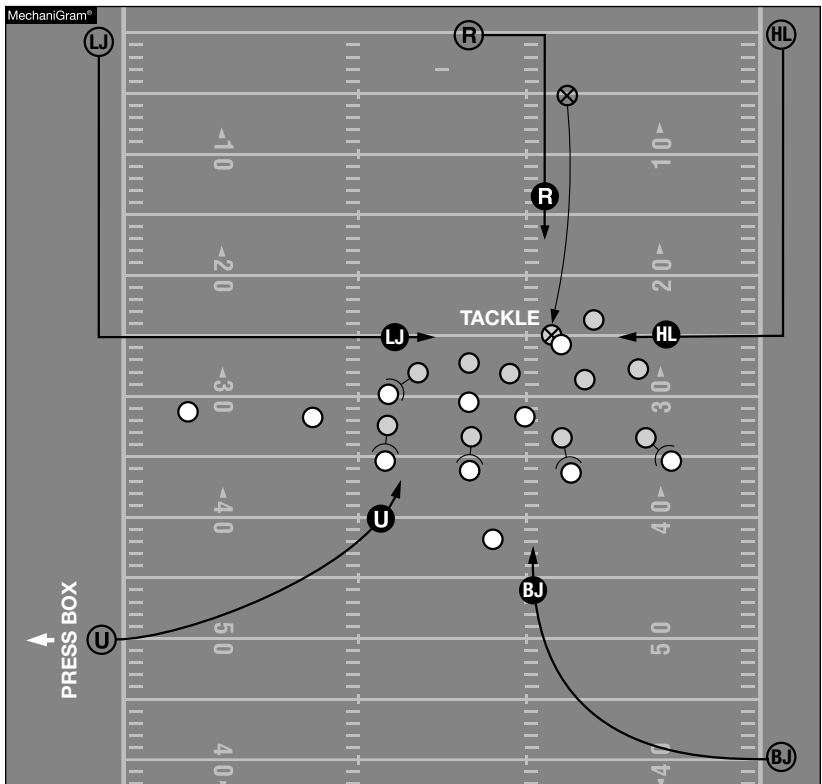
Umpire: Observes action in front of runner.

Head linesman: Takes coverage of runner when runner enters area.

Line judge: Moves with runner. Observes action in front of runner.

Back judge: Observes action in front of runner. Goes no farther than Team R's 45-yard line.

FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and is downed.

Referee: Moves slowly upfield trailing runner. Observes players. When certain no penalty flags are down, signals new series for Team R.

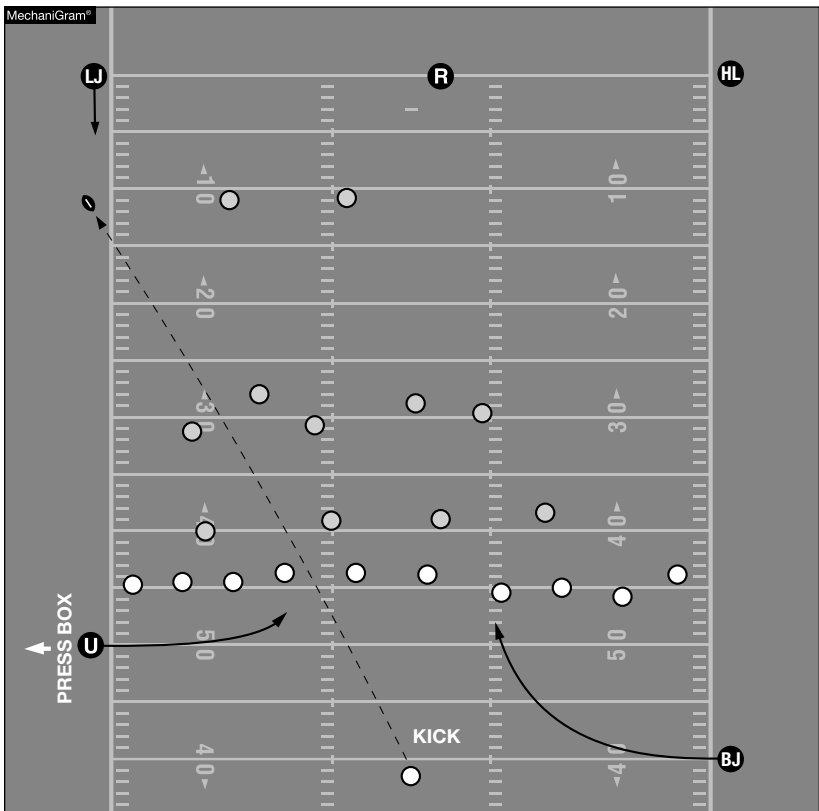
Umpire: Observes players and hustles to spot. Moves to middle of the field and spots ball for next down.

Head linesman: Observes players. Blows whistle and gives stop-the-clock signal when runner is downed. Squares off and holds spot. When referee signals possession for Team R, instructs line-to-gain crew to set chains for new series.

Line judge: Observes players. Mirrors spot until head linesman marks progress.

Back judge: Observes players. Retrieves game ball from ball helper and relays to umpire. When referee signals possession for Team R, moves into position for next down.

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 1



Action on the field: Ball kicked out-of-bounds in umpire's side zone.

Referee: Observes action in his area.

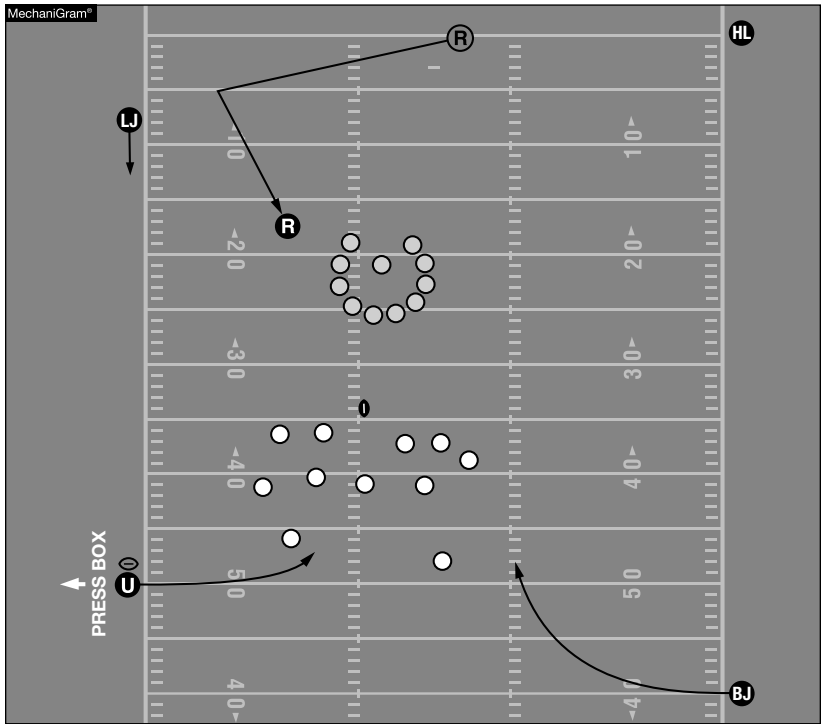
Umpire: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him.

Head linesman: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him.

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Moves into position to judge which team caused kick to go out-of-bounds. Gives stop-the-clock signal when ball is out-of-bounds.

Back judge: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him including kicker.

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 2



Action on the field: Team R chooses to take ball at its own 35-yard line (25 yards from the previous spot).

Referee: Observes action in his area. Communicates with umpire to determine result of play. Obtains choice from Team R. Signals Team K's foul and points toward Team R's 35-yard line, where ball will next be put in play. (If Team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

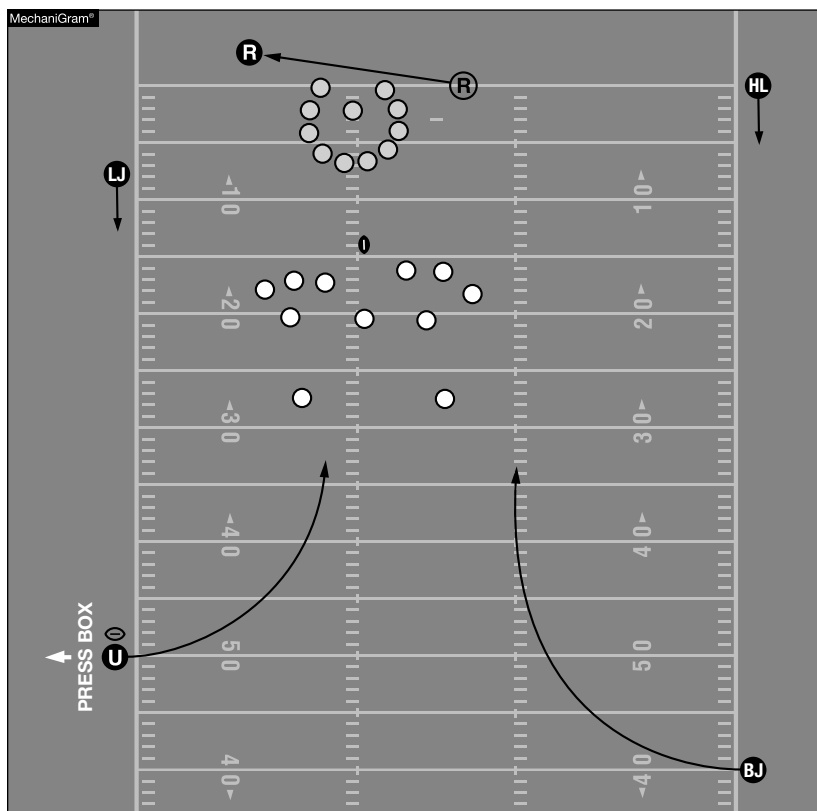
Umpire: Observes action in his area. Moves to hash mark at Team R's 35-yard line to set ball for new series. (If Team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

Head linesman: Observes action in his area. Moves to Team R's 35-yard line, where Team R will begin new series, assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains. (If Team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play to referee.

Back judge: Observes action in his area. Moves to position for start of new series. (If Team R chooses a rekick, signals Team K's foul, walks off penalty and returns to position for rekick.)

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 3



Action on the field: Team R caused the ball to go out-of-bounds.

Referee: Observes action in his area. Communicates with umpire to determine result of play. Signals new series will begin at spot where kick went out-of-bounds.

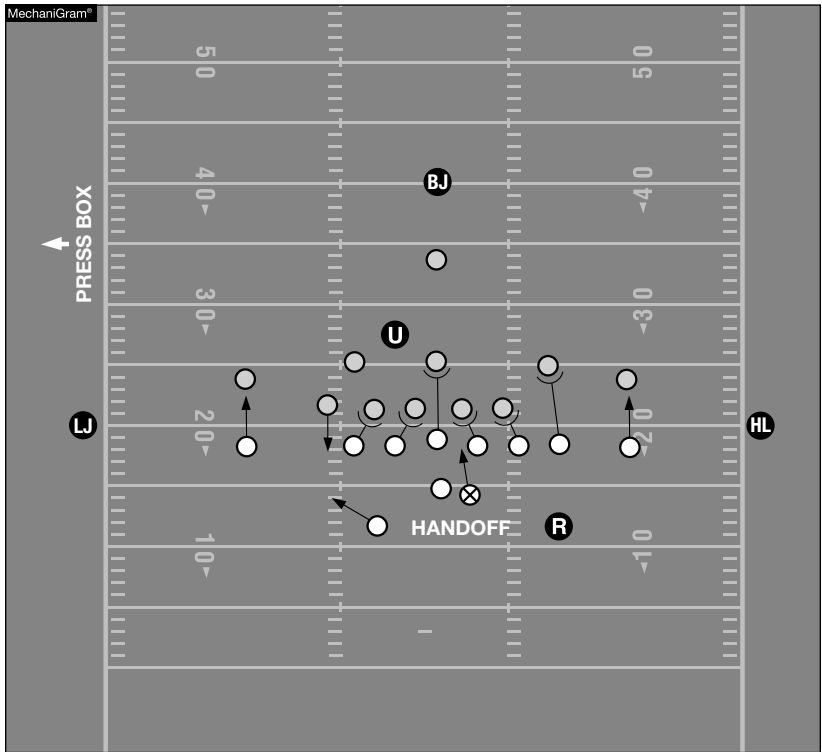
Umpire: Observes action in his area. Moves to spot where new series will begin. Holds spot until umpire sets ball for new series. Moves to hash mark where new series will begin and sets ball.

Head linesman: Observes action in his area. Moves to spot where new series will begin and assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains.

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play to referee.

Back judge: Observes action in his area. Moves to position for start of new series.

RUN UP THE MIDDLE PART 1



Action on the field: Handoff to a back.

Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Observes handoff and action around quarterback after handoff.

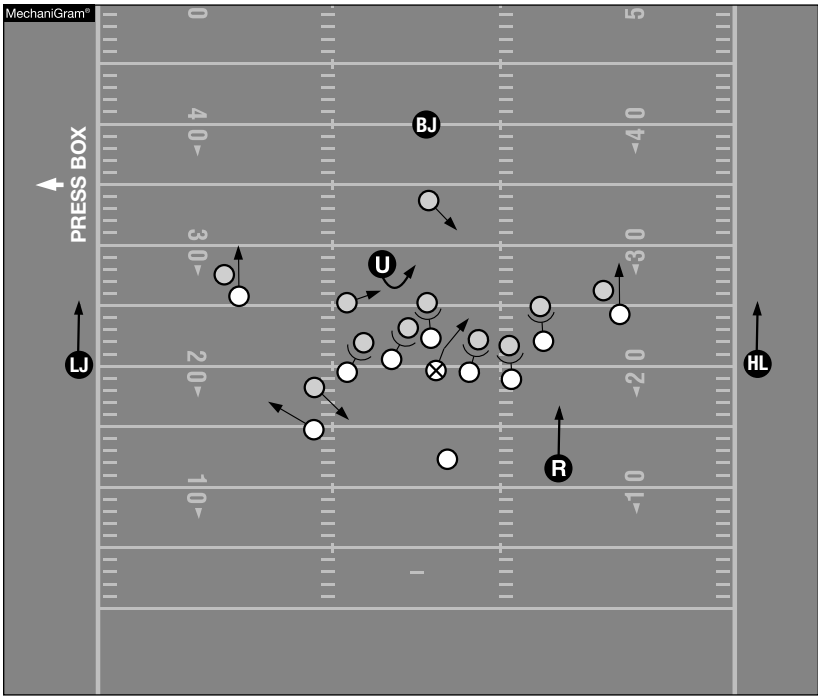
Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there.

Head linesman: Reads blocking of tight end and reads run. Observes blocking.

Line judge: Reads blocking of left tackle and reads run. Observes blocking.

Back judge: Reads blocking of tackle and reads run. Observes blocking.

RUN UP THE MIDDLE PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances.

Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes action behind runner.

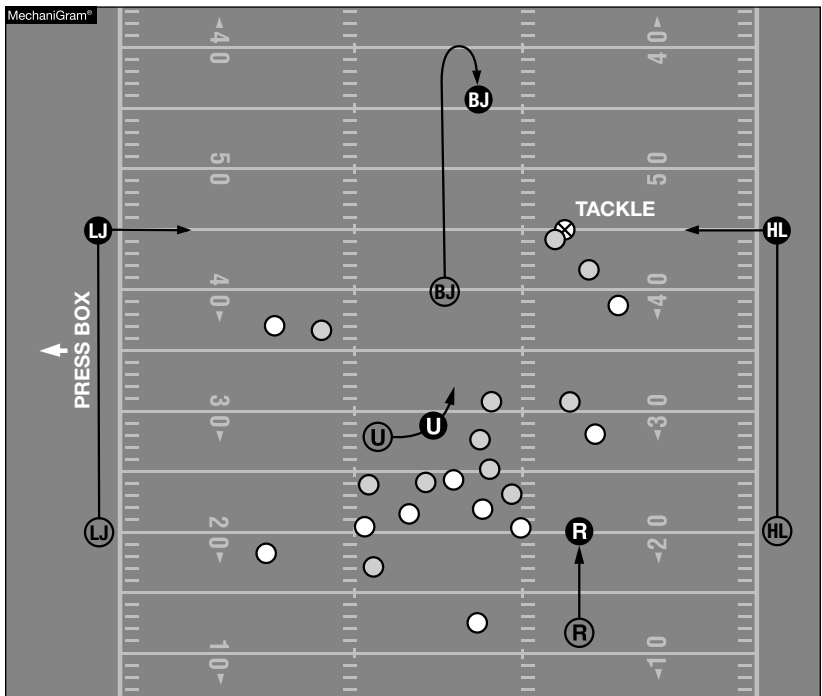
Umpire: Pivots to observe play. Observes action around runner.

Head linesman: Moves slowly downfield and observes action in front of runner.

Line judge: Moves slowly downfield and observes action in front of runner.

Back judge: Observes action in front of runner.

RUN UP THE MIDDLE PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and is downed.

Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players behind the ball in his area. If first down has been achieved and no penalty markers are down, signals head linesman to have line-to-gain crew move the chains.

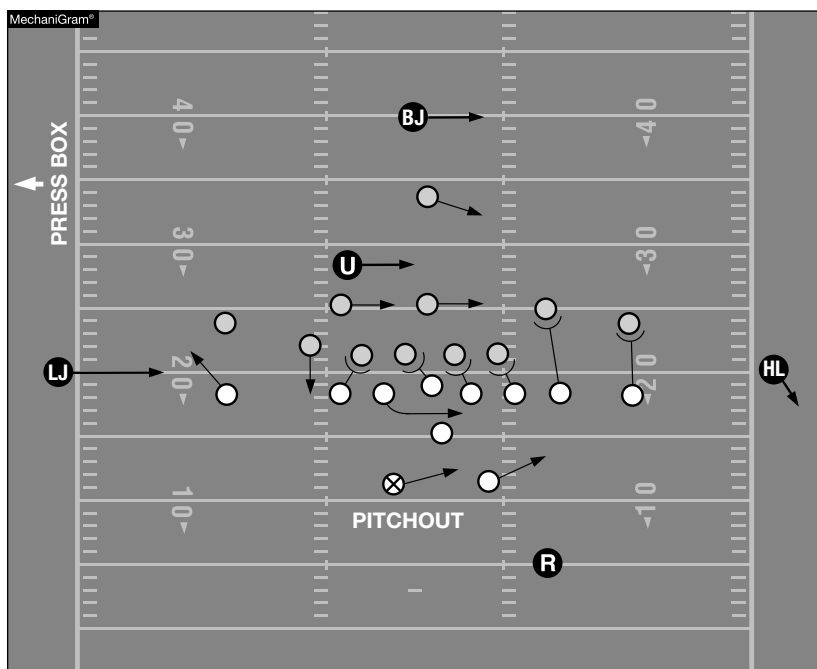
Umpire: Moves downfield and observes action behind runner. Observes players in his area.

Head linesman: Moves quickly downfield and observes action around runner until runner enters back judge's coverage area. Observes players. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. If first down has been achieved, gets signal from referee and instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot. Assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains for new series.

Line judge: Observes action in front of runner on his side of the field. Squares off to mirror spot of forward progress. Observes players in his area.

Back judge: Observes blocking ahead of the runner and the runner himself if the runner advances more than 10 yards downfield. When runner is downed, observes players for dead-ball fouls.

SWEEP TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE PART 1



Action on the field: Pitchout to back.

Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Observes runner and action around runner.

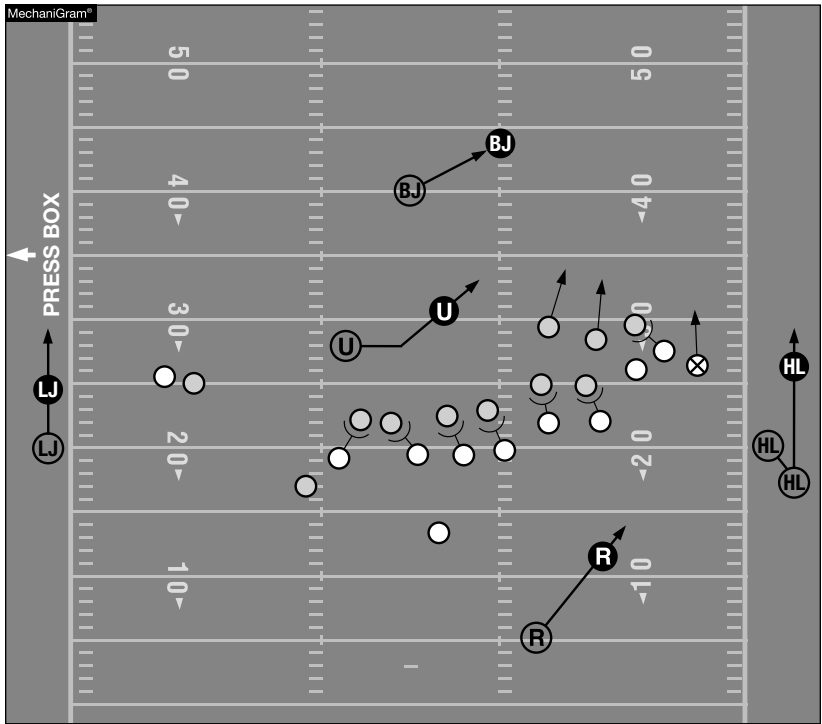
Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: Looks through split end, reads blocking of tight end and reads run. As flow comes to his side, steps backward across sideline and upfield to prevent interfering with play. Waits until players have flowed downfield before moving to cover play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Line judge: Looks through end, reads blocking of pulling left tackle and reads sweep to opposite side. Moves slowly toward play. Observes blocking and action of players not involved in flow of play.

Back judge: Observes blocking of tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

SWEEP TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances.

Referee: Gives up coverage of runner to head linesman. Moves slowly downfield trailing flow and cleans up after the play.

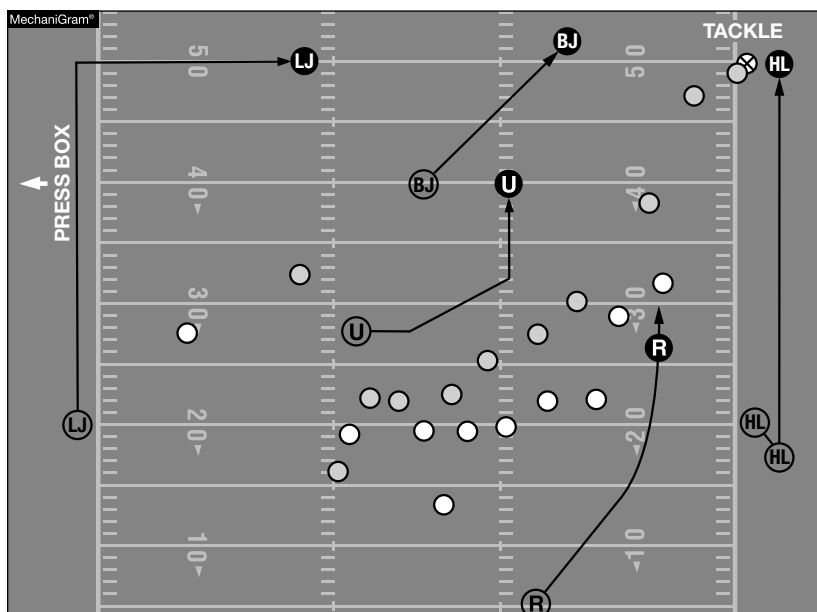
Umpire: Pivots and moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: Takes coverage of runner and moves quickly up sideline, allow play to get past you-trail slightly. Observes runner and action around runner.

Line judge: Moves slowly downfield and cleans up after the play.

Back judge: Moves toward play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

SWEEP TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and goes out-of-bounds.

Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. If first down has been achieved and no penalty markers are down, signals head linesman to have line-to-gain crew move the chains.

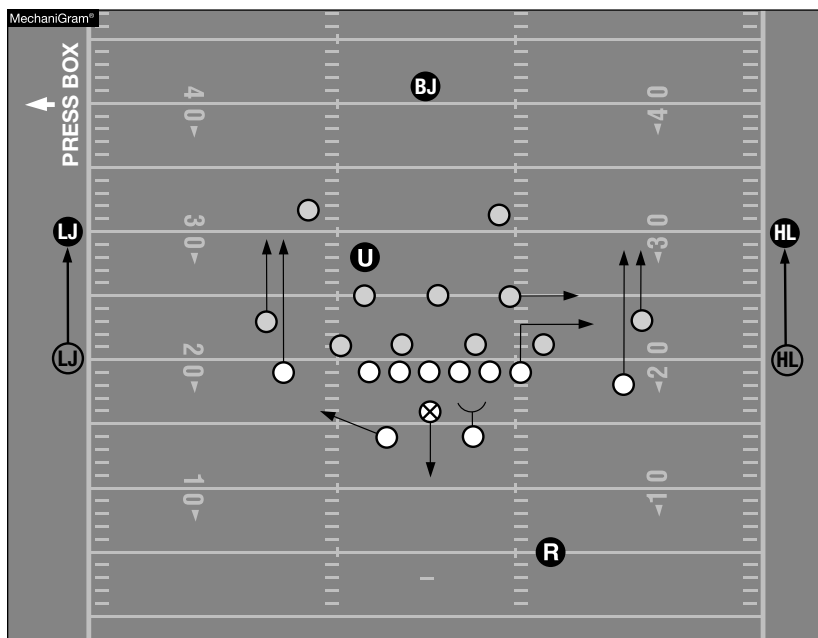
Umpire: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. Once spot is established, hustles to hash mark to set ball for next down.

Head linesman: Gives up coverage of runner when runner enters back judge's coverage zone (halo principle). Moves down sideline and observes action behind the runner. Blows whistle and gives stop-the-clock signal when runner steps out-of-bounds. Hustles to dead-ball spot to prevent post-play action. If first down has been achieved, gets signal from referee and instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot. Assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains for new series.

Line judge: Moves downfield with flow of play and cleans up after the play. Squares off to mirror spot of forward progress. Observes players in his area.

Back judge: Takes coverage of runner when runner enters coverage area (halo principle). Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. Observes players. Holds spot until umpire arrives to set ball for new series.

DEEP PASS PART 1



Action on the field: Quarterback drops back.

Referee: Keys on opposite-side tackle; reads pass when tackle retreats. As quarterback drops back, moves back to maintain distance between himself and quarterback. Observes blocking by backs.

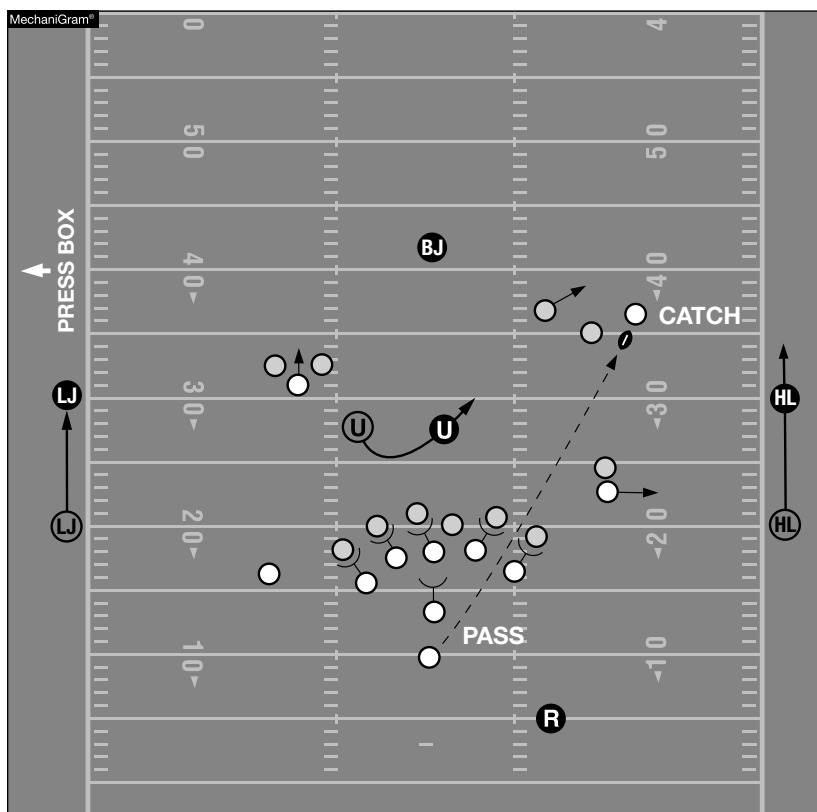
Umpire: Observes presnap adjustments and legality of snap. Keys on center and guards; reads pass when linemen retreat. Observes blocking.

Head linesman: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. Uses extended arm signal to alert line judge that end is in offensive backfield. After snap, observes initial blocking, then moves slowly downfield and watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

Line judge: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. After snap, observes initial blocking, then moves slowly downfield and watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

Back judge: Observes tackle's block and reads pass, then shifts focus to split end. As receivers move downfield, moves back to maintain distance between himself and receivers. Watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

DEEP PASS PART 2



Action on the field: Pass thrown to and caught by receiver.

Referee: Observes passer. Moves downfield with flow of play.

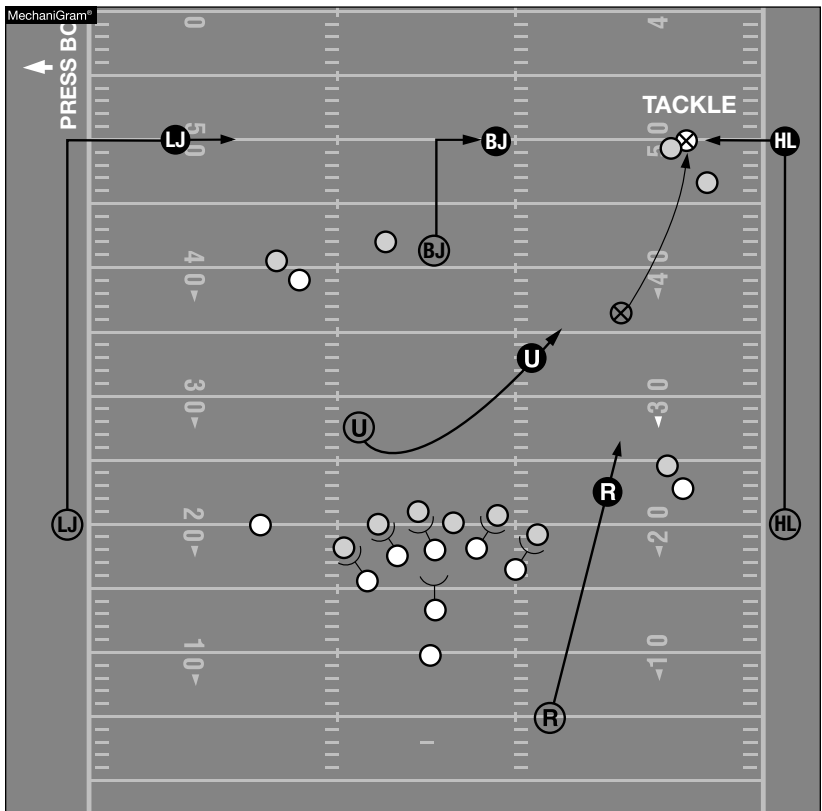
Umpire: Pivots and moves in direction of the ball.

Head linesman: Moves downfield and maintains position about halfway between line of scrimmage and deepest receiver on his side, then moves quickly to get angle to observe attempted catch.

Line judge: Moves downfield and maintains position about halfway between line of scrimmage and deepest receiver on his side.

Back judge: Determines intended receiver and pivots to get angle and observe attempted catch.

DEEP PASS PART 3



Action on the field: Runner advances and is downed.

Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players upfield of the ball.

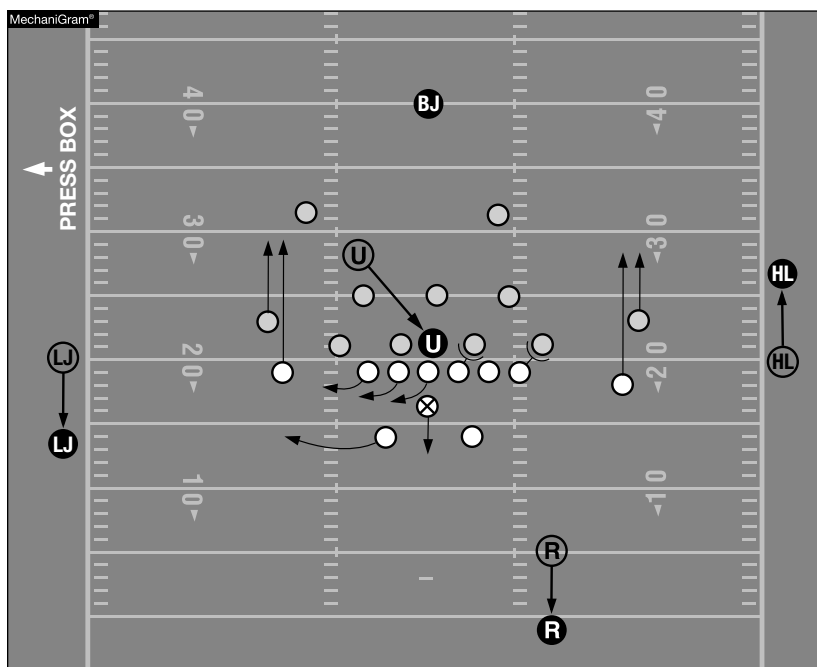
Umpire: Moves slowly downfield and observes players upfield of the ball. Once spot is established, hustles to hash mark to set ball for next down.

Head linesman: Continues to move downfield. Blows whistle when receiver is downed. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. Stops clock if first down has been achieved.

Line judge: Moves downfield and observes players behind the ball in his area. Practices dead-ball officiating.

Back judge: Moves downfield and observes players in his area. Gives stop-the-clock signal if first down has been achieved.

SCREEN OR PASS TO FLAT PART 1



Action on the field: Quarterback drops back.

Referee: Keys on opposite-side tackle; reads screen or draw when tackle pulls. As quarterback drops back, moves back to maintain distance between himself and quarterback. Observes blocking by backs.

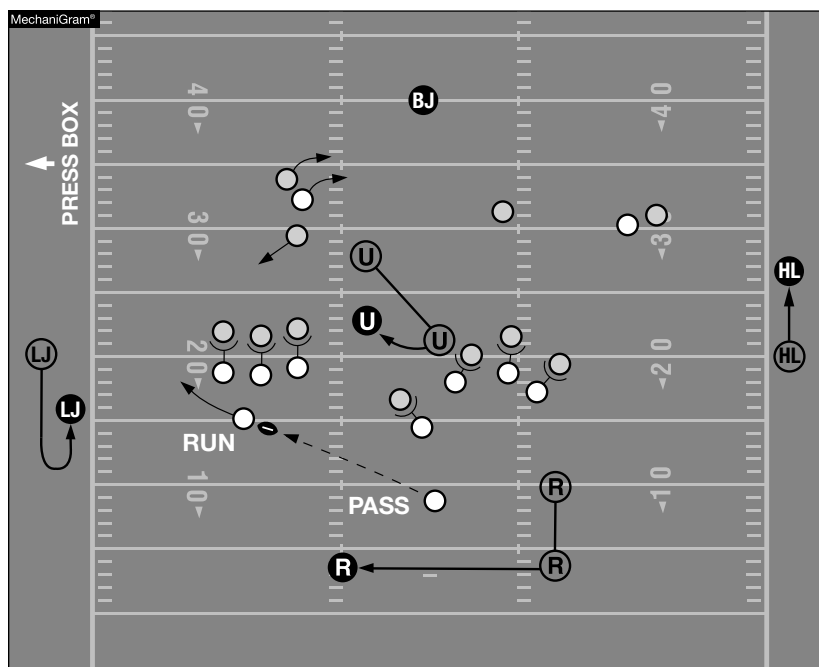
Umpire: Observes presnap adjustments and legality of snap. Keys on center and guards; reads screen or draw when linemen pull. Steps up to the line of scrimmage and observes blocking.

Head linesman: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. Uses extended arm signal to alert line judge that end is in offensive backfield. After snap, observes initial blocking, then uses shuffle step to move slowly downfield. Watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

Line judge: Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. After snap, observes initial blocking; reads screen or draw when tackle pulls. Moves into offensive backfield to cover receiver out of backfield.

Back judge: Reads run when tackle fires out. Observes blocking by his keys.

SCREEN OR PASS TO FLAT PART 2



Action on the field: Pass thrown to and caught by back.

Referee: Observes passer. Looks to line judge for either backward pass signal, incomplete pass signal or no signal (complete forward pass). When passer is no longer threatened, moves to follow play.

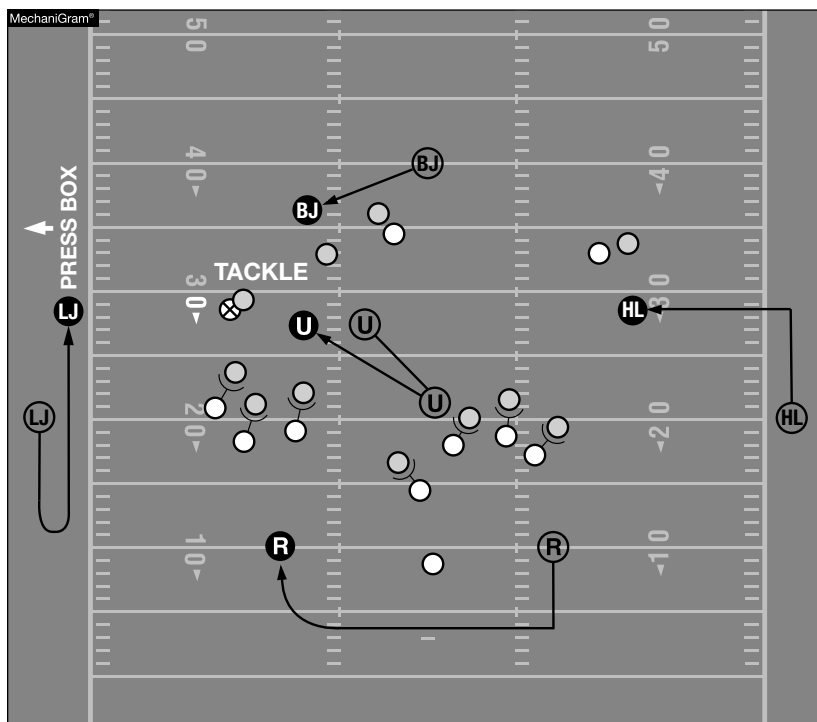
Umpire: Observes blocking.

Head linesman: Moves downfield and observes action of players in his area.

Line judge: Rules on whether pass is backward or forward. Observes action in front of runner.

Back judge: When position of ball is established, moves toward line judge's sideline and observes action in front of runner.

SCREEN OR PASS TO FLAT PART 3



Action on the field: Runner advances and is downed.

Referee: Moves slowly downfield and observes players in his area.

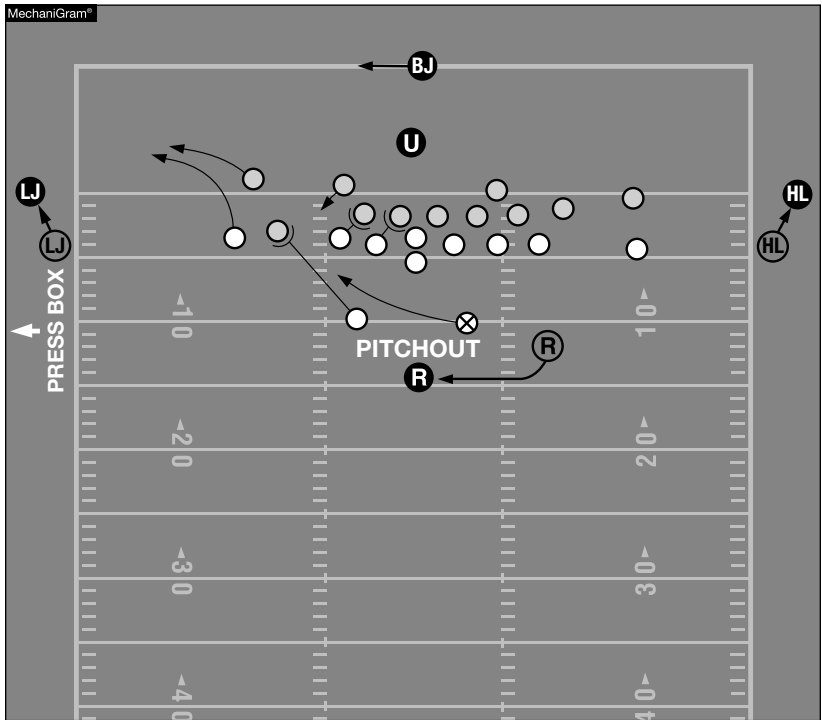
Umpire: Pivots toward play and moves slowly downfield. Observes players in front of the ball. Moves to hash mark to set ball for next play.

Head linesman: Moves downfield and observes players in his area. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress.

Line judge: Blows whistle when receiver is downed. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. Stops clock if first down has been achieved.

Back judge: Moves toward play and observes players around pile.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN PART 1



Action on the field: Pitchout to back, sweep left.

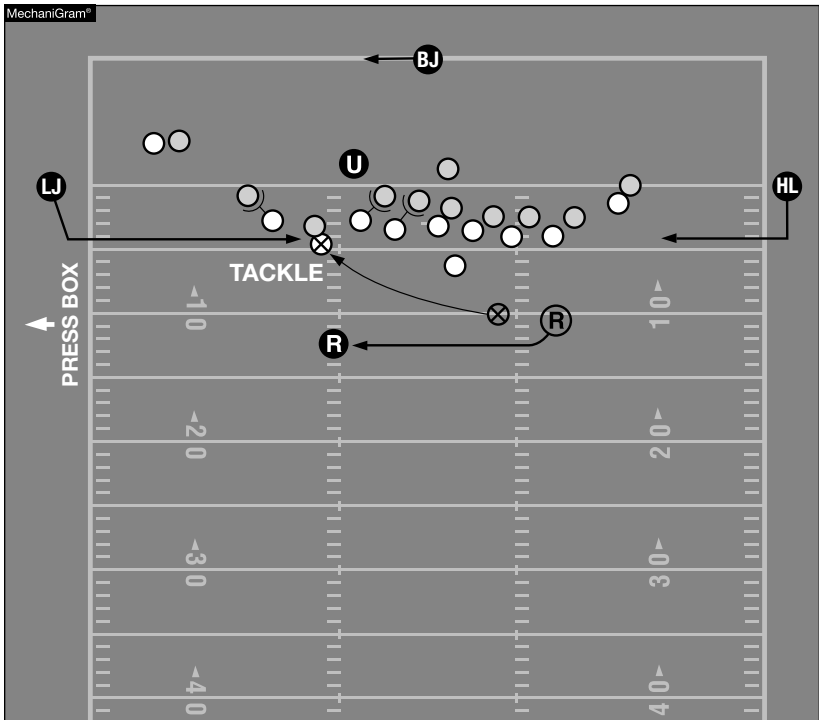
Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman and line judge: Moves immediately to goal line at snap. Observes initial blocking.

Back judge: Reads blocking of tight end and tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN PART 2



Action on the field: Runner stopped short of goal line.

Referee: Observes action.

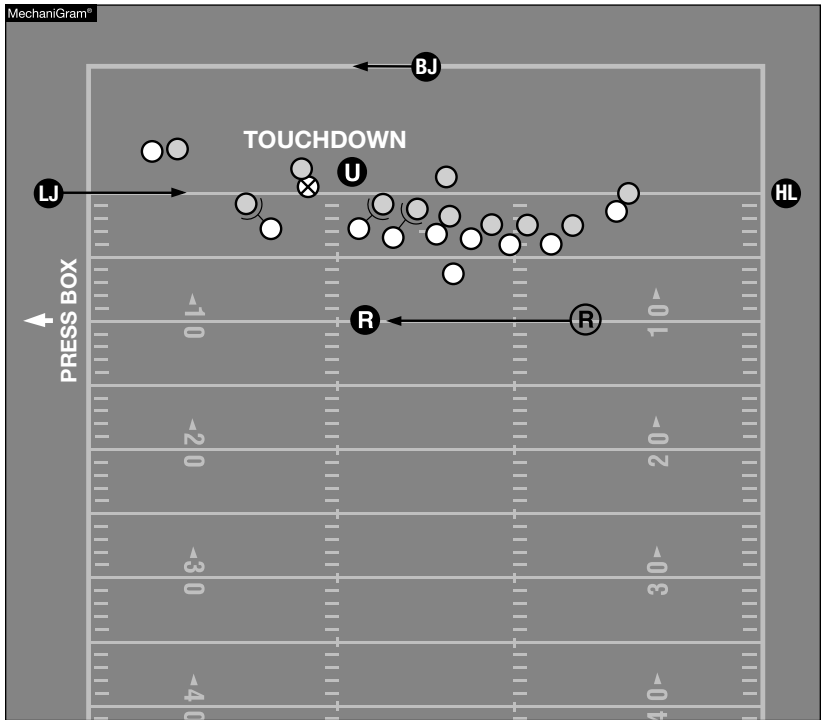
Umpire: Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: Officiates back to the ball and squares off to mirror line judge's spot.

Line judge: Officiates back to the ball to observe contact on runner and squares off to indicate forward progress. Blows whistle when runner is downed.

Back judge: Moves with flow of play and observes action.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN PART 3



Action on the field: Runner scores.

Referee: Observes action. When line judge signals touchdown (if no flags are down), ensures the players have safely separated, then turns to press box and signals touchdown.

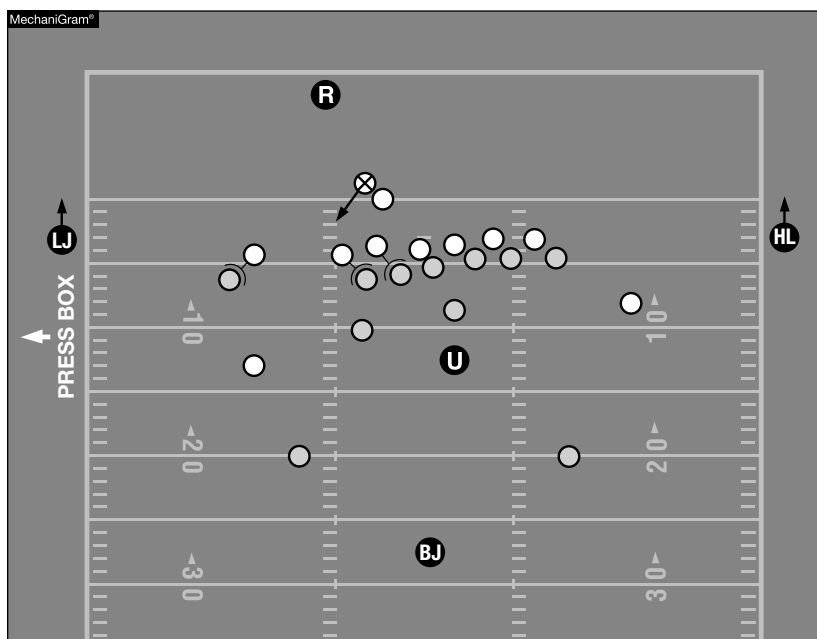
Umpire: Observes action.

Head linesman: Observes action.

Line judge: Observes runner. When ball in possession of runner breaks plane of goal line, moves toward runner while straddling goal line, blows whistle and signals touchdown.

Back judge: Moves with flow of play and observes action.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE COMING OUT PART 1



Action on the field: Handoff to running back.

Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

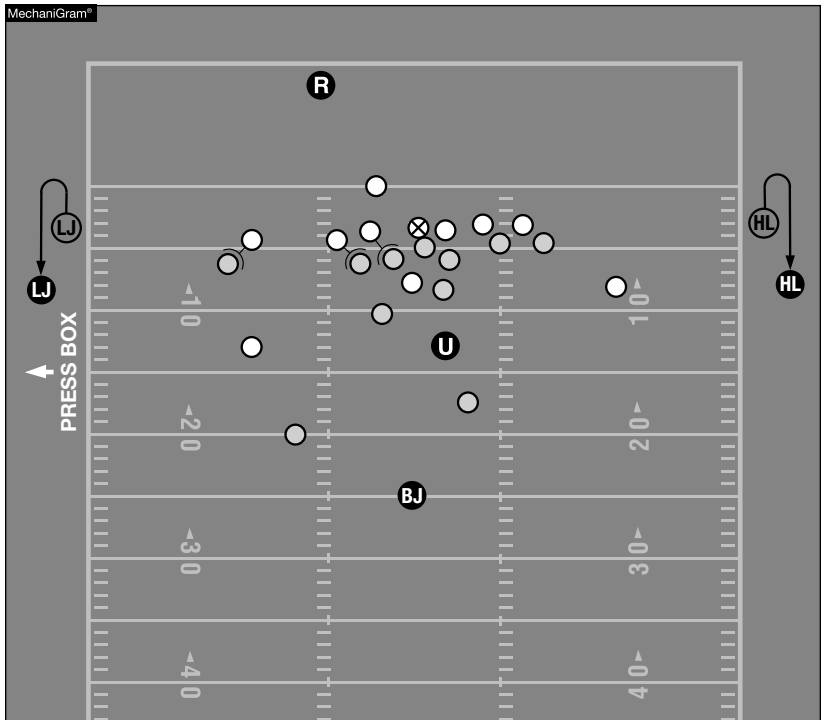
Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

Head linesman: On plays snapped between the 10-yard line and the goal line, moves immediately to the goal line at the snap. Observes initial blocking. If runner is in coverage area and is downed in end zone, signals safety. If runner advances beyond goal line, officiates back to the ball and covers play as usual.

Line judge: On plays snapped between the 3-yard line and the goal line, moves immediately to the goal line at the snap. Observes initial blocking. If runner is in coverage area and is downed in end zone, signals safety. If runner advances beyond goal line, officiates back to the ball and covers play as usual.

Back judge: Reads blocking of tight end and tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE COMING OUT PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances beyond goal line.

Referee: Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

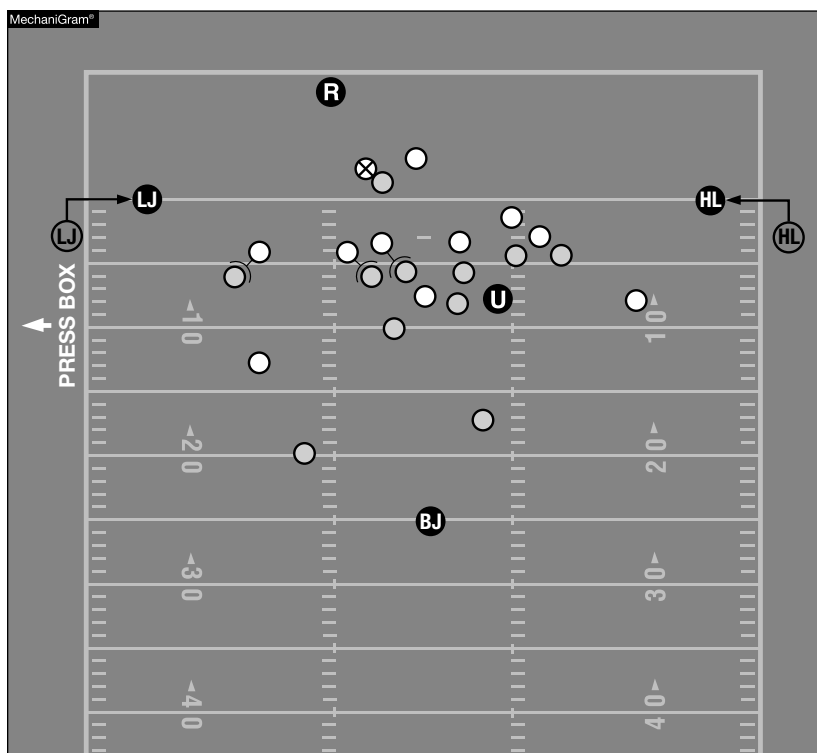
Umpire: Steps back to avoid interfering with play and pivots to observe play. Observes action around runner.

Head linesman: Reverses field, moves with flow of play and observes action in front of runner.

Line judge: Reverses field, moves with flow of play and observes action in front of runner.

Back judge: Observes action in front of runner.

GOAL LINE PLAYS: OFFENSE COMING OUT PART 3



Action on the field: Runner downed in end zone.

Referee: Looks to appropriate wing official for progress spot or safety signal.

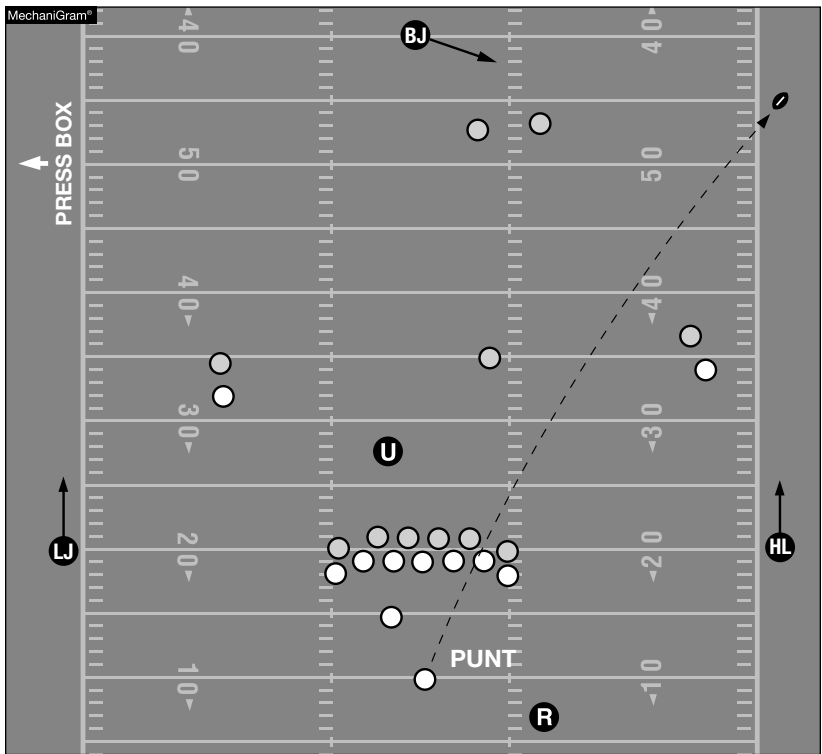
Umpire: Continues to observe blocking.

Head linesman: If runner is clearly downed in end zone in coverage area, hustles in and signals safety. If runner is out of coverage area, hustles in for dead-ball officiating.

Line judge: If runner is clearly downed in end zone in coverage area, hustles in and signals safety. If runner is out of coverage area, hustles in for dead-ball officiating.

Back judge: Observes action of players away from pile.

SCRIMMAGE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 1



Action on the field: Ball kicked toward sideline.

Referee: Observes snap and action around kicker.

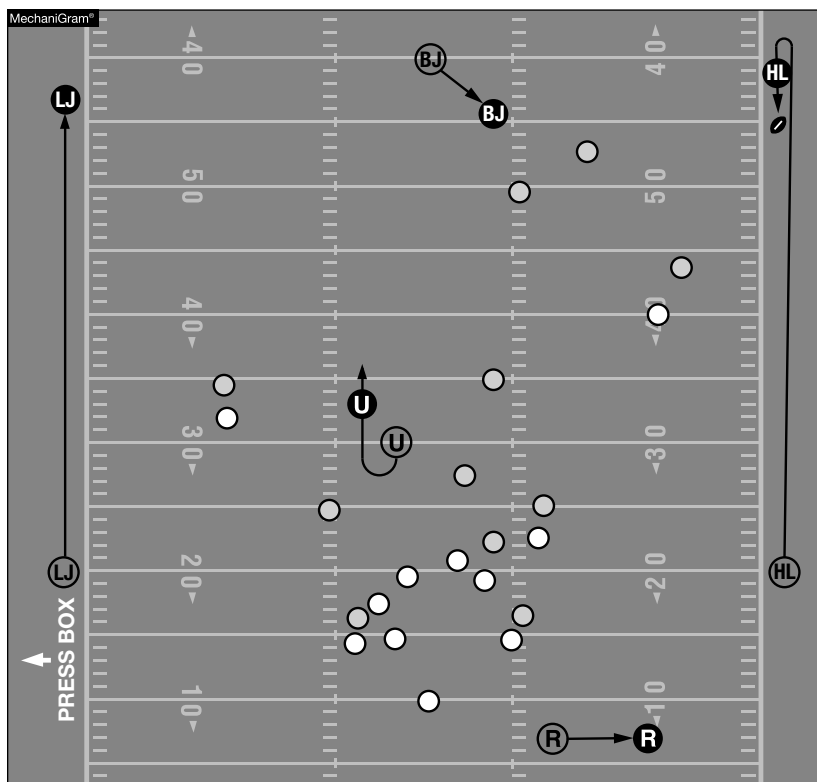
Umpire: Observes initial blocking and contact on the snapper.

Head linesman: Observes initial line charge and remains on the line to rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. Moves quickly downfield when ball crosses neutral zone.

Line judge: Moves downfield on snap, observing action of players moving downfield.

Back judge: Observes receivers. Retreats to observe result of kick.

SCRIMMAGE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 2



Action on the field: Kick is dead out-of-bounds.

Referee: Moves quickly toward sideline to observe flight of ball.

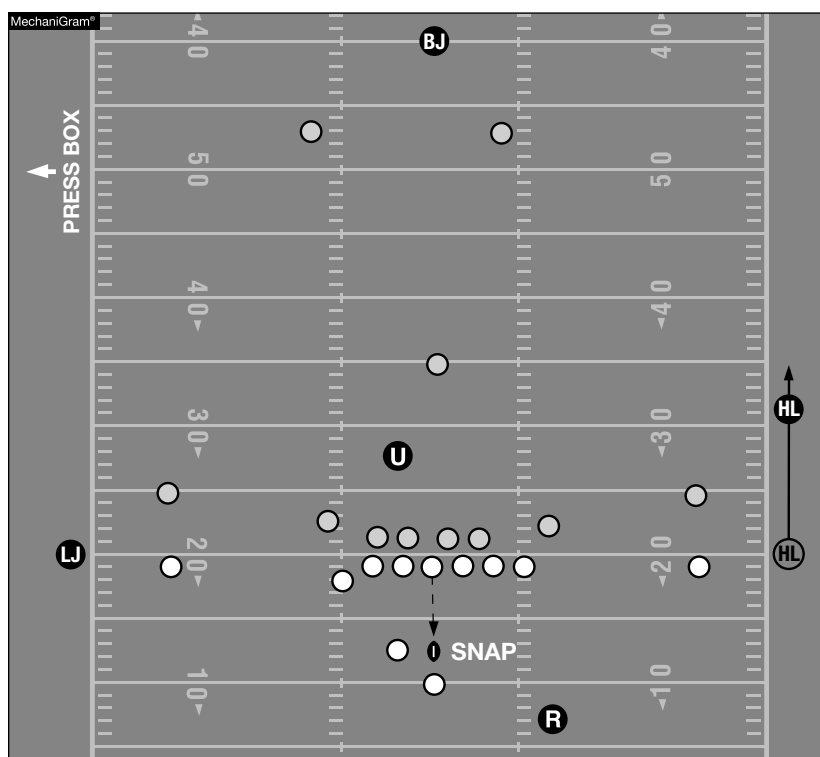
Umpire: Pivots toward the line judge's side of the field, observing players as they move downfield. Moves downfield on line judge's side of field.

Head linesman: Moves down sideline. Observes action of players in front of ball. Moves 5 to 7 yards beyond spot where ball apparently went out-of-bounds, pivots and makes eye contact with referee.

Line judge: Moves down sideline. Observes action of players in front of ball.

Back judge: Gives stop-the-clock signal when he sees ball go out-of-bounds.

SCRIMMAGE KICK TO BACK JUDGE'S SIDE ZONE PART 1



Action on the field: Ball snapped to punter.

Referee: Observes snap and action in front of and around kicker.

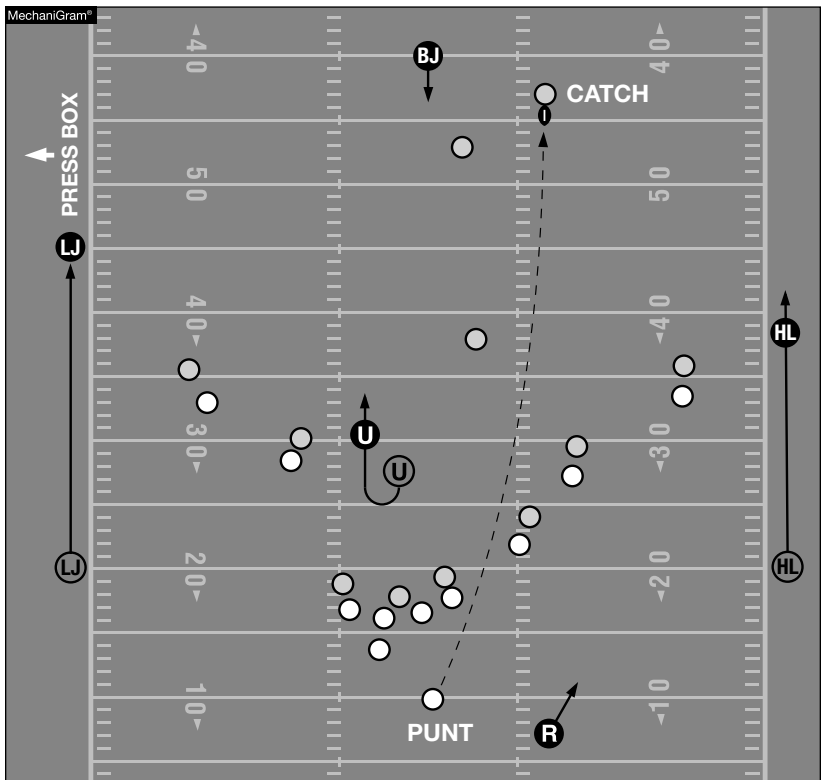
Umpire: Observes initial blocking and contact on the snapper.

Head linesman: Releases on snap and begins to move downfield, observes action on his side of the field between the neutral zone and the receivers. Has first waive responsibility.

Line judge: Observes initial line charge and remains on the line to rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. Has second waive responsibility.

Back judge: Observes action of receivers.

SCRIMMAGE KICK TO BACK JUDGE'S SIDE ZONE PART 2



Action on the field: Receiver catches punt.

Referee: Observes line play after ball has cleared neutral zone. Moves slowly downfield.

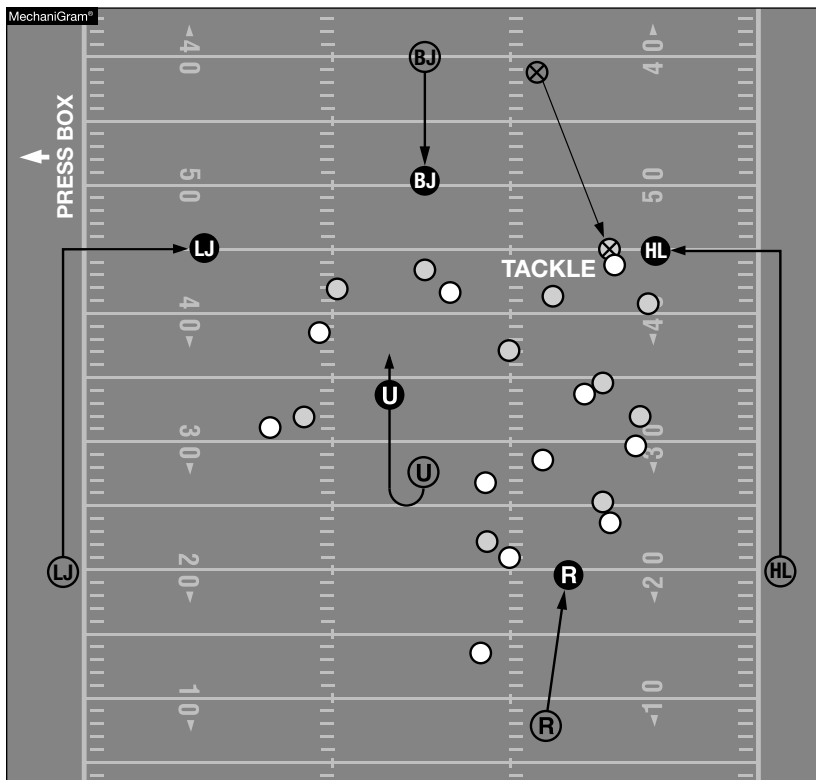
Umpire: Pivots toward line judge's side of the field. Observes players as they move downfield. Moves downfield with flow of players.

Head linesman: Observes action of players in front of ball.

Line judge: Observes action of players in front of ball.

Back judge: Drops beanbag at spot the kick ends. Moves with runner.

SCRIMMAGE KICK TO BACK JUDGE'S SIDE ZONE PART 3



Action on the field: Runner advances and is downed.

Referee: Observes action of players. When certain there are no penalty markers down, signals head linesman to move line-to-gain crew.

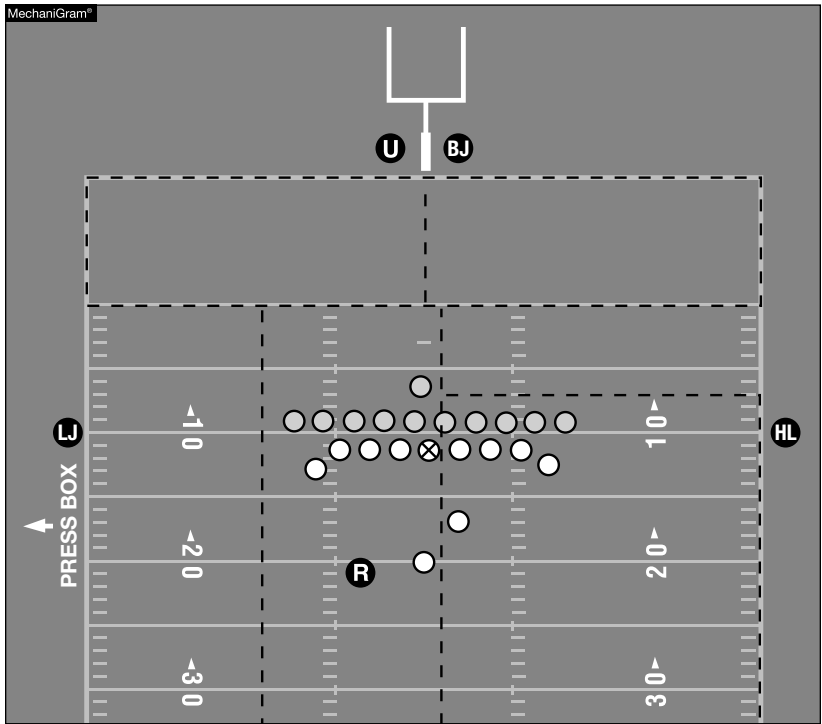
Umpire: Observes action of players. Moves to spot to set ball for new series.

Head linesman: Takes coverage of runner when runner enters coverage area. When runner is downed, squares off to spot and stops the clock. Upon signal from referee, instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot.

Line judge: Observes action of players. Squares off to mirror head linesman's spot.

Back judge: Gives up coverage of runner when runner enters head linesman's coverage area (halo principle). Observes action of players.

SCORING KICK



After the snap, the referee observes the actions of the kicker and holder. If the holder has to leave a kneeling position to catch or recover a poor snap, the referee must rule on the holder's ability to return to a kneeling position.

In cases of a fake or a broken play, the referee assists on sideline coverage on the open side of the field (the one vacated by either the line judge or head linesman).

Once he is confident the kicker and holder are in no danger of being roughed, the referee looks to the deep officials to learn the result of the kick. The signal should then be relayed to the press box.

On a blocked field-goal attempt, the wing on the line will rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. That game official also has sole responsibility for encroachment and rules on the legality of the snap.

If a pass is used on the fake, the wing must know if the passer was beyond the line. He can also help rule on ineligible downfield on fake kicks that lead to passes. When a runner approaches the goal line, the wing must be at the goal line to rule on the potential score.

CREW OF FIVE

The wing can move toward the offensive and defensive linemen after the kick and use his voice to encourage players to unpile.

The back judge and umpire should confirm their ruling verbally before signaling, using “good” or “no, no, no.”

The umpire is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side; the back judge is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side as well as whether the ball cleared the crossbar.

When a successful kick passes the upright or when the ball breaks the goal line plane and it is obvious it will not score, the back judge sounds his whistle and gives the appropriate signals. If the kick is blocked, is obviously short or the play turns out not to be a kick (fake or busted play), the deep officials should move along the end line and toward the nearest sideline. Once the sideline has been reached, the deep official can move toward the goal line to assist on coverage of the runner.

Part 5

Crew of Seven

5.1 Philosophy

Movement and compromise are the characteristics of football officiating. Twenty-two players are moving around, competing for space and position; the game officials must utilize hustle, angles, distance and planned compromises to observe and control the action.

Hustle

Hustle is an overused word today. Everyone knows it's needed to succeed, but what does it really mean when relating it to football officiating? Hustle to cover plays and to get into position is important regardless of how many game officials work a game. Using seven game officials provides significant coverage and attention to players well downfield, such as those running pass routes or blocking ahead of the runner.

Significant movement by all game officials is critical for proper field coverage. Hustle gives you a chance. That equates to more running and a well-placed concern for angles.

Movements

All game officials must work hard at understanding then obtaining proper angles. Your line of sight must provide you with an opportunity to view a developing play or part of a play. You must be able to see completely through the play, which means your vision must be unobstructed by the players directly involved in the play and others near the play.

When the ball is snapped, all 22 players are in motion. A game official's angle and distance adjustments are constant as play is in motion. A step or two in the right direction may open up a whole new viewing experience, free from obstruction; a step in the wrong direction will screen you from the critical game action.

Movement allows the non-covering game officials to watch players away from the ball, the critical component to combating physical play. When a wing official moves off the sideline, he can watch the areas behind the run, where rough play often occurs.

The covering wing official also moves along the sideline to improve angles. There's usually at least three and sometimes six or seven players around the ball, either trying to throw blocks or attempting to make the tackle. Movement is critical to watching action around the ball. It's also paramount to game control.

Proper movements when the play is over are also important. Because the ball is live for only a few seconds every play, there is a tendency to think about spotting or retrieving the ball for the next play and forgetting about the players. If game officials ignore post-play action, players get physical with each other and game control suffers. All game officials must observe player action after the ball has been whistled dead.

Field coverage

Proper coverage is enhanced by good eye contact and a “feel” for where your crewmates are looking. You must learn about all aspects of football officiating to know what areas all members of the crew are covering. Once you’ve mastered that, practical onfield application develops through communication, including eye contact and understanding. At the risk of being obvious, you’ve got to know exactly what both you and your crewmates are expected to do in specific situations — then effectively communicate with your crewmates — to truly master football officiating. When you understand why angles and distance are important and how and when to obtain them, you’ll find yourself in great position throughout each game.

5.2 Coin Toss

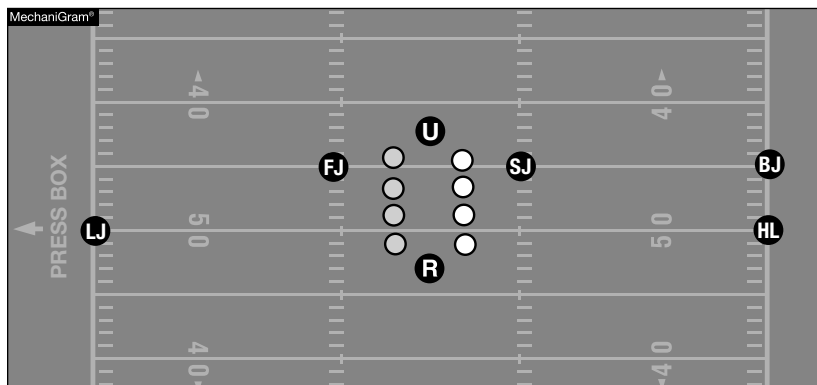
The coin toss is conducted in the center of the field 20 minutes before the game. The state association may prescribe alternative procedures. The toss may be held at an earlier time off the field if both coaches agree. In such a case the results may be simulated in the center of the field 3 minutes before the game.

The line judge and head linesman are responsible for getting the teams on the field at 3 minutes before the start of each half. The referee and umpire stand in the center of the field to await arrival of captains. The head linesman remains near the sideline and directs the line-to-gain crew. The field judge and side judge get the captains at five minutes and escort them to the hash mark when directed by the referee. At the hash mark, the captains are released. The field judge and side judge monitor the activity from the hash mark.

The speaking captains (those who will give options for their teams) should be positioned so they are closest to the referee when the group meets in the center of the field. The umpire and referee meet the captains at their respective sidelines and escort them to the middle of the field, positioned so their backs are to their own sidelines. The referee may either face the scoreboard or have his back to it during the toss.

When they reach the center of the field, the referee and umpire will be across from each other.

Players who are not involved in the toss should be kept out of the area between the top of the numbers on both sides of the field. The captains are asked to introduce themselves to each other.



The referee should allow all captains to view both sides of the coin, identifying which side is heads and which is tails. The visiting captain is instructed to call heads or tails before the coin is flipped. The umpire repeats the choice loudly enough for all to hear.

Once the winner is determined, the winner is offered his choice: defer, receive, choose a goal to defend or kick. If the choice is to defer, the referee immediately faces the press box, taps the shoulder of the deferring captain and signals the declination. The remaining choices are then presented to the other captain and the final selection is made by the deferring captain. If the winner of the coin toss does not defer, no signal is immediately given.

When the final selections are made, the captains are asked to put their backs to the goal line their team will defend and the referee gives the appropriate signal. If the choice is to kick or receive, only the first selection is signaled. If the choice is to defend a goal, two signals are given: pointing both arms toward the goal line being defended, followed by the appropriate signal for the other captain.

If at any time during the toss the referee errs or gives incorrect information (for instance, giving the wrong team an option), the umpire should speak up immediately.

When the toss is completed, the other game officials join the referee and umpire in the center of the field and record the results of the toss. All game officials simultaneously move to their kickoff positions.

It is recommended that as the teams are entering the field prior to the beginning of the second half, the head linesman and line judge obtain the second-half choices from the respective head coaches. The choices are communicated to the opposing coaches during the 3-minute warmup period.

Overtime Procedure

If overtime is necessary, the game officials wait for the 3-minute intermission to end. The referee and umpire go to their respective sidelines and once again escort the captains to

the center of the field while the other game officials assume the same positions as for the pregame toss. The coin toss is repeated with the visiting team again calling it. When the winner is determined, the options are explained. The winner may not defer, but may choose offense, defense or the goal to be used.

When the selections are completed, the captains of the team on offense are asked to face the goal line in the direction their team will advance and the opposing captains stand with their backs to that goal line. The referee then taps the shoulder of the captain of the team that won the toss and gives the first down signal in the appropriate direction.

5.3 Keys

Football game officials should develop field and situational awareness to help them determine what's going to happen before it occurs. Those hints are called keys. Game officials have initial keys at the start of each play, but those keys are not permanent. They are initial responsibilities that change as the play develops.

There are two basic types of keys: call them “situational” and “positional” keys.

Situational Keys

Situational keys are partially based on the down, distance, score, time remaining, offensive and defensive formations and actions of players at the snap. For example, it's third down and 11. Team A trails by two points with 1:37 to play in the fourth quarter and has the ball on its own 44-yard line. Going without a huddle, Team A lines up in a shotgun formation with three receivers on the right side of the formation. All of that adds up to a pass. That hunch is confirmed when, at the snap, the offensive linemen drop back to pass block, the quarterback retreats into the pocket and the receivers run pass patterns rather than block Team B's linebackers and defensive backs.

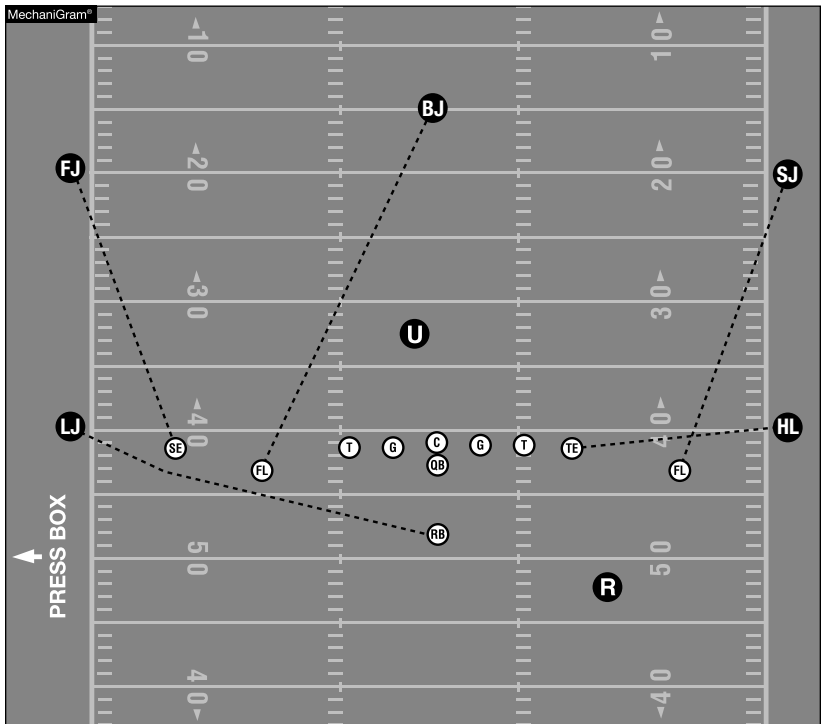
In addition to down, distance and other game factors, offensive and defensive formations provide hints as to what type of play a game official can expect in a given situation. Most teams using the wishbone formation, for instance, are predominantly running teams. Teams using four-receiver sets and shotgun formations pass more times than not.

Linemen provide situational keys. For example, pulling linemen indicate a sweep or trap block. Linemen's splits may indicate certain types of plays. Retreating linemen indicate a pass. Charging linemen indicate a running play. When offensive linemen provide only passive resistance, allowing defensive linemen to penetrate the neutral zone, a screen pass often follows.

Positional Keys

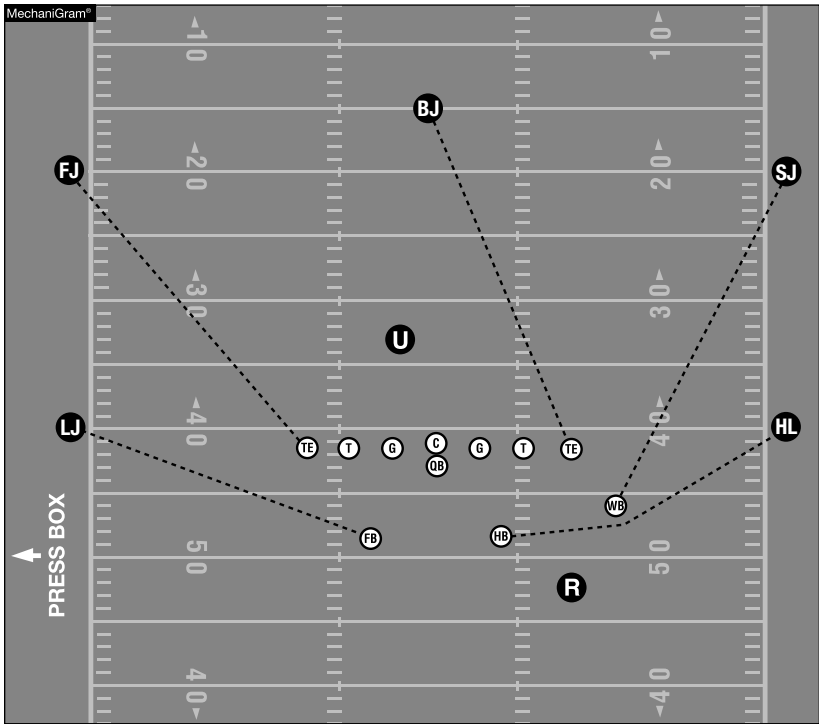
Positional keys, including how those keys change with motion, are described and illustrated in the MechaniGrams that follow.

BALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH DECLARED TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE



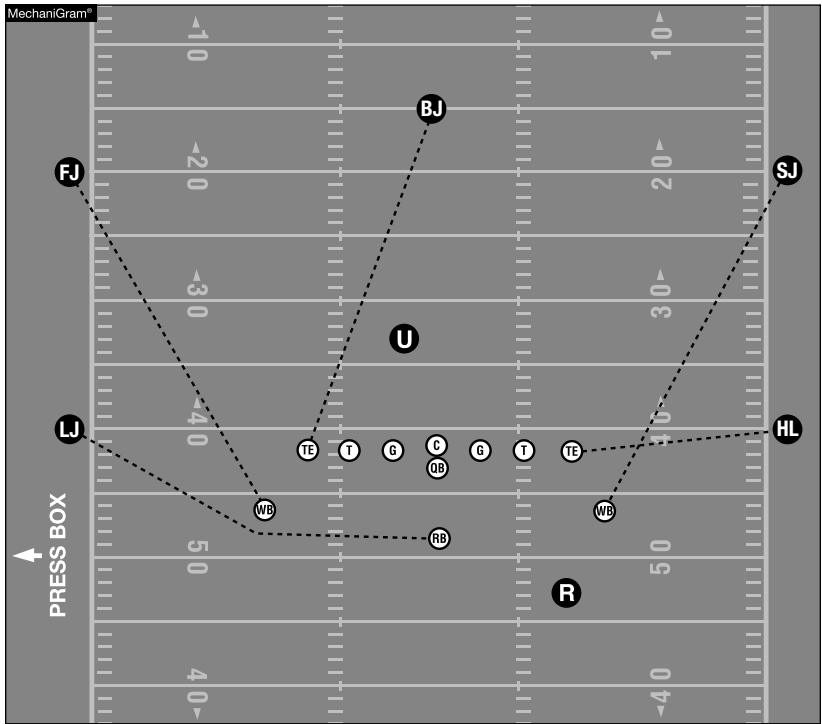
In a balanced formation, strength is always considered to be on the line judge's side. The field judge keys on the widest receiver (in this case, the split end). The back judge keys on the flanker while the line judge has the back. The head linesman keys the inside receiver on his side (in this case, the tight end) and the side judge has the widest receiver.

DOUBLE TIGHT ENDS, STRENGTH TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE



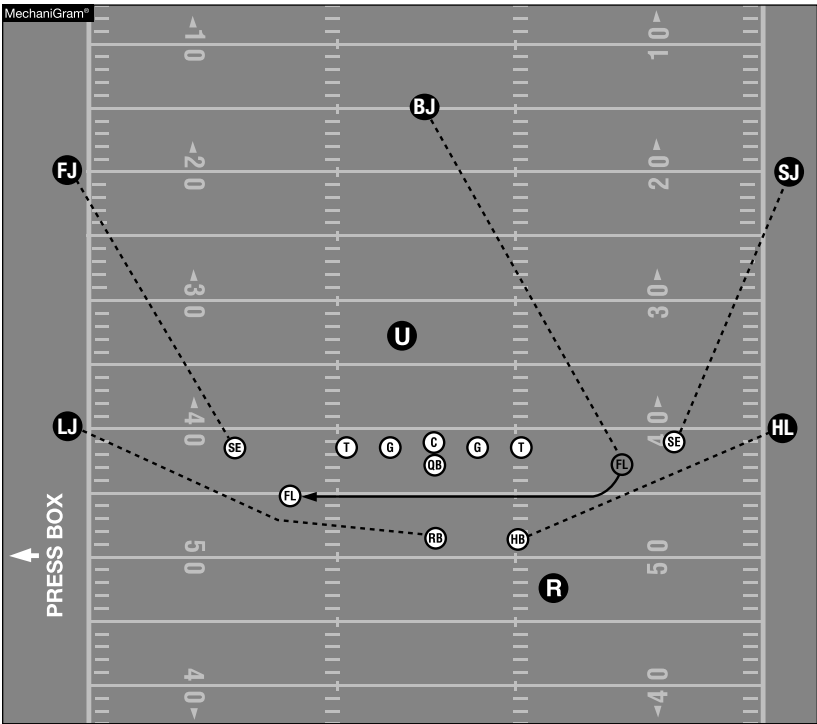
This is primarily a running formation used on short yardage, but teams sometimes throw quick passes out of this formation. The side judge keys on the widest receiver on his side (in this case, the wingback on the head linesman's side). The head linesman keys on the halfback. The back judge keys on the inside receiver on the line (in this case, the tight end). The line judge keys on the back on his side. The field judge keys on the widest receiver on his side (in this case, the tight end).

DOUBLE WING, DOUBLE TIGHT END FORMATION



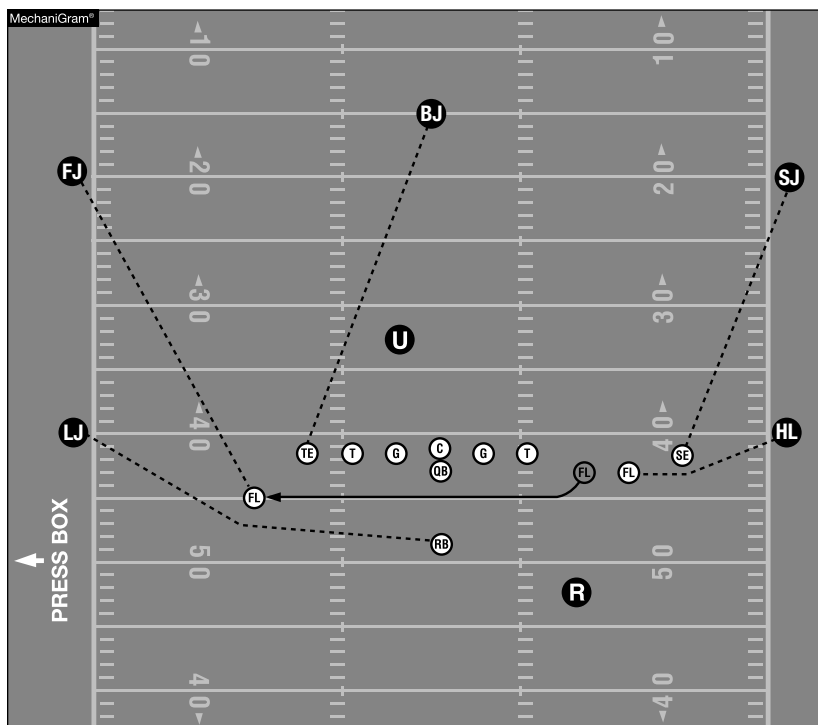
Strength is declared to the line judge's side. The field judge keys on the widest receiver on his side (in this case, the wingback on the line judge's side). The line judge keys on the back. The back judge has the tight end. The side judge has the widest receiver on his side (in this case, the wingback). The head linesman has the inside receiver (in this case, the tight end).

MOTION CHANGES STRENGTH



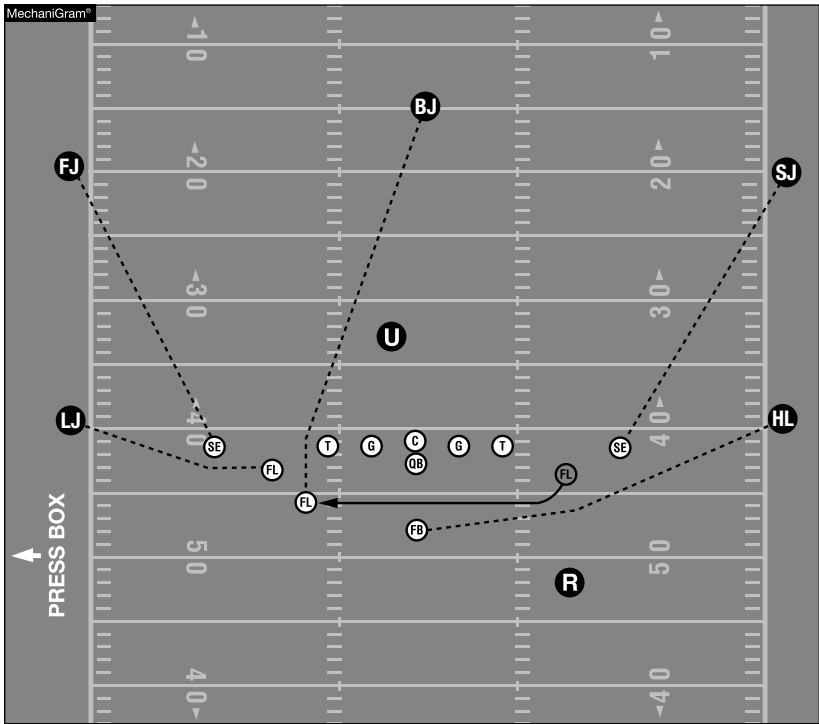
Strength was to the head linesman's side, but motion changed the strength to the line judge's side. The back judge shifts position and keys on the motion man. The field judge keys the split end. The line judge keys on the nearest running back. The side judge keys the split end and the head linesman keys the nearest running back.

MOTION CHANGES FORMATION FROM UNBALANCED TO BALANCED



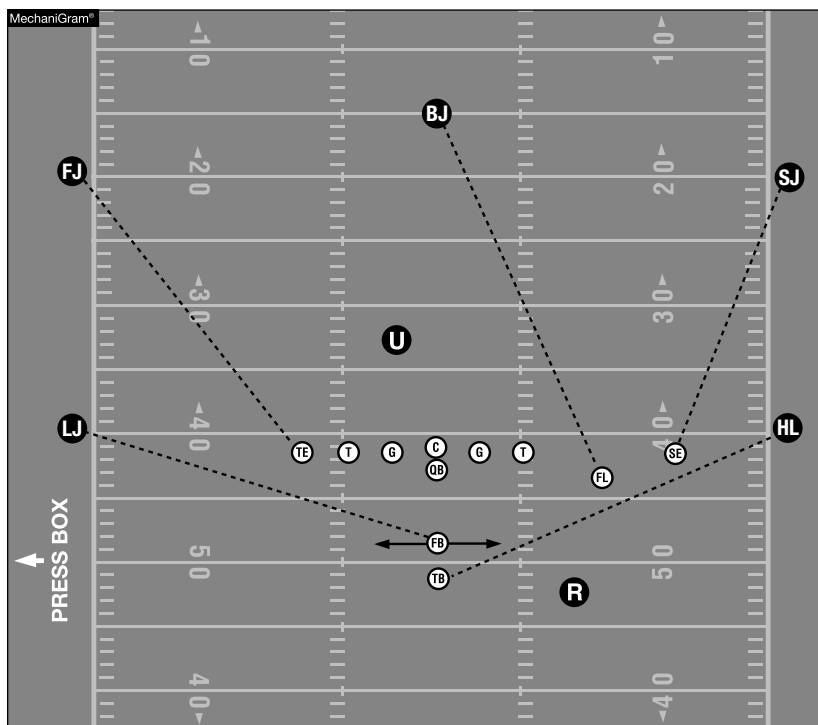
Strength was to the head linesman's side, but motion changed the formation from unbalanced to balanced. In a balanced formation, strength is declared to the line judge's side. The back judge initially keys the flanker, but when the strength changed, his key became the tight end on the line judge's side. The field judge initially keys the tight end, but when the strength changed, his key became the flanker. The line judge keys on the running back. The motion did not change the side judge's or the head linesman's keys.

MOTION INTO TRIPS



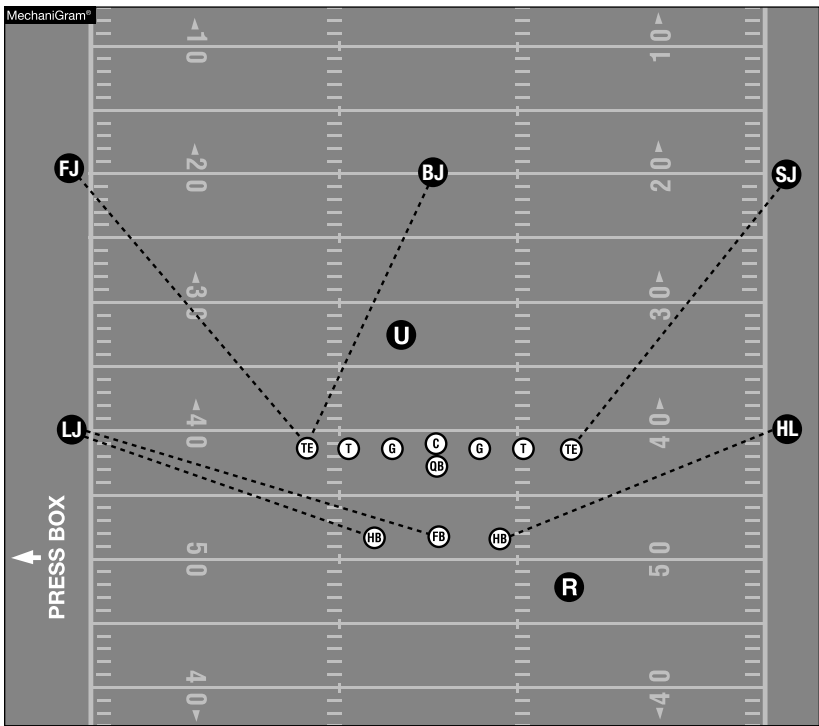
Motion by the flanker turned a balanced formation into a trips formation to the line judge's side. The field judge keys the outside receiver. The line judge, whose original key was the fullback, now keys on the second receiver. The back judge keys the flanker that was in motion. The motion did not change the side judge's key. The head linesman, whose original key was the nearest flanker, now keys the fullback.

MOTION DOESN'T CHANGE STRENGTH



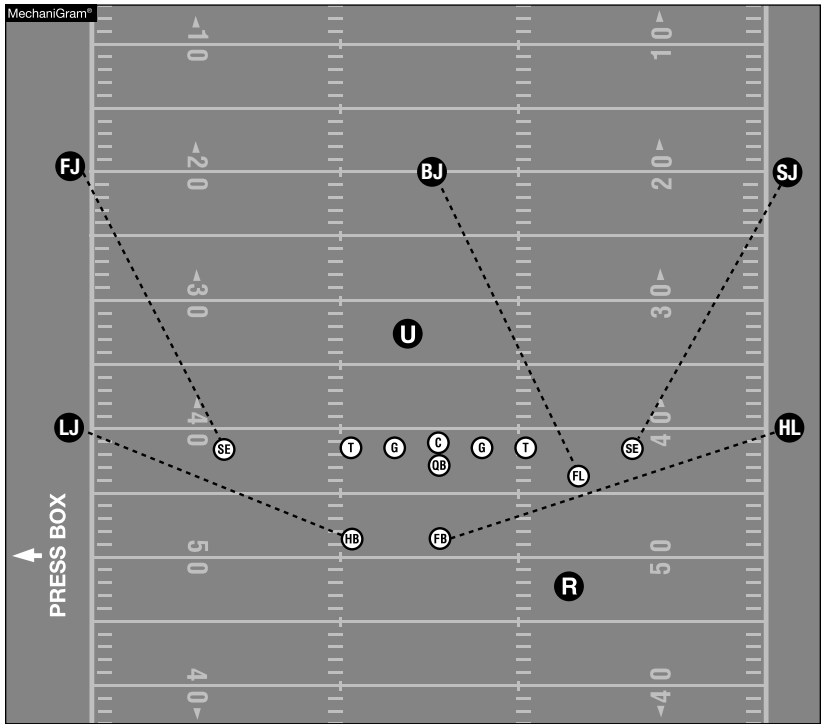
Strength is to the head linesman's side. Even if the back goes in motion to the line judge's side, strength is not considered to have changed. The side judge keys the widest receiver on the strong side. The back judge keys the flanker on the strong side. The head linesman keys the deepest back. The field judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The line judge keys on the back closest to the line.

STRAIGHT T OR WISHBONE



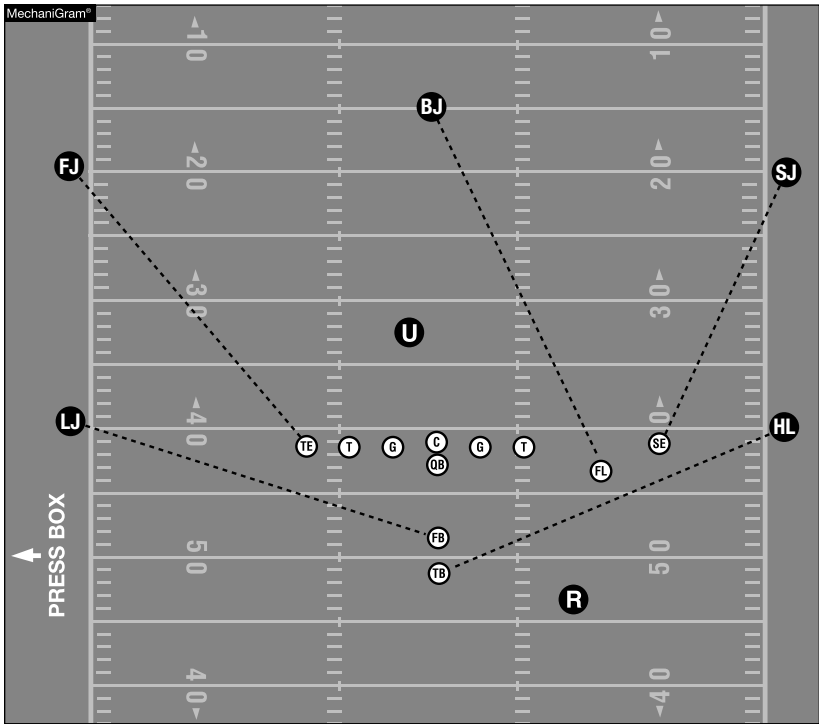
This is primarily a running formation, but on passing downs teams sometimes move a tight end to split end. It's a balanced formation, so strength is declared to the line judge's side. The field judge and back judge key on the tight end on the line judge's side. The line judge keys on the two backs nearest him. The side judge keys the tight end. The head linesman keys on the back nearest him.

STRENGTH TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE SPLIT END



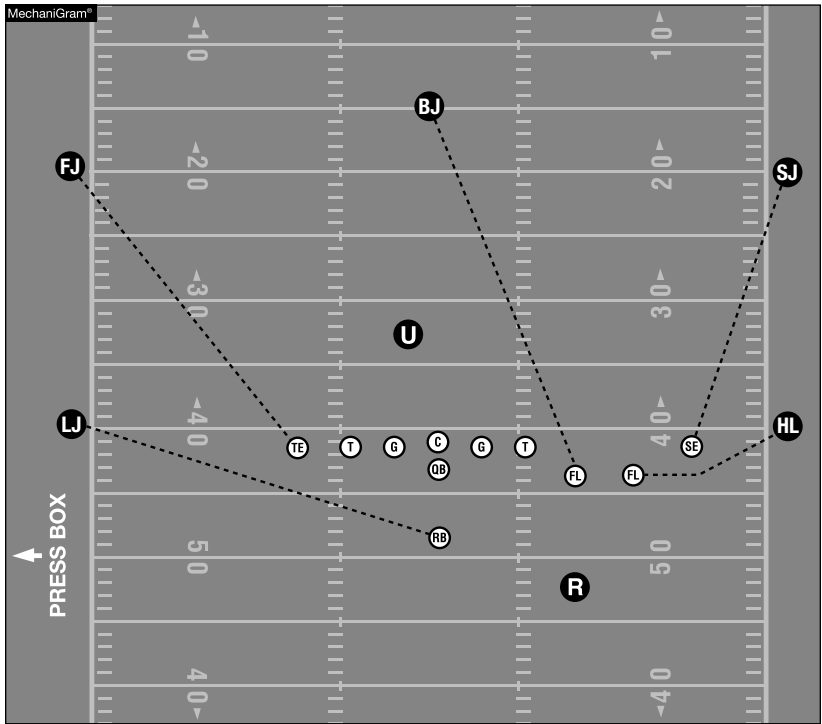
The side judge keys on the strong side split end. The back judge keys the flanker. The head linesman keys the fullback. The field judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The line judge keys the halfback.

STRENGTH TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE TIGHT END



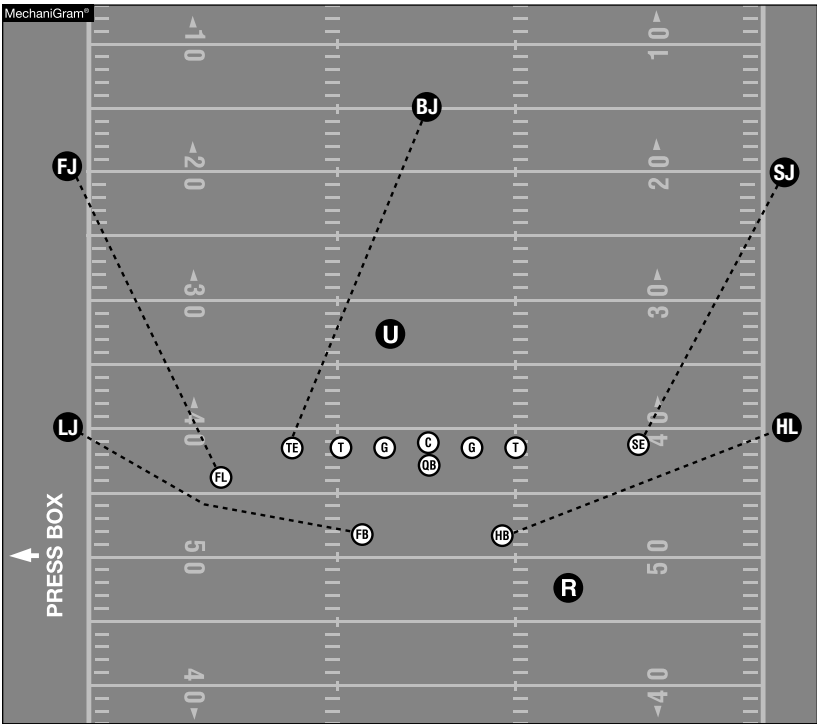
The side judge keys on the strong side split end. The back judge keys the flanker. The head linesman keys the deepest back. The field judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The line judge keys the back closer to the line.

TRIPS TO HEAD LINESMAN'S SIDE



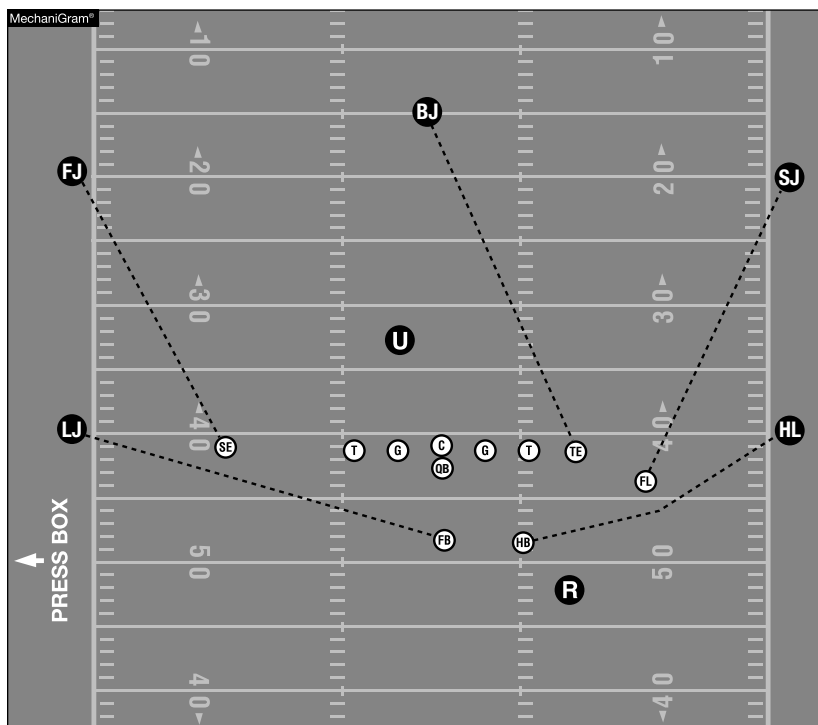
The side judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The head linesman keys on the flanker nearest him. The back judge keys on the inside-most flanker on the strong side. The field judge keys on the widest receiver on his side. The line judge keys on the back.

UNBALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE



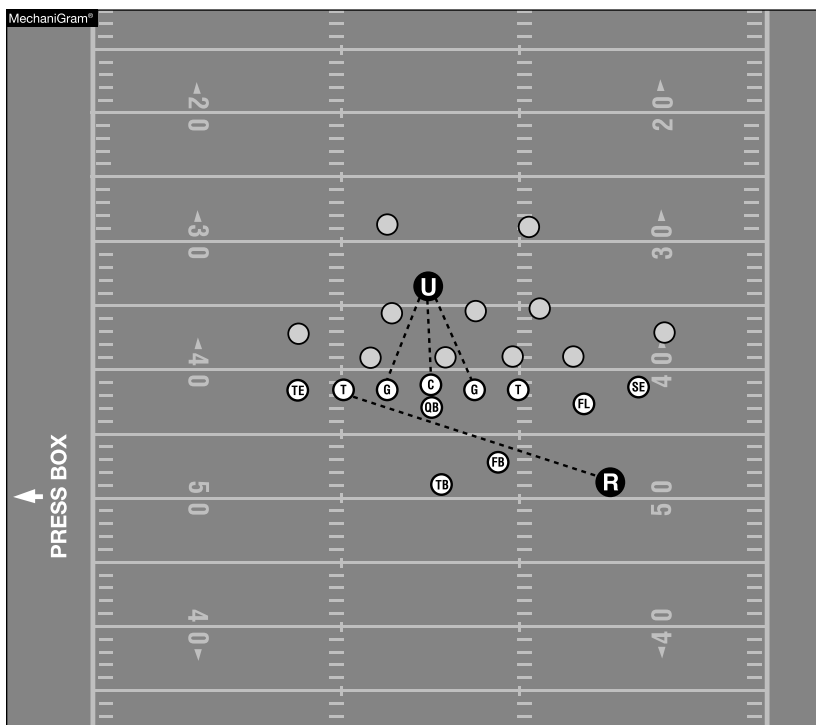
The field judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The back judge keys on the tight end. The line judge keys the back nearest to him. The side judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The head linesman keys on the back nearest to him.

VEER



Although primarily a running formation, teams will occasionally throw to the flanker or split end. In this example, strength is to the head linesman's side. The side judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The back judge keys the tight end. The head linesman keys the back nearest to him. The field judge keys the widest receiver on his side. The line judge keys the back nearest to him.

REFEREE AND UMPIRE KEYS



In all but the rarest cases, the referee will key on the opposite side tackle. In all cases the umpire will key on the center and both guards.

5.4 Before and After the Snap

The referee is responsible for observing the huddle to ensure Team A is not violating substitution rules, identifying eligible receivers in the backfield, observing shifts and watching for false starts and other pre-snap violations by the offense. He also counts Team A on scrimmage downs.

The umpire is responsible for ensuring that Team A has five players numbered 50 to 79 on the offensive line. The umpire should listen for defenders interfering with the offense's snap count, observe the snapper for snap infractions and observe the guards for false starts. He also counts Team A on scrimmage downs.

Before the snap, the short wing officials identify the eligible receivers on their side of the field, assist the referee in monitoring substitutions, count to ensure Team A has no more than four backs and assist the umpire in checking the legality of uniform numbers of offensive linemen and receivers. If the receiver nearest the short wing official is in the offensive backfield, the short wing uses the extended arm signal to alert the opposite wing official. The head linesman and line judge count Team A players on scrimmage downs.

The side judge, field judge and back judge count Team B on scrimmage plays.

The back judge is responsible for the play clock. If the count gets to 10 seconds, the back judge should raise a hand and at 5 seconds use a visible count.

Forward Progress

The wing officials are primarily responsible for forward progress. On long runs or passes, the back judge may assist with forward progress.

Progress should be indicated by using the downfield foot. Keep your head up and observe players while marking a spot. Do not go around or jump over players to mark progress. Move into the field until you approach players, then stop.

If a spot is close to the line to gain, the spotting game official must come all the way to the spot where the play ended. Wait for players to clear your path and then continue to spot the ball.

The primary game official responsible for determining the forward progress spot is the game official who can actually see the ball when the play is declared dead — not based on what side of the field the play ends — usually from hash mark to hash mark.

5.5 Time-outs

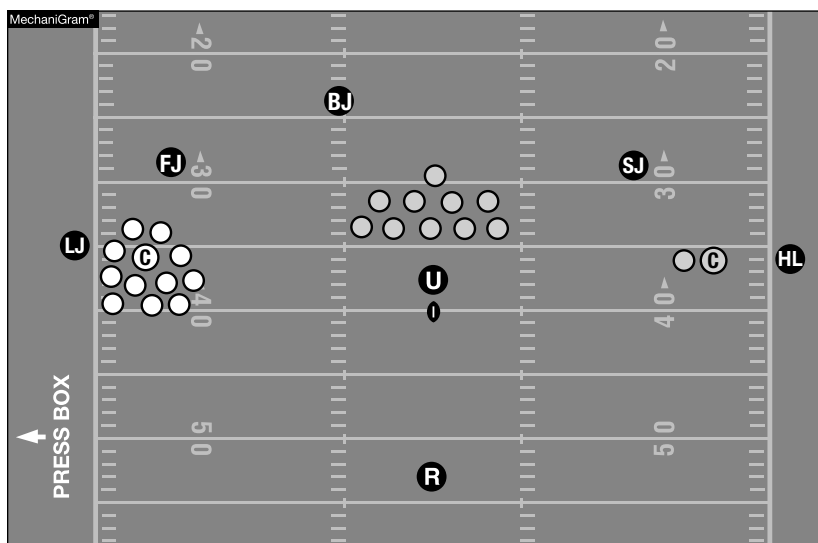
Any game official should grant a valid time-out request and immediately stop the clock if it is running. That game official reports the time-out to the referee. The referee indicates the time-out by repeating the stop-the-clock signal and indicating the team being charged the time-out by facing the team and extending both arms shoulder high, giving two “chucks” in that team’s direction.

All game officials must record the number and team of the player requesting the time-out, the quarter and the time remaining on the game clock. The referee confirms the number of time-outs each team has remaining. The head linesman and line judge inform the coaches on their respective sidelines of the time-outs remaining.

The back judge is responsible for timing the time-out. The one-minute count begins when the referee is informed of the time-out. When 45 seconds have expired, the back judge sounds his whistle twice so the head linesman and line judge can inform their teams. When the minute has expired, the referee whistles the ball ready-for-play.

The procedure for signaling an official’s time-out is the same as for a charged time-out. After stopping the clock, the referee has the option of tapping his chest to indicate it is an official’s time-out. Play should resume as quickly as possible. If the official’s time-out is for injury, any team conference must be an “Outside 9-yard Mark Conference” if approved by the referee.

During time-outs, wing officials are responsible for monitoring conferences near your sideline. Help get players promptly back onto the field.



Media Time-Out Guidelines (If Applicable)

The back judge informs the crew of a media time-out and moves directly to the red hat. When the time-out is confirmed, the side judge and field judge immediately inform the coaches and stay with the teams.

At the 30-second mark, the back judge will alert the crew and return to position. The side judge and field judge or line judge and head linesman bring out the teams and get player counts. The red hat extends an arm directly out to the side.

At the 15-second mark, the referee verifies crew and team readiness. The red hat extends an arm directly overhead and moves to the sideline.

When the media-time out has concluded, the red hat gives an extended arm wind signal. The referee makes a final check and gives the ready-for-play signal.

5.6 Measurements

When the referee calls for a measurement, the line of scrimmage official should have the down indicator moved behind the lead rod. That is a reference point in case the line to gain should somehow become lost during the process. As the line-to-gain equipment is being brought onto the field, the line of scrimmage official should use his foot to indicate the intersection of the 5-yard line where the chain is clipped and a line through the ball parallel to the sideline. That is the spot where the line of scrimmage official will place the clipped part of the chain.

The line of scrimmage official brings the chain in from the sideline with the line-to-gain crew members. Putting one hand on the links on each side of the clip improves the line of scrimmage official's chances of keeping track of the proper link in case the clip falls off the chain. The clip must be placed on the back edge of the line for the measurement. A good double-check is for the line of scrimmage official to state that the next down will be first if the ball is beyond the rod or the next down of the series if it is short. (Example: "It will either be first or fourth.")

Depending on which team has the ball, the field judge or side judge can obtain another game ball from the offensive team's ball helper. If the back judge has the ball, he can toss it to the line of scrimmage official before the measurement.

The back judge holds the ball in place from the downfield side (the side of the ball closer to Team B's goal line) while facing Team A's goal line. Once the line of scrimmage official tells the referee he has the chain on the proper mark, the umpire takes the forward rod from the line-to-gain crew member, then pulls the rod to ensure the chain is taut. The referee rules whether or not the ball is beyond the front rod.

Short of a First Down

If the measurement is in a side zone and does not result in a first down, the umpire should keep control of the rod. The referee uses his hands (or thumb and index finger if the ball is inches short of the front rod) to inform both benches how short the play ended of a first down.



The back judge continues to hold the ball in place. The referee grasps the chain at the link in front of the ball and rises. The referee should grasp the chain with two hands with the link that will be used to place the ball between his hands; that will ensure the proper link is maintained. The back judge continues to hold the ball in place. Referee, umpire, line judge and head linesman walk to the nearest hash mark. The spare ball (the one the line of scrimmage official is holding) is then placed at the proper spot.

Once the ball is placed, the back judge may remove the ball that was used in the measurement and return it to the ball helper.

If the measurement occurred on fourth down and Team A is short, the referee signals the change of possession by giving the first down signal toward Team A's goal line. The referee then sets the ball in the same position as it was when it became dead so its foremost point becomes the rear point when the direction is changed. The new rear rod is then moved to the new foremost point of the ball.

First Down

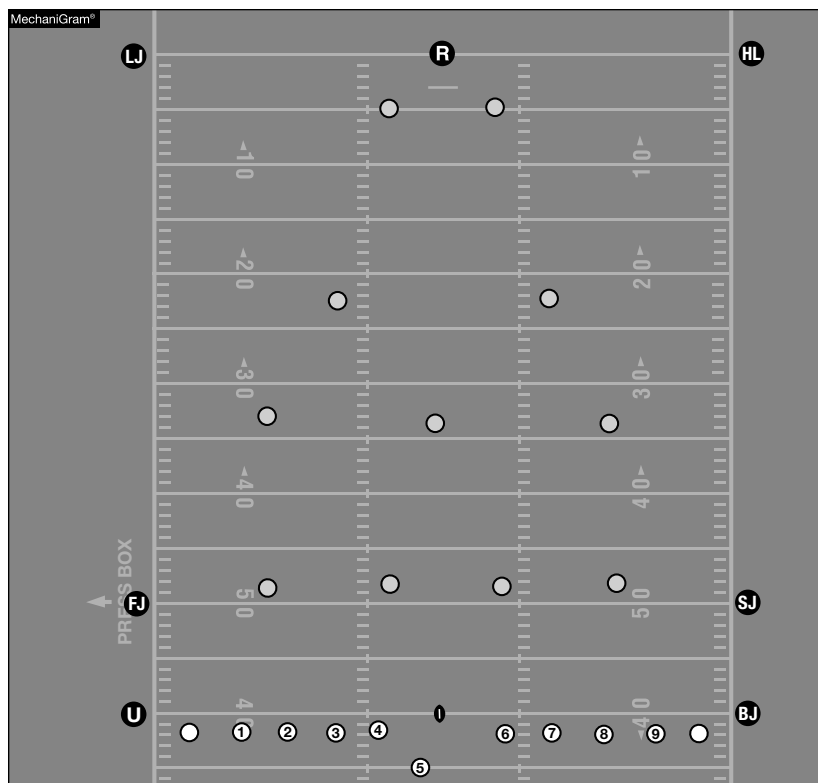
If the measurement results in the award of a new series, the referee signals the first down. The line of scrimmage official need not hold the chain as he accompanies the line-to-gain crew back to the sideline, but he must go all the way to the sideline and indicate to the line-to-gain crew where the new series will begin.

If the measurement occurred in a side zone, the back judge should remain with the ball on the ground as a double-check to ensure the ball is spotted properly for the next play.

Whether or not the result is a first down, the referee must wait for the line of scrimmage official's signal that the line-to-gain crew is back in position before giving the ready-for-play signal.

5.7 Positioning

FREE KICK



Referee: Starting position is in the center of the field on the goal line.

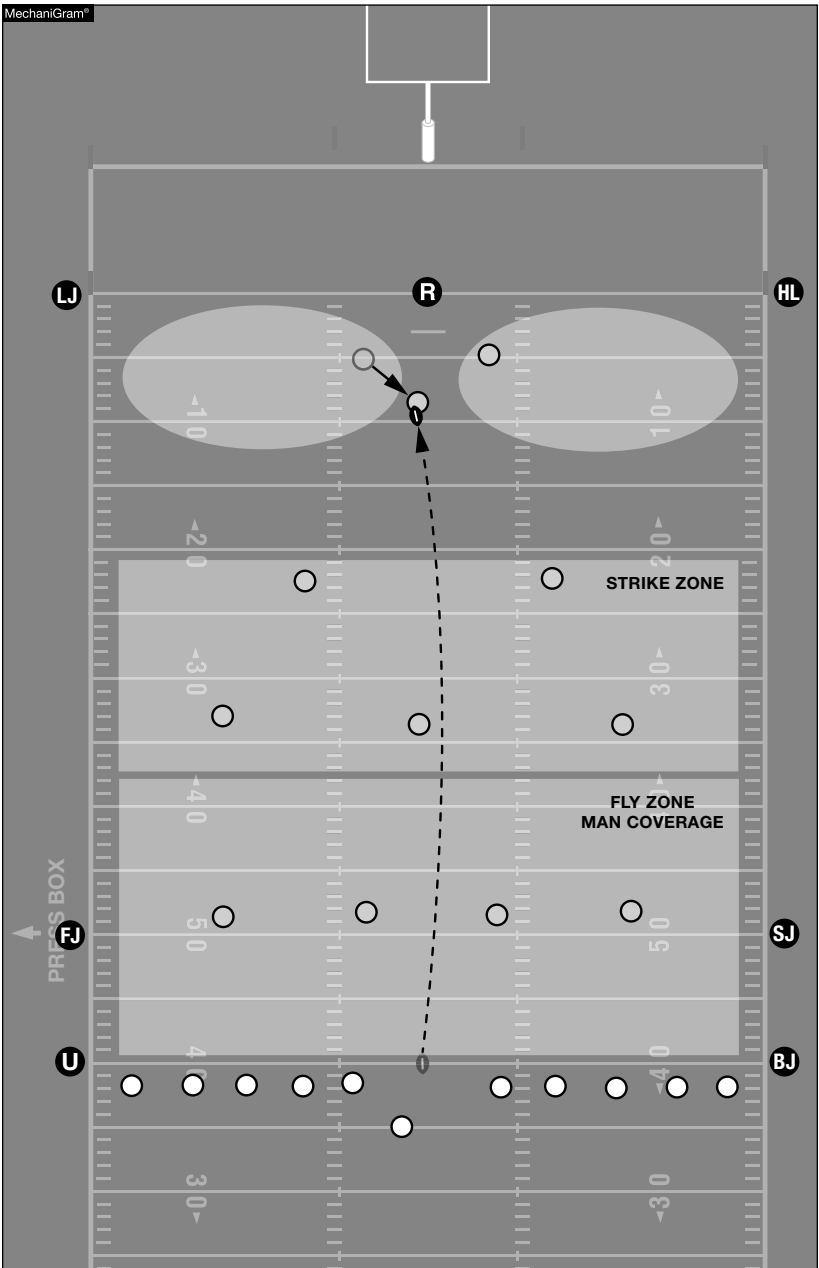
Umpire: Starting position is at Team K's restraining line (usually the 40-yard line) on the press box side of the field. Count Team K players and help manage the 5-yard belt.

Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is at respective pylon on the goal line or at least 10 yards deeper than the deepest receiver if moving up field. Count Team R players.

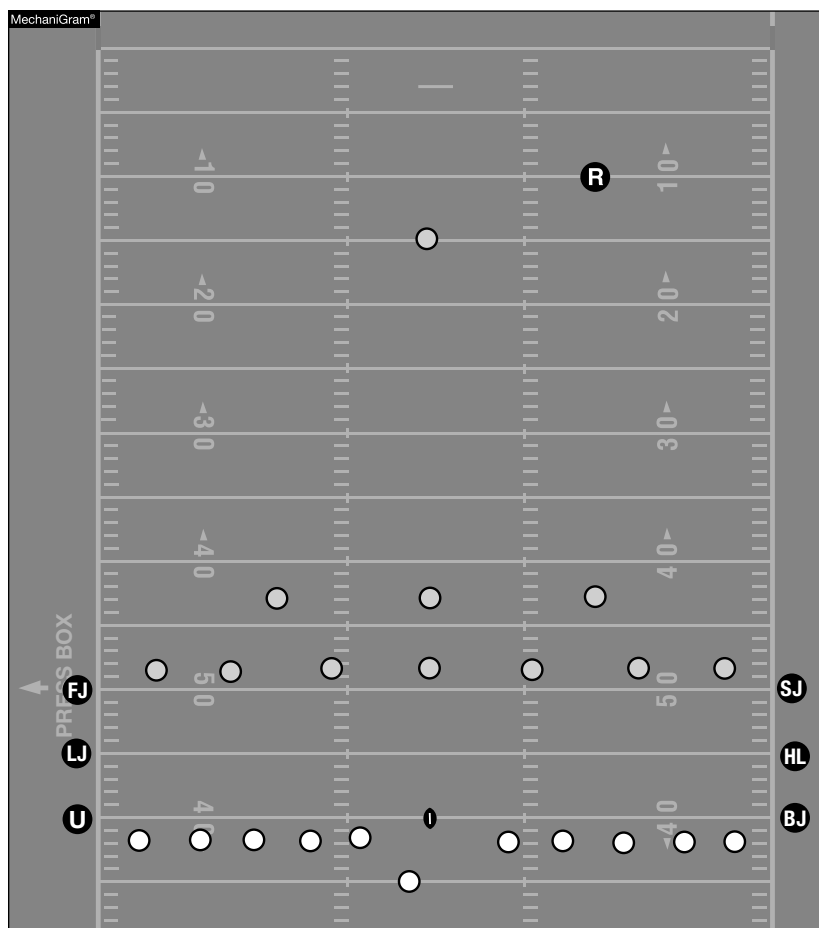
Side judge and field judge: Starting position is at Team R's restraining line (usually the 50-yard line).

Back judge: Count Team K players. Do not give the ball to the kicker unless Team K has 11 players on the field. Manage the 5-yard belt. Hand the kicker to the ball and give instructions before moving to starting position on the sideline on Team K's restraining line (usually the 40-yard line) on the side opposite the press box.

FREE KICK COVERAGE AREAS



ONSIDE KICK



Referee: Starting position is in center of the field deeper than the deepest receiver. Maintain a distance and watch for low blocks. Responsible for the goal line.

Umpire: Starting position is on Team K's restraining line. Responsible for Team K being behind their free-kick line and ruling if the ball is "topped" off the tee. The kicker's restraining line is a true line and must not be broken prior to the kick.

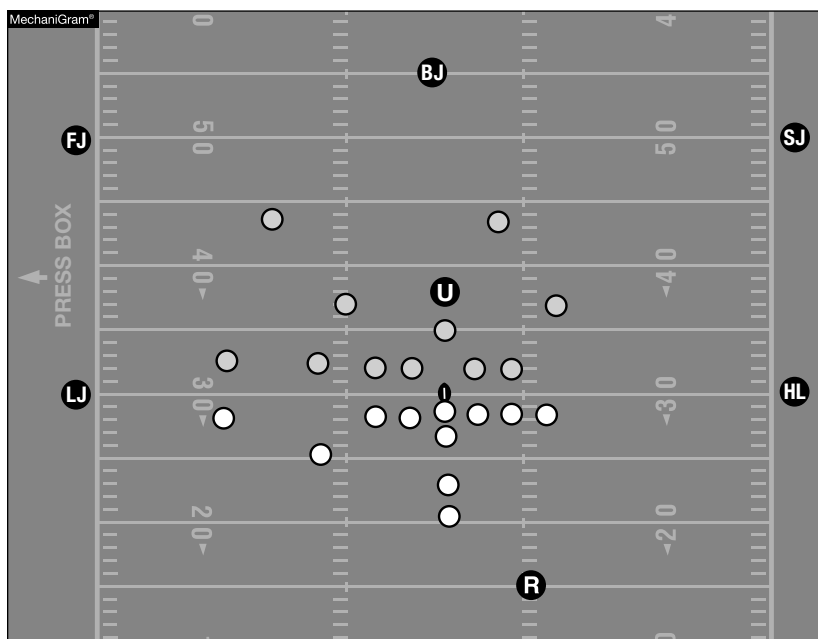
Head linesman and line judge: Starting position is on Team K's 45-yard line. Rule if Team K blocks before they're eligible to touch the ball. Responsible for watching the ball immediately after it is kicked. Rule if the ball was "topped" off the tee and hit the ground. Be prepared to rule on pop-up kick, first touching, muff, and illegal or low blocks.

Side judge and field judge: Starting position is on Team R's restraining line. Primary responsibility to rule whether the ball goes 10 yards, if ball is touched or muffed or if low block occurred within 2 yards of the line. In the event the ball is kicked deep, both the side judge and field judge are responsible for forward progress.

Back judge: Starting position is on Team K's restraining line. Responsible for Team K being behind their free-kick line and ruling if the ball is "topped" off the tee. The kicker's restraining line is a true line and must not be broken prior to the kick.

All: The most important aspect of this mechanic is to not move until the ball is beyond Team R's restraining line or is recovered. The game officials on the side the ball is kicked take primary responsibility for the ball (touched when, where and by whom) and the game officials on the opposite side of the ball is kicked take primary responsibility for the blocks. Team K cannot initiate a block unless Team K can possess the ball, it has gone 10 yards, is touched by Team R or Team R has already initiated a block.

SCRIMMAGE PLAY



Referee: Count the offense before every play and a signal should be given and acknowledged by the umpire. Be 13 to 15 yards deep on the passing arm side of the quarterback and at least 1 yard outside the tight end position.

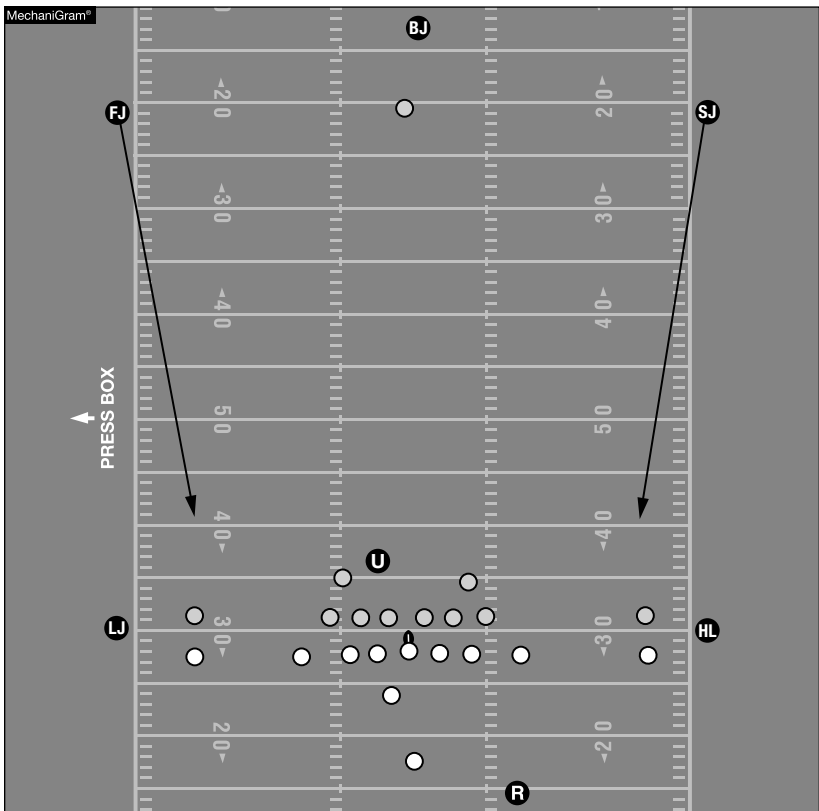
Umpire: Position should be from 5 to 8 yards deep and not outside the tackle. Count and signal to the referee the number of players on offense before every play. Vary your position. Key on the center and the two guards. Be alert for false starts.

Head linesman and line judge: Read the formation and identify your eligible receiver. Shut down the play on false starts and encroachment. Verify formations and rule on legality of motion on their side of the snapper. Line judge is responsible for the tackle on his side unless trips are presented. Head linesman will have near-side tackle responsibility when there are trips to the line judge's side. In a balanced formation head linesman covers the second receiver in and the line judge is responsible for the running back.

Field judge and side judge: Take initial position 20 to 22-yards deep. Count the defense on every play and signal to acknowledge with the back judge. Side judge and field judge will be responsible for the game clock.

Back judge: Position 25 to 30 yards deep. Count defensive team, signal, and acknowledge with the side judge and field judge.

SCRIMMAGE KICKS



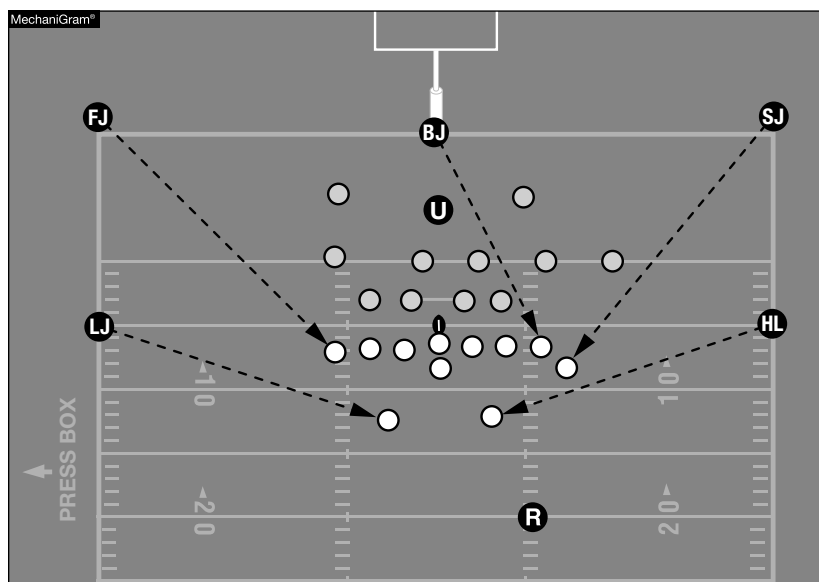
Referee: Count offensive players. Take a position 3 yards behind the kicker, wider than the tight end's normal position and on the kicking leg side.

Umpire: Count the offense. Be 10 yards deep and know your ineligible. Note the numbers of players on the line of scrimmage participating under the numbering exception rule.

Head linesman and line judge: Count the offense and take position on line of scrimmage.

Field judge and side judge: Count R players and signal. Position yourself 10 yards behind deepest receiver. If the kick is from the 50-yard line and in, start at the goal line pylons.

Back judge: Initial position will be between the hash marks approximately 8 to 10 yards deeper than the deepest receiver. With a single receiver, line up in a straight line with the kicker and receiver and adjust to wide side once the kick is away. With two receivers, split them and adjust as necessary once the kick is away. Count R players and signal.



Referee: Normal position. Responsible for direction of pass (forward vs. backward). Signal only after being positive all requirements have been met for a score and dead-ball action has concluded.

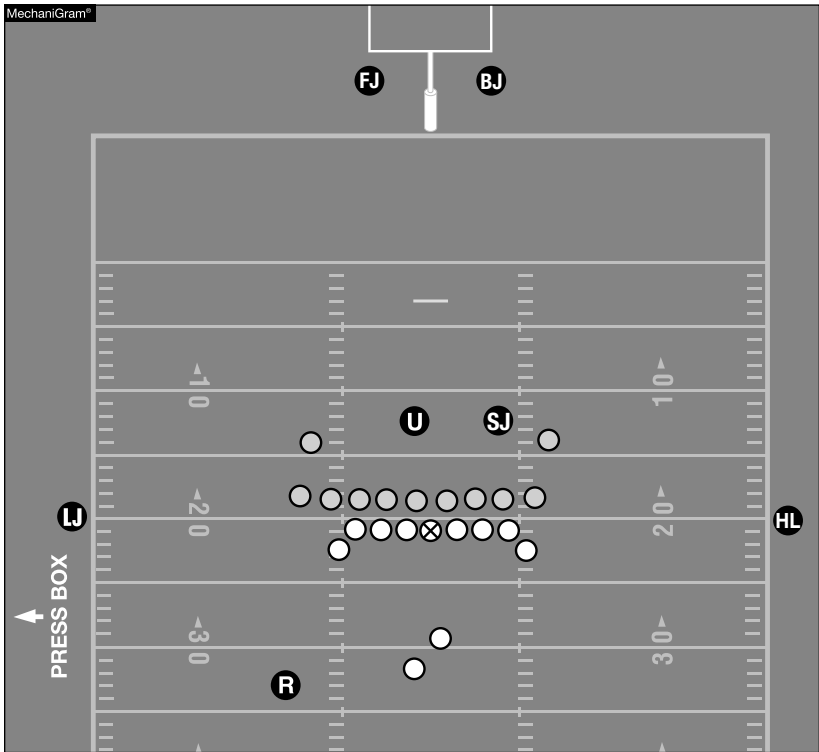
Umpire: Normal scrimmage play responsibility. Do not signal touchdown. Let the wing and deep officials rule and signal if a score has been made.

Head linesman and line judge: You have goal line responsibilities from the 7-yard line and in. Be at the goal line. Communicate on every play with your downfield game official to let them know you will assume complete responsibility for ruling on all goal line plays. Only signal if you see the ball cross the goal line. Do not mirror signals.

Field judge and side judge: When the ball is snapped outside the 25-yard line, assume your normal positions as in any scrimmage play. When the ball is put in play from the 25- to 7-yard line, position yourself on the goal line at the pylon. When play terminates on or near the goal line, you must be on the goal line to rule on the play. You are responsible for the goal line and your sideline. If the ball is snapped at the 7-yard line and in, position yourself at the pylon on the end line.

Back judge: Normal position on balls snapped outside the 25-yard line. On balls snapped from the 25-yard line and in, be at the end line. You have primary end line coverage. When the offense is in a tight power run formation (i.e., no split receivers), responsible for low blocks relating to linebackers and lead blockers.

SCORING KICKS



Referee: Count the offense and signal. Position at an angle at least seven yards to the side and a yard or two back of the kicker facing the holder.

Umpire: Take your regular position.

Head linesman and line judge: Take your regular positions.

Field judge and back judge: Take positions under the goal post.

Side judge: Take position as a “second umpire” on all scoring kick formations on the defensive strength side.

5.8 Coverage

Scrimmage Plays

The referee keys the tackle on the opposite side unless there are trips to the near side, in which case key tackle on near side. Retreat at a 45-degree angle if the quarterback drops back to pass.

The umpire officiates the point of attack, being aware of takedowns and twisting or turning by the offensive lineman. When the play is over retrieve or get another ball if the ball is declared dead in a side zone. Go beyond the hash, if necessary, to expedite retrieval of the ball.

The head linesman and line judge officiate at the point of attack and take all forward progress spots to the 2-yard line. They have the goal line on all plays from the 7-yard line and in. Place downfield foot out to signify forward progress to umpire. Utilize cross-field mechanics on push back plays. For example, if the runner or receiver is pushed back on the head linesman's side of the field near the sideline, the line judge is responsible for providing the progress spot. This mechanic is used to allow the near game official to maintain a safe distance for optimal viewing of the play. Line judge is responsible for forward or backward pass (exceptions: 1. option play towards head linesman. 2. Quarterback quick pass from under center towards head linesman).

The side judge and field judge take the widest receiver on their side of the field. Retreat as the play develops. They have goal line responsibilities when the play is snapped outside the seven yardline. Officiate the point of attack and be good dead-ball game officials. Go into the bench area, if necessary, on plays ending at or beyond the sidelines. Communicate player numbers to the head coach on all fouls. On plays starting between Team B's 25- and 7-yard line, position yourself at the goal line.

If the formation is balanced, the back judge takes the second receiver on the line judge's side. On trips formations, the back judge takes the third receiver in on the trips side. On any play starting from the 25-yard line and in, begin at the end line. The back judge has primary end line coverage and the play clock.

Goal Line Plays

The referee is responsible for the direction of a pass (forward vs. backward). Signal only after being positive all requirements have been met for a score and dead-ball action has concluded.

The umpire has normal scrimmage play responsibility. The umpire should not signal touchdown. Let the wing and deep officials rule and signal if a score has been made.

The head linesman and line judge should communicate on every play with your downfield game official to let them know you will assume complete responsibility for ruling on all goal line plays. Only signal if you see the ball cross the goal line. Do not mirror signals.

When play terminates on or near the goal line, the side judge and field judge must be on the goal line to rule on the play. They are responsible for the goal line and their sideline, when the play is snapped outside the seven yardline.

The back judge has primary end line coverage. When the offense is in a tight power run formation (i.e., no split receivers), the back judge is responsible for low blocks relating to linebackers and lead blockers.

Scrimmage Kicks

The referee should see the ball from the snap to the kicker and be able to see blockers and kickers. Watch the action on the kicker until the kicker has regained his balance and moves to become an active participant. Proceed downfield slowly and be prepared to be at the goal line if there is a runback. If the ball is kicked out-of-bounds, be prepared to signal spot to the downfield game official.

The umpire must be very aware of illegal acts against the snapper as well as holding by both teams. After the players go by you, turn and move towards the return area. Officiate to blocks ahead of returner.

The head linesman and line judge must know the eligible receivers and hold until the ball crosses the line of scrimmage. Move slowly downfield and officiate ahead of the runner. Use reverse fade mechanics (see Fade Mechanics Outline) on the advancing runner and be at the goal line if it's threatened.

The side judge and field judge observe the flyers and/or first threat on their side from the snap until the receiver begins the return upfield. Key the runner once the runner starts to turn upfield. They are responsible for the forward progress and should utilize cross-field mechanics on push back plays. For example, if the runner or receiver is pushed back on the side judge's side of the field near the sideline, the field judge is responsible for providing the progress spot. This mechanic is used to allow the near game official to maintain a safe distance for optimal viewing of the play. Track the players around the ball location if the receiver fails to field the kick.

Back judge: Be in position to rule on the validity of the catch or signal. Back judge has primary coverage of the receiver, ball and signal (any action by or against the receiver) until he advances and then officiate the point of attack action.

Scoring Kicks

The referee is responsible for action on the kicker and holder.

The umpire observes the action on the snapper. Note the jersey numbers of players on the line of scrimmage participating under the numbering exception rule. Be very aware of illegal acts against the snapper.

The head linesman and line judge observe the legal snap, tackle and back on their side. Don't leave the scrimmage line until the kicked ball crosses the line of scrimmage or there is a broken play. The line judge should be ready to cover the sideline from the line of scrimmage to

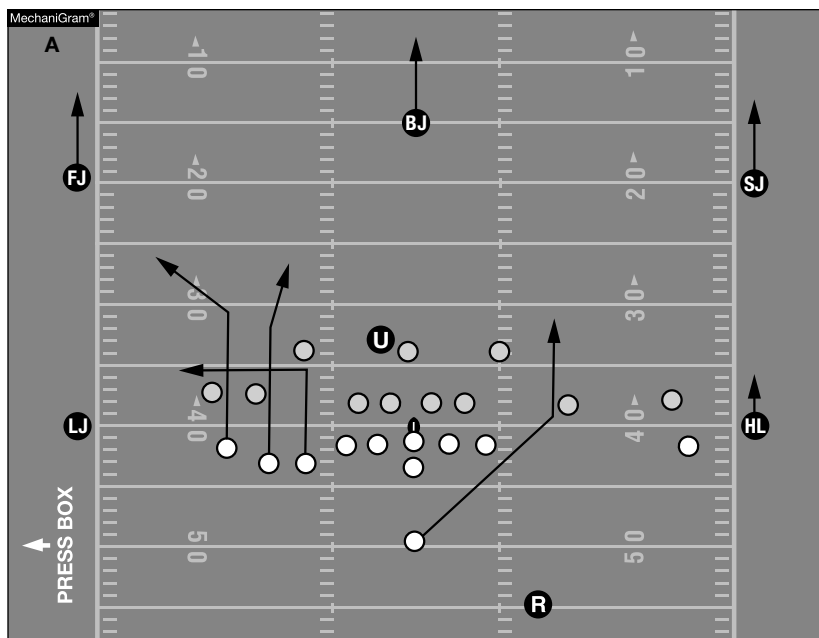
the end line. These game officials have goal line responsibility in case of a fake. The field judge and back judge rule on the success or failure of the kick with both giving a signal. The back judge has the ruling on the cross bar.

Fade Mechanics

Fade mechanics are the key to crew of seven officiating. When using seven game officials on the field, fade mechanics provide the crew with the best possible looks at all plays and complete goal line coverage.

Fade mechanics are easy to explain and for some reason difficult to master. The side judge, field judge and back judge will be moving back (fading) on all pass plays and they are responsible for the goal line on all plays except short goal line mechanic situations. In other words, the deep officials are responsible for the deep look. The head linesman and line judge will be responsible for the forward progress on all plays.

The only way to maintain a correct mechanic is for the crew to communicate constantly about situations that start to break down the proper mechanic. The side judge and field judge are not responsible for forward progress so they shouldn't try to stay close to the play to get progress. Do not move in on a play until it is over, including short runs. The best place to make a sideline ruling is from 10 to 15 yards away, so get deep and stay deep. The space between a deep official and a receiver closes quickly so read and react even quicker. Just because you start with a 20-yard lead doesn't mean that you can take it easy. It only takes 2 seconds for a fast receiver to close that gap so be prepared on every play.

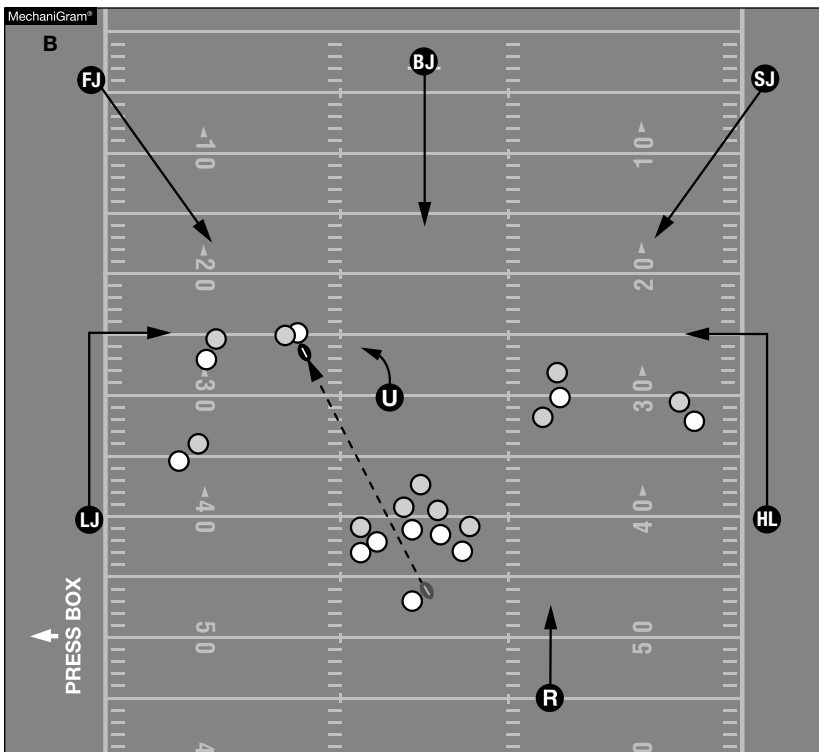


MechaniGram A illustrates a play with a trips right formation with a single receiver on the right and a back that goes out. It is easy to read pass on this play. At the snap, the deep officials should start moving back and keep going. Notice there are no deep receivers on the side judge side of the field. But because it is a pass, the side judge still needs to stay deeper than the deepest receiver. As a result, the side judge, field judge and back judge will all be moving back together. The line judge should stay home until the pass crosses the line. The head linesman can go down 3 yards, but in this situation it would be better to stay on the line so the receiver running the short pattern can pass in front of the line judge.

After the play is over (MechaniGram B), the head linesman and line judge get the forward progress spot and the deep officials angle in five to seven yards. All deep officials need to respect the deepest receiver and the goal line when necessary. Note that in a 2-minute or hurry-up situation, the deep officials can stop the accordion mechanic to keep pace with the game.

Reverse Fade Mechanics

On a change of possession with a defensive return, the head linesman and line judge become responsible for the goal line. The side judge and field judge become responsible for forward progress.



Postgame Conference

Once in the locker room, the game officials should complete any required game reports and mail them immediately. Game officials retain clerical authority over the game through the completion of any reports, including those imposing disqualifications, that are responsive to actions occurring while the game officials had jurisdiction.

If there is any breakdown in cooperation between game officials and the clock operators during the game, or if either clock malfunctions, the game official in charge of the timer should inform the state association or assigning agency. Timers are encouraged to report crews that are not cooperative or whose signals are not clear and accurate.

If a player was disqualified for fighting or for receiving two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, the incident must be reported to the proper authority after the game. The calling official must complete the official report.

The referee should contact the conference officiating coordinator and inform him who was disqualified. The report must include the point of the game in which the disqualification occurred. Many state associations require notification of disqualifications or incidents of poor sportsmanship as well.

Coaches disqualified from a game must remain out of sight and sound of the stadium for the rest of that game and may not participate in any coaching activities after they've been disqualified.

Postgame Review

After the game, it's a good idea to review what happened during the game. The postgame review is another important part of the learning process.

The first order of business immediately after the game is to relax. Officiating can be stressful and postgame relaxation helps get you back to normal.

At a reasonable time after the game, review the game with your crew. Some crews like to review before taking a shower and relaxing. Others like to wait until the postgame dinner. Do whatever is convenient and comfortable for you and your crew.

When reviewing the game, talk about:

Strange Plays, Rulings

Discuss and review any strange plays or rulings. If necessary, confirm your ruling with the NFHS Football Rules Book and/or Case Book. Make sure you've got the rule down so you can apply it correctly if it happens again. Discuss any unusual penalty enforcements and confirm they were handled properly.

If a situation involving a new rule or interpretation occurred, is the crew confident it was applied correctly? Discuss if you need to take more or less time when discussing

POSTGAME CONFERENCE

enforcements and other facets of penalties among yourselves or when presenting options to the designated team representatives.

Points of Emphasis

Were the pregame points of emphasis handled effectively? Many times, rough play and sportsmanship are emphasized. Did you control the game effectively? Were dead-ball situations handled appropriately? If the points of emphasis were not handled properly, discuss remedies for your next game.

Sideline Decorum

How did you handle the benches? Did you let the coaches go too far? Were you approachable? Did you communicate penalty, time-out and other information sufficiently with the coaches?

Tempo

Did you let the game come to you or did you assert yourself when you didn't need to? Did the game develop a flow? If not, is there anything you could have done to keep the game moving?

Solicit Constructive Criticism

One of the ways to improve is to get opinions and advice from others. Your crew is a great source. Always ask if there's anything you could have done differently or better.

After asking, accept the constructive criticism. Don't be one of those referees who asks, "How'd I do?" expecting a shower of praise. If you don't want to know the truth, don't ask. Take the criticism offered, analyze the comments and apply the changes if you feel they're appropriate.

Be ready to offer a critique when asked. It's frustrating for a game official who wants to learn to invite criticism only to hear, "You did a good job." There must be something that needs improving! You ought to be able to give your crew at least three things to think about after every game.

If you don't usually work in crews, or if a game official is substituting for a regular member of your crew, ask if you did anything better or less effectively than is done on other crews. While many facets of mechanics or positioning are done virtually the same all over, nuances or variations may be worth trying.

Write a Journal

Consider keeping a journal during your season. Write down strange plays, your feelings about your performance, notes about your crew, things you did well and things you can improve on. The journal is a great way to look back during and after the season to see if there are patterns. If the same things keep appearing in your journal, you know there are things that need to be addressed.

Reviewing the journal is also a great way to start thinking about officiating before next season.

The Locker Room

The host school or facility allowed you the use of the locker room. Regardless of the condition it was in when you arrived, take a few minutes to tidy up.

If the game was played on a muddy field, wait until you get outside to clean the mud from your spikes. If mud was tracked into the room, clean it up with paper towel and dispose of it.

After your shower, if you were provided with towels, toss them in the appropriate container or pile them out of the traffic lane.

If you brought bottles of water or sports drinks into the locker room, toss the empty bottles into a waste container or take them with you.

Under no circumstances should game officials take towels, equipment or other items that do not belong to them. Theft is theft, whether or not anyone's watching. If your dressing facility was a coach's or teacher's office, do not disturb personal items or rifle through desk drawers.

NFHS Football Rules Penalty Summary

LOSS OF 5 YARDS	SIGNAL
Delay of game	7-21
Illegal substitution	22
Free-kick infraction	7-19
Encroachment	7-18
Free kick out-of-bounds.	19
Invalid or illegal fair-catch signal	32
Snap infraction	7-19
False start	7-19
Disconcerting act.	7-23
Illegal formation.	19
Less than five players on A's line or numbering violation	19
Illegal shift or illegal motion	20
Planned loose-ball infraction	19
Illegally handing ball forward (also loss of down)	35-9
Illegal forward pass (by A) (also loss of down)	35-9
Illegal forward pass (by B)	35
Intentional grounding (also loss of down)	36-9
Ineligible receiver illegally downfield	37
Illegal touching (also loss of down).	16-9
Helping runner.	44
Incidental grasping of opponent's face mask (or any helmet opening, chin strap or attached tooth and mouth protector)	45
Running into kicker/holder	30
Sideline interference	7-29
Attendant illegally on field	19
Nonplayer outside of the team box, but not on field	7-29
LOSS OF 10 YARDS	
Illegally kicking or batting ball	31
Illegal blocking technique	43
Interlocked blocking.	44
Holding	42
Runner grasping a teammate.	43
Illegal use of hands or arms.	43
Illegal block in the back	43
Illegal block on free kick	43
LOSS OF 15 YARDS	
Unsportsmanlike conduct by player or nonplayer	27
Illegal helmet contact against a defenseless player	38-24
Illegal block after valid or invalid fair-catch signal	43
Kick-catching interference.	33

Forward-pass interference	33
Illegal block below the waist	40
Illegal block on free-kicker or holder	30
Clipping	39
Chop block	41
Tripping	38-46
Illegal personal contact outside restricted area	38
Charging into an opponent obviously out of the play	38
Grasping opponent's face mask (or any helmet opening, chin strap, or attached tooth and mouth protector)	38-45
Hurdle an opponent	38
Butt block, face tackle or spear (Illegal Helmet Contact)	38-24
Horse-collar	38-25
Initiate contact with a helmet-less opponent	38
Targeting an opponent	38-24
Illegal blindside block	38-26
Roughing passer (also first down)	38-34-8
Roughing kicker or holder (also first down)	38-30-8
Roughing snapper (also first down)	38-8
Slapping blocker's head	38
Illegal personal contact in restricted area	38-29
Illegal participation	28
Participating without a helmet beyond immediate action	28
Sideline interference (third and subsequent)	7-29-27
Nonplayer illegally on field	27
Unfair acts	27

DISQUALIFICATION ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN 15-YARD PENALTIES

Fighting by player or nonplayer	38-47
Intentionally contacting a game official	38-47
Striking, kicking, kneeling	38-47
Any act if unduly rough or flagrant (give proper signal and follow with 47)	47
A second unsportsmanlike foul by player or nonplayer	27-47
Substitute leaving team box during a fight	27-47



GAME 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 game 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. This includes, but is not limited to, positive verbal and nonverbal communication with coaches, bench personnel and players.
- **Officials** shall avoid the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco products beginning with the arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.
- **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, game officials 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.



NFHS PUBLICATIONS

Prices effective April 1, 2024 — March 31, 2025

RULES PUBLICATIONS

Baseball Rules Book.....	\$12.00	Girls Lacrosse Rules Book.....	\$12.00
Baseball Case Book.....	\$12.00	Soccer Rules Book.....	\$12.00
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