

***Minnesota State High School League  
Football Officiating Mechanics Illustrated:  
5 Person High School Crews***

Graphics and layout by Matt Bowen, publication design manager, *Referee*/NASO

Copyright © 2021 by Referee Enterprises, Inc.  
and the Minnesota State High School League

The text and illustrations in this book are protected by copyrights of Referee Enterprises, Inc. PLAYPIC® and MECHANIGRAM® and their related graphics are registered trademarks of Referee Enterprises, Inc., and are copyrighted.

Copying in whole or in part is prohibited without prior written consent from Referee Enterprises, Inc. Republication of all or any part of this publication, including on the Internet, is expressly prohibited.

Published by Referee Enterprises, Inc., and the National Association of Sports Officials.

Printed in the United States of America

# CONTENTS

Introduction .....	4
Definition of Terms .....	5
Uniform .....	7
Use of the Beanbag.....	8
Flags and Penalties.....	9
Penalty Signaling Sequences .....	11
Signal Chart .....	15
Crew and Supplementary Signal Chart .....	27
Whistle Mechanics .....	30
40/25 Play Clock.....	30
Chain Crew, Timers and Ball Helpers .....	31
The Halo Principle .....	33
Fumbles .....	35
Snap Location After Kick or Penalty .....	37

## **MECHANICS**

Chapter 1: Philosophy .....	41
Chapter 2: Keys .....	43
Chapter 3: Before and After the Snap .....	61
Chapter 4: Coin Toss .....	62
Chapter 5: Timeouts .....	64
Chapter 6: Measurements .....	67
Chapter 7: Positioning .....	73
Chapter 8: Coverage .....	79
Chapter 9: Pregame Conference .....	116
Chapter 10: Postgame Duties .....	118

# INTRODUCTION

Officiating any sport is difficult. Officiating becomes exponentially difficult when we lack experience or training in the areas of rules knowledge and mechanics. Gaining knowledge and experience in these areas requires us as officials to be intentional about seeking continuous development of our skills through focused effort in the rulebook and the mechanics book.

To that end, the Minnesota State High School League Board of Directors authorized the Football Mechanics Committee to develop mechanics content for football officials that can be found in one place: Football Officiating Mechanics Illustrated for Five-Person Crews. This manual was developed for new officials and veterans alike with a goal of providing consistent messaging about positioning, mechanics and philosophies expected of officials that are officiating MSHSL varsity football games. Simply put, if it is not in this manual, it is not a mechanic. Hopefully, it will be easier to officiate when the expectations are clear and consistent for all football officials across the state.

Officials may never achieve consistency in judgment, but it is my firm belief that we can achieve consistency in positioning, mechanics and philosophy for officiating high school football in Minnesota by reading and applying the guidelines in this manual. Officiating is fun and it will be more fun when you are in the right spot to make the right call at the right time.

As Coordinator of Officials for the Minnesota State High School League, I have boundless appreciation for all of you who go out every Friday night with a purpose of providing outstanding opportunities for young people in the great state of Minnesota!

Have a great season!

Jason Nickleby  
Coordinator of Officials  
MSHSL

Thank you to the following Minnesota Football Mechanics Committee members who devoted their time and expertise to developing the content in this manual:

Mike Cannon, Hutchinson  
Bill Mills, Glenwood  
Jim Schrank, Hudson, WI  
Mike Spanier, Sartell  
Greg Swan, Robbinsdale  
Pat Whalen, New Brighton

# 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.”

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

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

**Cleaning up after the play** — Mechanic in which the officials 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** — 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.

**Mirroring a signal** — Giving the same signal as a crewmate (i.e. stop the clock, touchdown).

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

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

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

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

**Hashmarks (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 an 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 official a tip as to what type of play the offense will run; a player an official observes for all or part of a down.

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

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

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

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



**Officiate back to the ball** — Mechanic in which a wing official who has moved toward team B's goalline 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 officials who prevent 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 hashmark to the nearer sideline when the ball is snapped from the hashmark; opposite of the "Wide side."

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

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

**Side zone** — The area of the field between the sidelines and the hashmarks.

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

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

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

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

**Triangle** — Alignment used by officials to relay the ball from a side zone to the hashmark.

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

**Upfield** — The direction the defense or receiving team is moving. Opposite of "Downfield."

**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 hashmark through the middle of the field and side zone to the sideline when the ball is snapped from the opposite hashmark. Opposite of the "Short side."

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

**Wing official (or wing man)** — The linesman or line judge.

# 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 one inch wide. Minnesota uses a shirt with stripes that are 2-1/4 inches wide. 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.

**Pants:** Full length black pants with a single one and one-quarter inch white stripe down each leg are required. A black leather belt 1-1/4 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 always worn.

**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 may be worn before the game during warmups. All officials should either wear jackets or go without.

**Accessories:** Each official must have:

- At least one penalty flag. Each flag should be 15 by 15 inches and have a center weight. Most 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. Wherever it is carried, as little of the flag as possible should be visible.

- At least one beanbag to mark non-penalty spots. Beanbags should be white, black 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 timeouts, captains, etc.) and a writing utensil.

- 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 linesman should have a device that is clipped to the chain as an aid for measurements, etc., and an extra snap clip to aid setting the box after the first and third quarters. A second clip is recommended (see page 35).

# 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 yardline is needed because any penalty enforcement would bring the ball back to the nearest hashmark. Situations in which the beanbag should be used:

## **Fumbles**

The spot of the fumble must be marked in the event a penalty occurs and that spot is needed to determine where the run ended. Technically, the spot is required only for fumbles beyond the neutral zone, but many 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 line 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 goallines, the covering 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 five yardline and the goalline, 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 an official inadvertently blows his whistle, causing the ball to become dead, the covering 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.

# FLAGS AND PENALTIES

Fouls must be reported to the pressbox and both coaches. Additionally, all fouls must be communicated to all members of the officiating crew as each official has a role in penalty enforcement.

## Notification

Once the flag is thrown, the official who threw it must ensure both the referee and linesman are aware as soon as possible after the play ends. The linesman will ensure the chains and box 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 official who threw the flag. The referee must then move clear of the players, face the pressbox, 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 when multiple flags are down rather than reporting the foul to the referee because another official may have a different foul. The calling officials should get together to discuss what each official has seen, then report their decision to the referee.

## Getting the Explanation

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 official saw, "No. 49 cut upfield too soon." It may make sense to use both techniques dependent upon the experience level of the crewmate.

On certain fouls, it is critical that the referee be told the status of the ball when the foul occurred or whether a player involved was an eligible receiver. Of course the guilty team must also be identified. 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 captains 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.

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.

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

## Use of the Microphone

If the referee has a microphone to announce fouls, brief explanations are best: "Holding (pause), on the offense (pause), repeat the down (pause), third down." The number of the fouling player should also be announced.

## Use of the Flag

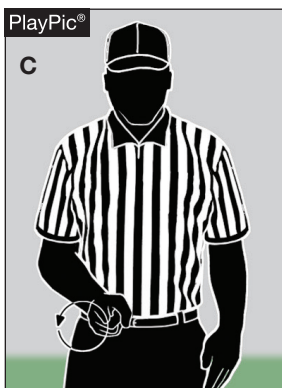
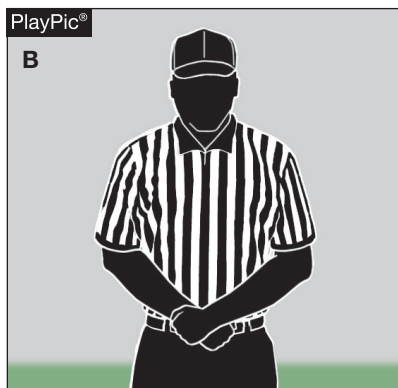
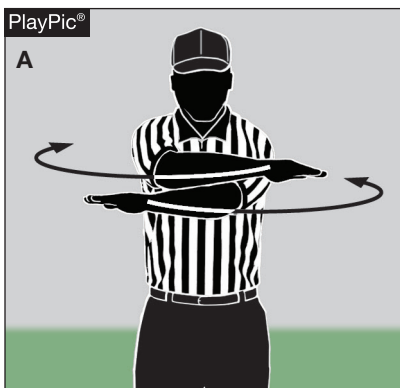
There are two ways to throw the flag: into the air or carefully to a spot. The latter is used when a spot foul occurs. If it is possible the spot of the foul will be the enforcement spot, you must get your flag as close to that spot as possible. If you're off target, you should relocate the flag as soon as possible after the play by picking it up and moving it definitively prior to reporting the foul.

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

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.

## Penalty With Clock Option

When a team accepts a penalty with less than two minutes in either half, the offended team will have the option to start the clock on the snap (3-4-7). If such a foul occurs, the referee shall look to the wing official on the offended team's side of the field to obtain their choice. If they choose to decline the penalty, the wing official will use the signal in PlayPic A. If the penalty is accepted and the offended team would like the clock to start on the snap, the wing official will use the signal in PlayPic B. If the clock will be started on the ready, the wing will use the signal on PlayPic C. The referee will then check with the wing on the offending team's side of the field. If the offending team chooses to use a timeout, the wing official will use the signal in PlayPic D.



# 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. Also, remember to wait for the linesman to indicate the chains are in position and the rest of the crew is ready before giving the ready-for-play.

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

The ready-for-play signal, which should always be given from a position that is visible to the clock operator, 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**

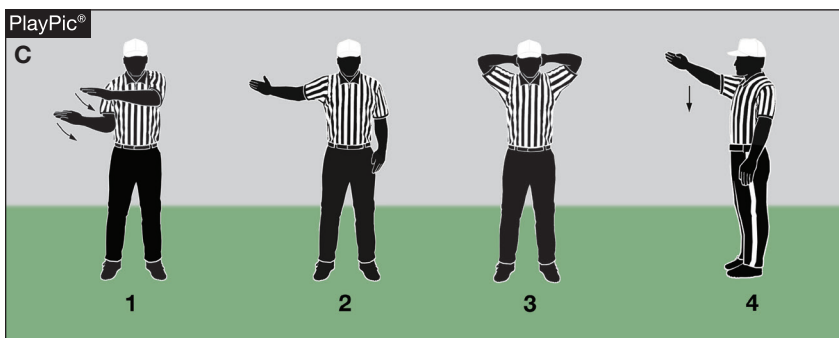
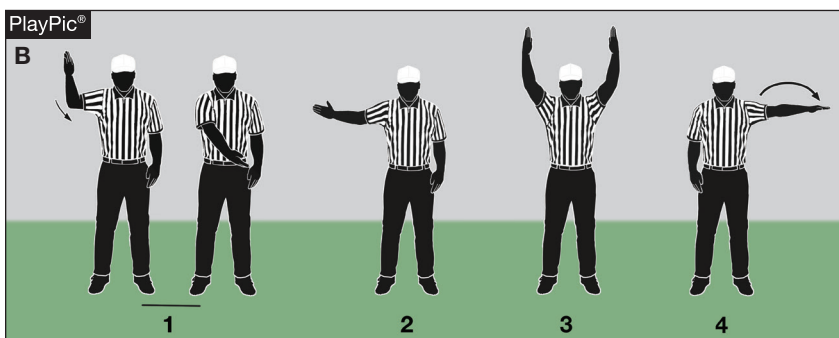
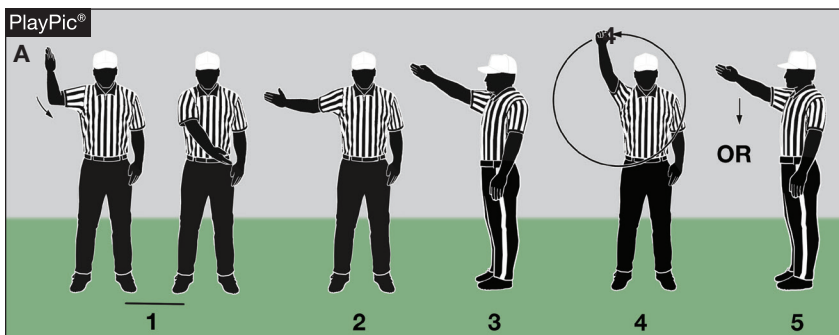
Signaling the penalty for a live-ball foul is a four-step process: foul signal, a point toward the team that fouled, an indication of the next down and either the ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal.

In PlayPic A, team B has been called for roughing the passer. The referee signals the foul (1), indicates which team has fouled (2) and signals that team A has been awarded a new series (3). The referee waits to be sure the chains have been moved and the other 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 (4). If the pass was incomplete or the play ended out of bounds, the referee gives the ready-for-play while simultaneously blowing his whistle (5).

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 signal. If the scoring team chooses to have the penalty enforced on the next kickoff, the referee signals the foul (1) and indicates which team has fouled (2). The referee signals the touchdown, then points to the spot of the next kickoff to indicate the enforcement (4).

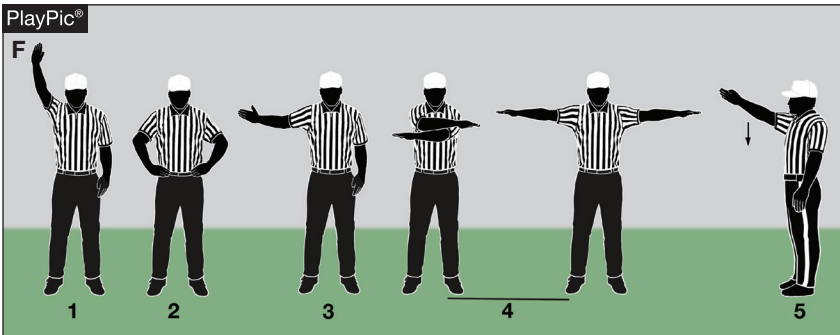
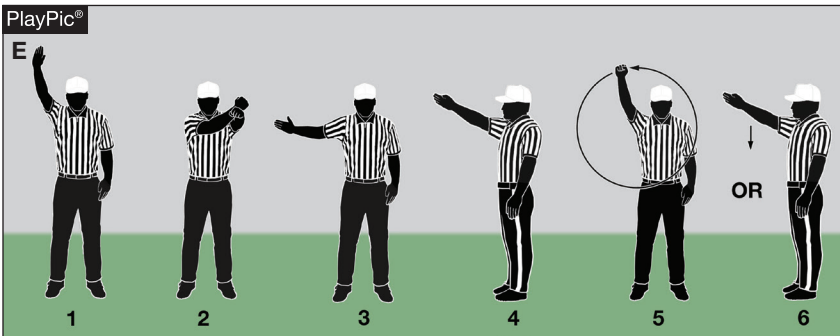
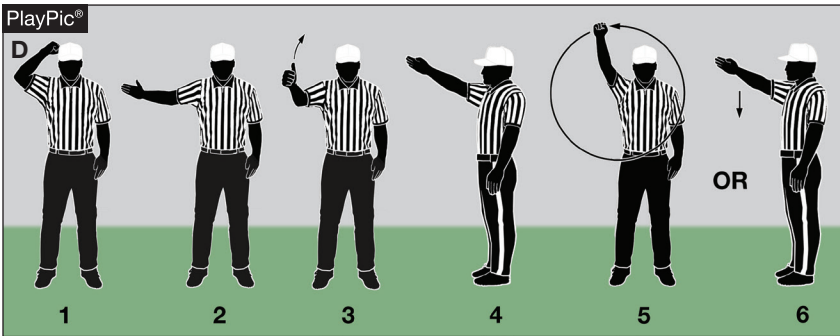
In PlayPic C, team A has been called for intentional grounding. The referee first indicates the foul (1), followed by the fouling team (2). Because the penalty includes a loss of down, the referee gives that signal (3). Because the pass was incomplete, the referee gives the ready-for-play while simultaneously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

Cases that involve an ejection add a step to the process. The referee must indicate the decision to the pressbox. PlayPic D (page 18) illustrates the sequence for a live-ball foul for illegal helmet contact that results in an ejection.



The referee first indicates the nature of the foul (1) and the fouling team (2). The ejection is then indicated (3). 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 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 (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).



### 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

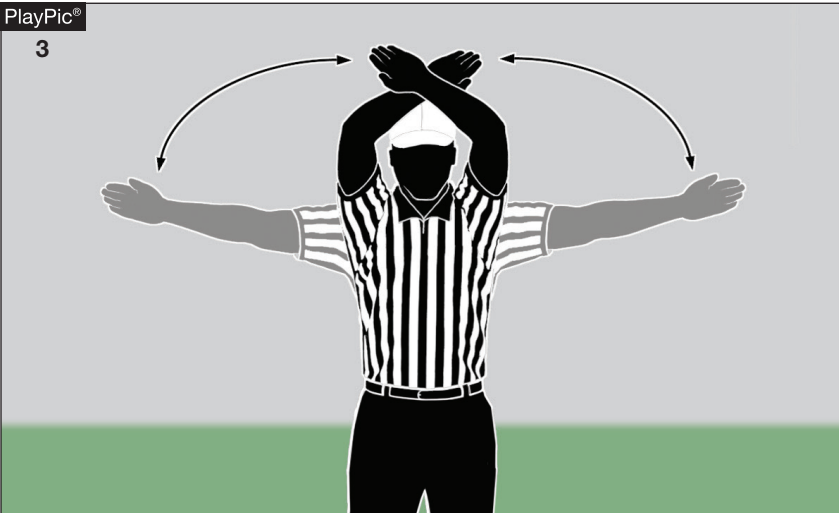
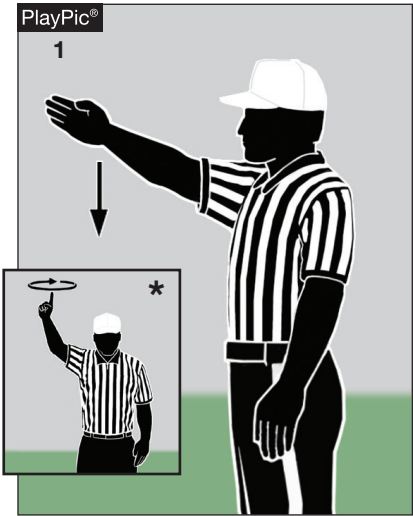


then indicates the team that fouled (3) and signals the next down. If the penalty results in a first down, the referee signals that team A has been awarded a new series (4); if not, the referee signals the next down. In the example, the penalty has given team A sufficient yardage for a first down. If 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 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).

# SIGNAL CHART

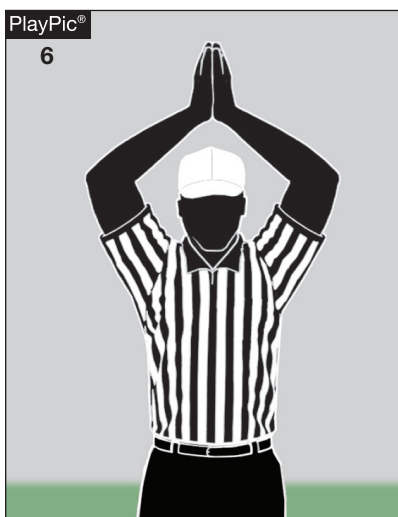




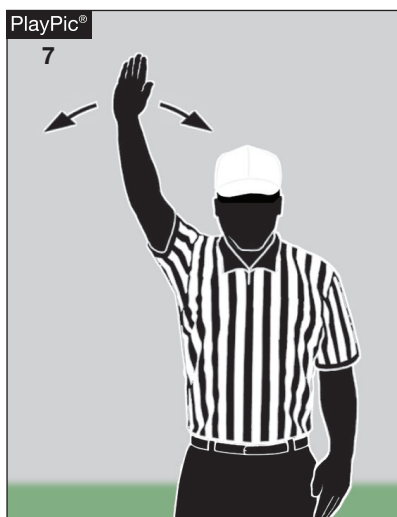
**TV/radio timeout**



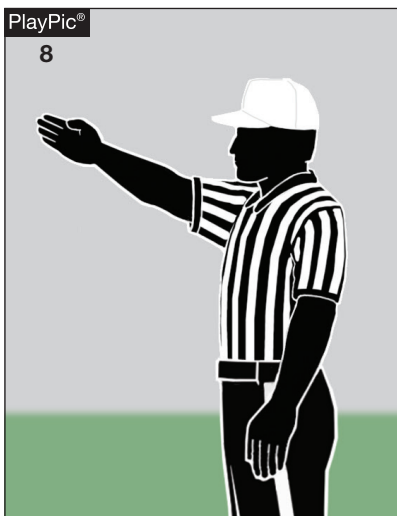
**Touchdown/field goal/point(s) after touchdown**



**Safety**



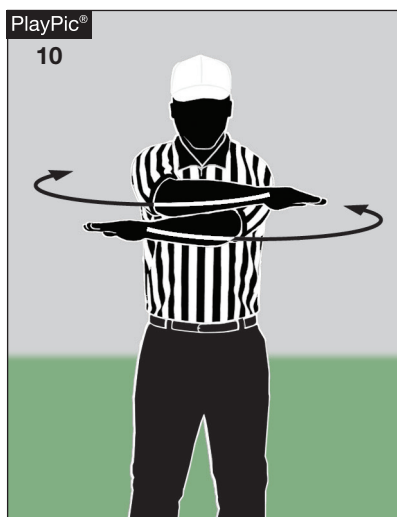
**Dead-ball foul/Dead ball Touchback (side to side)**



**First down**



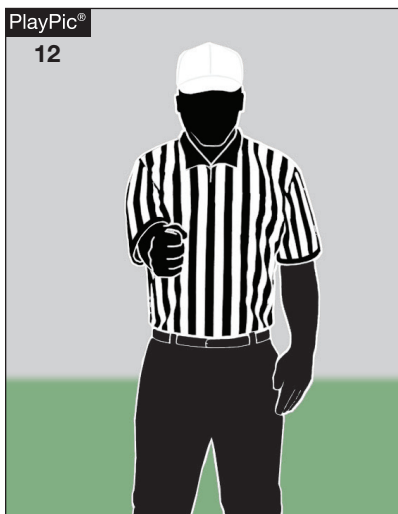
**Loss of down**



**Incomplete pass/unsuccesful try or  
field goal/penalty declined/coin toss  
option deferred**



**Legal touching**



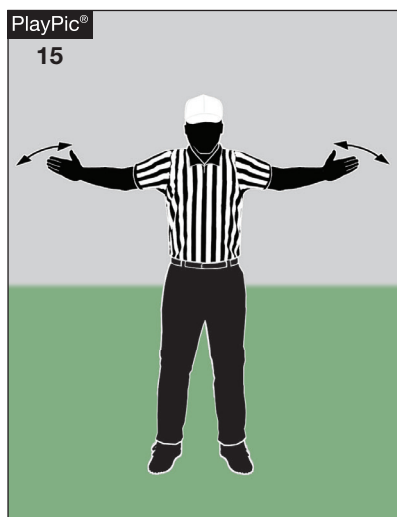
**Inadvertent whistle**



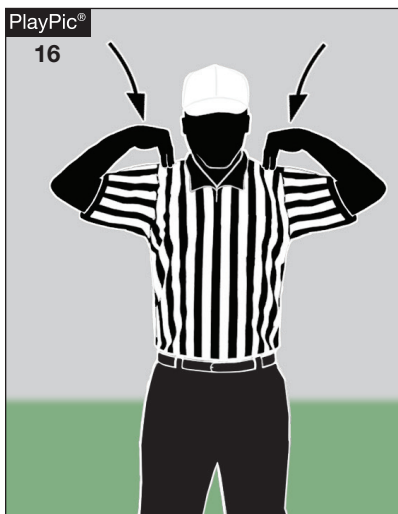
**Disregard flag**



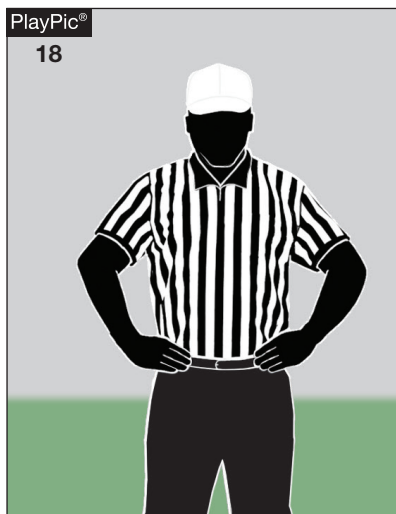
**End of period**



**Sideline warning**

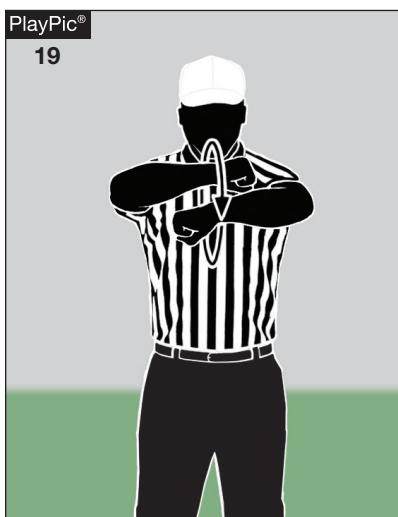


**First touching**  
**Illegal touching**

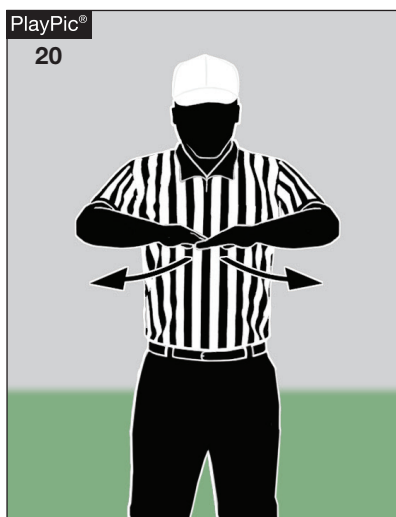


**Encroachment**

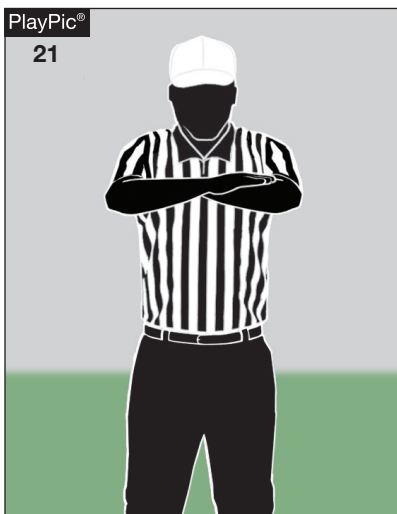
**NOTE:** Signal 17 is not depicted because it is an NCAA-only signal



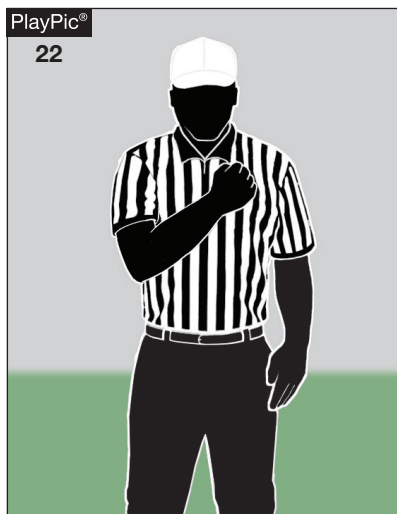
**False start**  
**Illegal formation**  
**Free kick infraction**



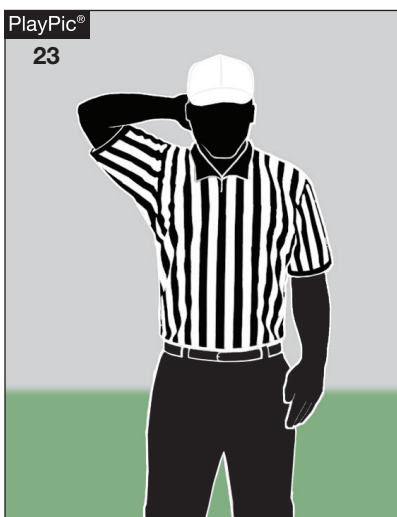
**Illegal motion (1 hand)**  
**Illegal shift (2 hands)**



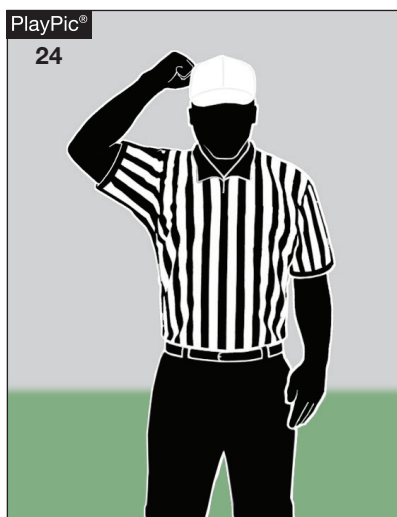
**Delay of game**



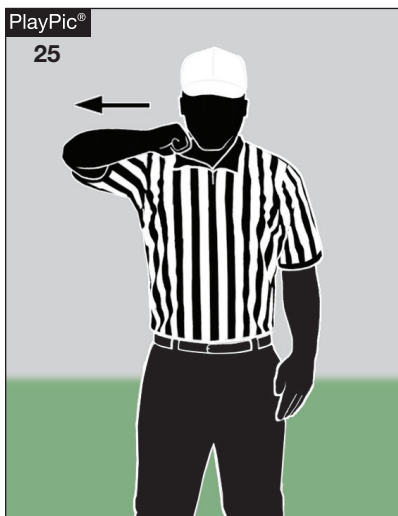
**Substitution infraction**



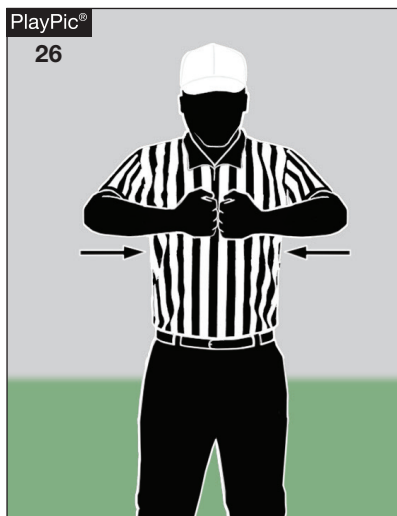
**Equipment violation**



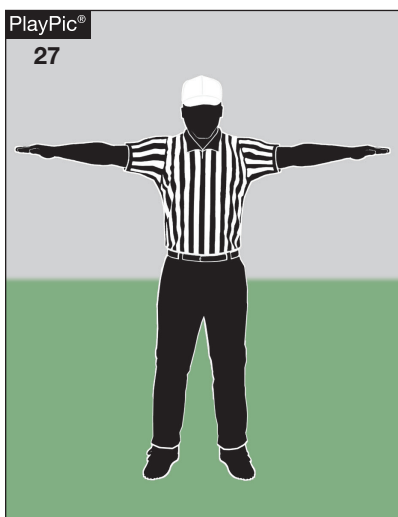
**Illegal helmet contact  
Targeting**



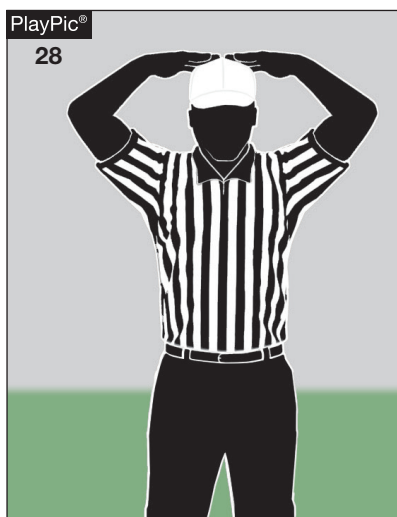
**Illegal horse-collar**



**Blindside block**

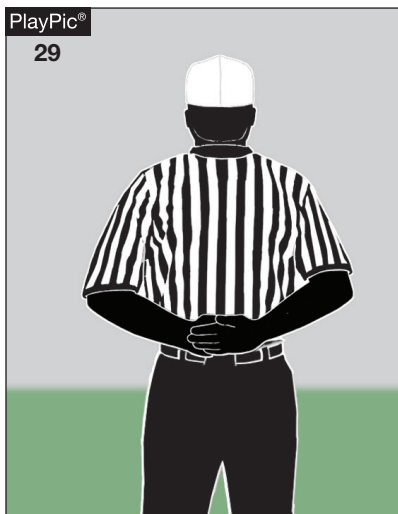


**Unsportsmanlike conduct or  
noncontact foul**



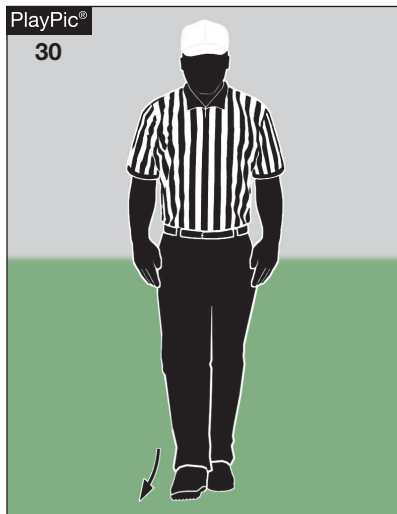
**Illegal participation**



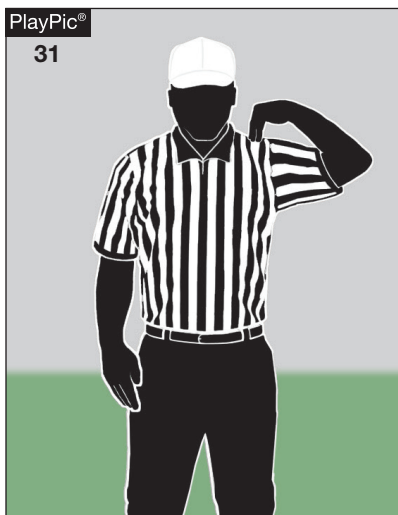


**Sideline interference**

**Note:** Face pressbox when giving signal.

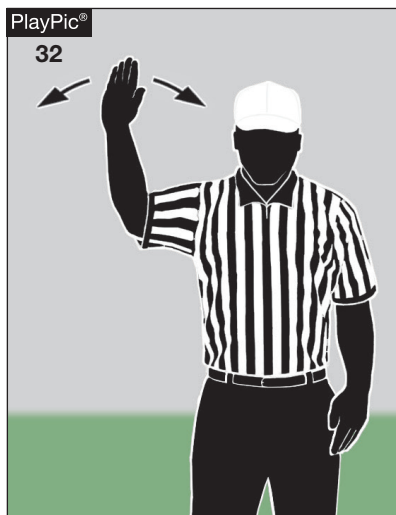


**Running into or roughing  
the kicker or holder**

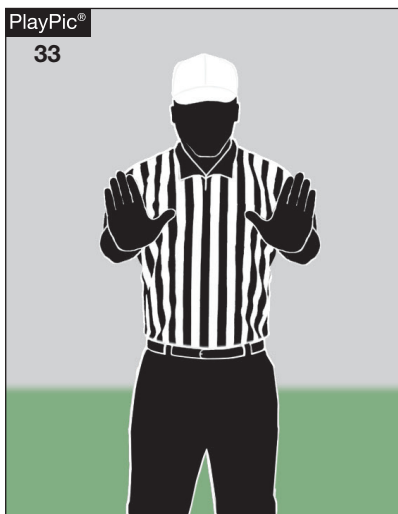


**Illegal batting/kicking**

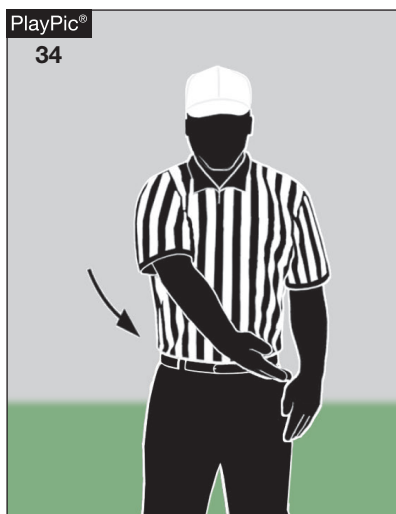
(for illegal kicking, follow with point  
toward foot)



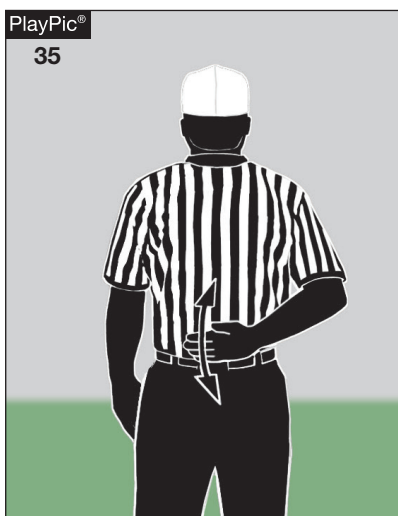
**Illegal/invalid fair catch**



**Pass interference  
Kick-catching interference**

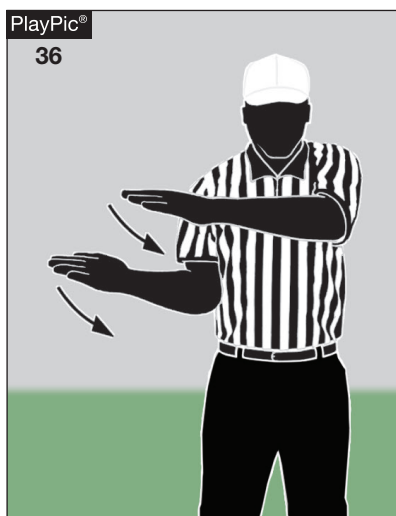


**Roughing the passer**



**Illegal pass  
Illegal forward handing**

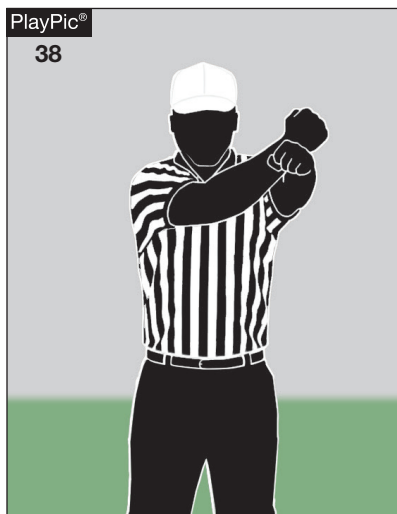
**Note:** Face pressbox when giving signal



**Intentional grounding**



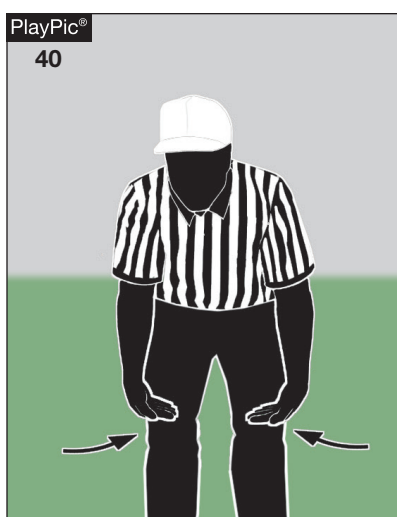
Ineligible downfield on pass



Personal foul



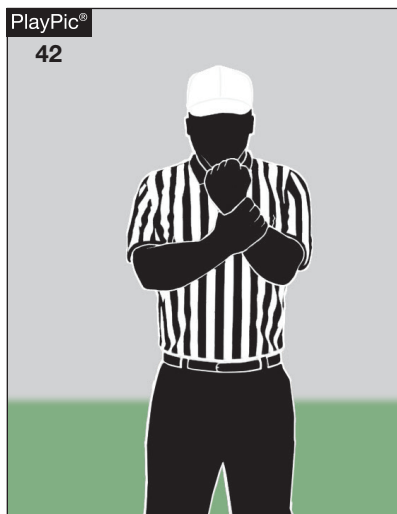
Clipping



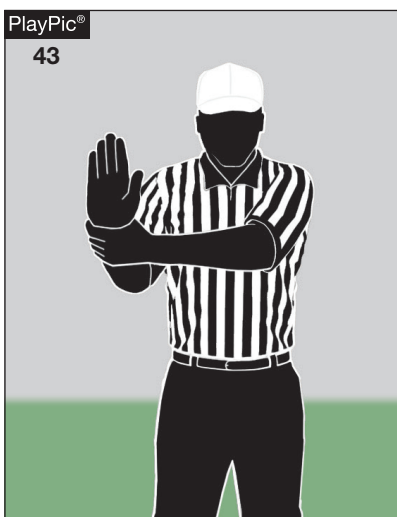
Block below the waist



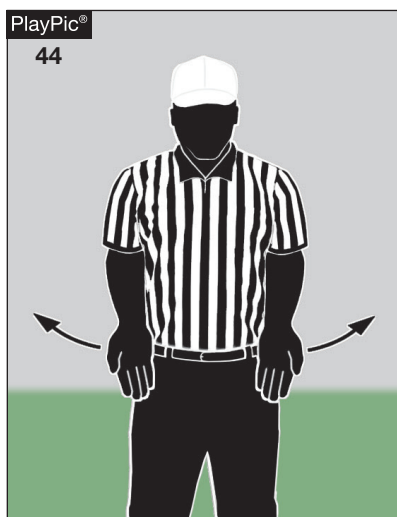
**Chop block**



**Holding  
Obstructing  
Illegal use of hands or arms**



**Illegal block**



**Helping the runner  
Interlocked blocking**

PlayPic®

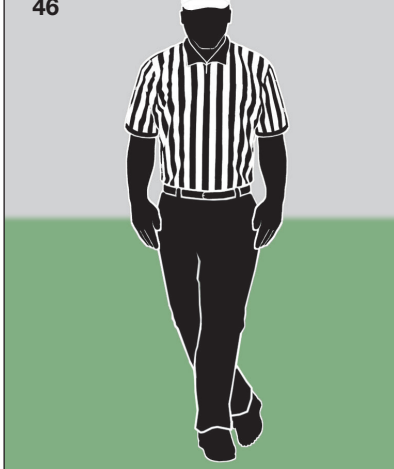
45



**Grasping of facemask, chin strap  
or helmet opening**

PlayPic®

46



**Tripping**

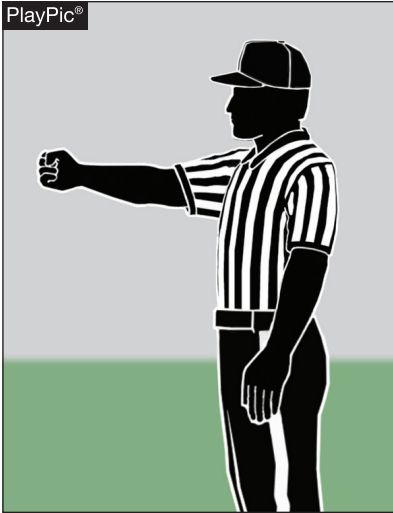
PlayPic®

47

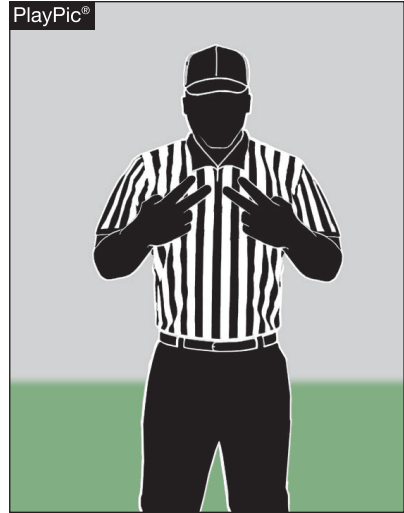


**Disqualification**

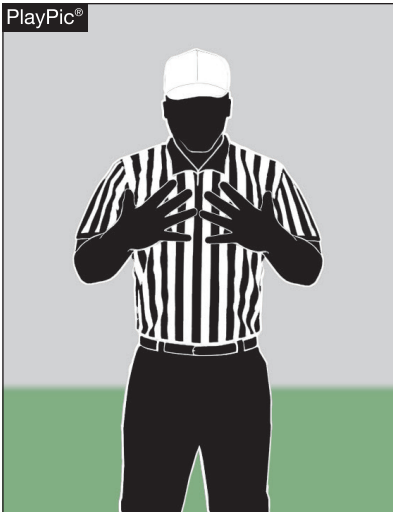
# CREW AND SUPPLEMENTARY SIGNAL CHART



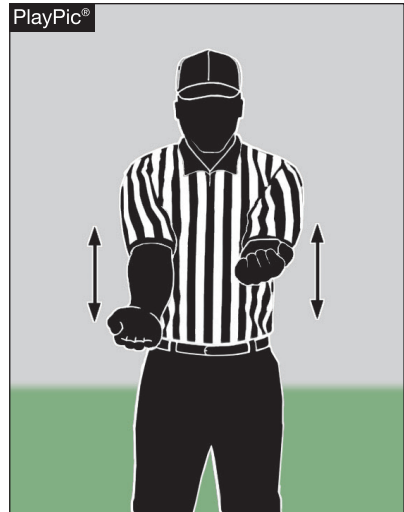
11 players



More than 11 players on field\*



Fewer than 11 players on field\*

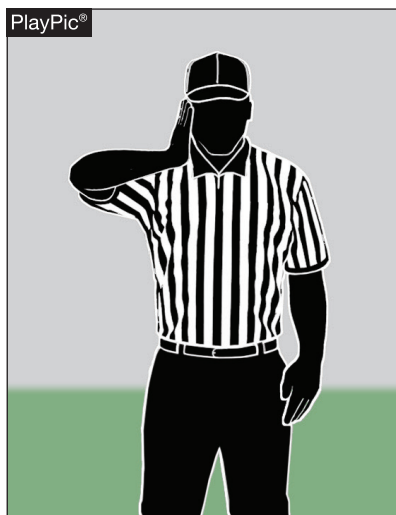


Pass juggled\*

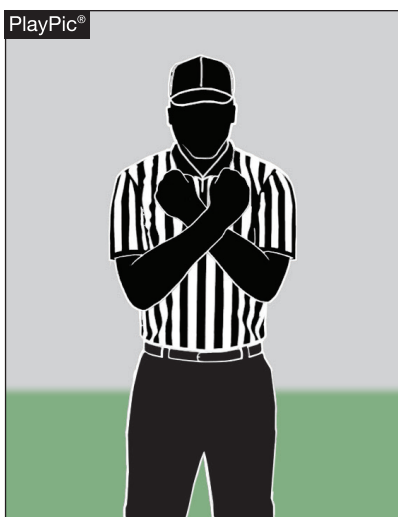
Asterisk (\*) indicates recommended signal



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



**Unbalanced line**



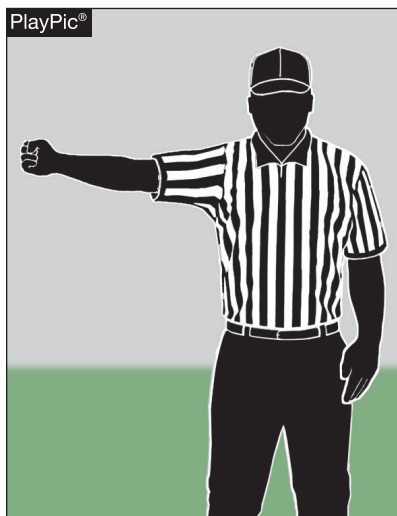
**Double sticks**



**Start clock on ready**



**Visible Count**



**Receiver off the line  
Backward pass**



# WHISTLE MECHANICS

Each official will carry a whistle as part of required game equipment. A whistle on a lanyard is preferred. The lanyard should be black.

Once the snap occurs, it is strongly recommended that no official have a whistle in the mouth until the ball becomes dead.

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

When, at the end of a play, any official sees that a flag has been thrown, he should alert the crew by giving three short blasts of the whistle. That helps ensure the box 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 timeout (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 that the ball is dead after a play.

The umpire whistles to indicate a timeout, 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.

Wing officials use the whistle to indicate timeouts, 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 timeouts, injuries, the end of a quarter, touchback, the ball is dead in his coverage area and touchdowns when he is the covering official.

## 40/25 PLAY CLOCK

There are instances in which the referee will give the ready-for-play signal and the 25-second play clock begins as in the past. The 25-second play clock is used before a try following a score; to start a period or overtime series; following administration of an inadvertent whistle; following a charged timeout; and following an officials timeout for the following reasons:

- For a measurement.
- Following a change of team possession.
- When captains and coaches are notified of the time remaining.
- For a player in need of equipment repair or required player equipment is missing or improperly worn.
- To dry or change the ball.
- For unusual heat or humidity.
- When a coach-referee conference results in the referee altering his ruling.
- To administer a penalty.
- For any unusual delay in getting the ball marked ready for play.
- For a media timeout.
- For the intermission between the first and second and the third and fourth periods.
- Prior to the succeeding free kick following a

try, successful field goal or safety.

- A player or official is injured or apparently injured.
- A helmet comes completely off a player during a down or the subsequent dead-ball action.
- Following the stoppage of the play clock by the referee for any other reason.

In all other cases, the 40-second play clock begins when the ball is declared dead by an official using an upraised arm. In those instances, the ball is considered ready for play when the ball has been placed on the ground by an official and the official steps away to position.

If there is an appreciable delay in spotting the ball and the play clock is down to 20 seconds, the referee should reset the play clock to 25 seconds by a few pumps of one arm with an upraised palm. When there is no visible play clock, the referee should approximate the interval and use his best judgment. The game clock will start by rule on a referee's signal or the snap.

When a first down is gained and the play ends inbounds, the clock stops to award the new series but the 40-second play clock

starts when the ball becomes dead (it is not an administrative stoppage). 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 restarted. The umpire may stand over the ball to prevent a snap until the referee signals the game clock to start.

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 will signal timeout and reset the play clock to 25 seconds.

On a fourth-down play that results in a change of possession, the clock is stopped to award team B a first down; the game clock will stop to allow teams to substitute players. The referee will then blow his whistle and signal ready-for-play for a 25-second play clock.

The play clock is turned off whenever the ready-for-play is whistled with less than 25 seconds remaining in any quarter and the game clock is running.

# CHAIN CREW, TIMERS AND BALL HELPERS

## Chain Crew

It is important for the linesman/line judge to have a thorough pregame meeting with the chain crew. Officials will often encounter a chain crew that "has been doing this for 30 years" and needs no instruction. In those cases, the linesman/line judge can remind the chain crew that not all crews do things the exact same way, thus creating the need for the meeting.

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

When a new series begins, the box is set on the spot where the linesman/line judge's downfield heel intersects with the sideline. The chains are then set according to the position of the box. Once the spot has been established, the box should be moved at least six feet away from the sideline. The six-foot spacing allows the chain crew some cushion. If players approach, the chain crew must retreat and drop the equipment. That protects the players and the chain crew.

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

The box holder is not to change the down or move the box until the linesman/line judge echoes the referee's announcement of the next

down. Let the box holder know what signals will be used to indicate the down (inexperienced chain crews may not know that a fist indicates fourth down). Remind the box holder the box will be needed on a try.

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 linesman/line judge 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 linesman/line judge tells the crew to move, not seeing that a penalty marker is down, the crew should be told not to hesitate to point out the flag to the linesman/line judge.

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

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

The linesman/line judge'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 yardline with a second clip, leaving the original clip in place until after the first-down play ends.

The clip goes on the five yardline nearer the trail stake, the yardline is set on the clip and the clip is never removed until the stakes are in a new position.

Another tool the linesman/line judge can use is tape on the halfway point of the chain. The tape helps the linesman/line judge determine if team A will achieve a first down on a five-yard penalty, thus precluding the need for a measurement.

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

To ensure that the proper penalty yardage is assessed, the linesman/line judge 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 linesman/line judge should record the down, distance, yardline on which the ball is resting and yardline on which the clip is located. The linesman/line judge then grabs the chain on either side of the clip, asks the stake holders to rotate so they are opposite of where they were when the quarter ended and then jog to the corresponding yardline on the other end of the field. The linesman/line judge places the clip on the ground at the appropriate line, then asks both stakeholders to pull the ends taut. The box is placed once the umpire has set the ball.

### Timer

When plays end at the sideline, the timer should observe if the covering 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 that a try is always untimed.

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

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 official should time the game. Those duties fall to the line judge.

Remind the timer that 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.

### 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 endline in field goal and try situations. One ball should be placed on the ground behind the goalpost. The ball helpers then take a position well behind the posts in order to recover the ball after the kick. An official can pick up the ball behind the goalpost for use on the ensuing kickoff or snap.

If the ball becomes dead out of bounds or inbounds nearer the sideline than the hashmarks, the ball helpers should give a ball as quickly as possible to the nearest 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 official covering the spot until it is no longer required and then take it off the field.

It is recommended that ball helpers not be allowed on the field. That prevents the possibility of injury or a ball helper interfering with live play.

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

The diagram illustrates a soccer field with yard lines and player positions. A central cluster of players is highlighted with a green circle, and a specific player is labeled 'HANDOFF' with an arrow pointing to them. The field is marked with yard lines and player names like B, J, U, R, and L.

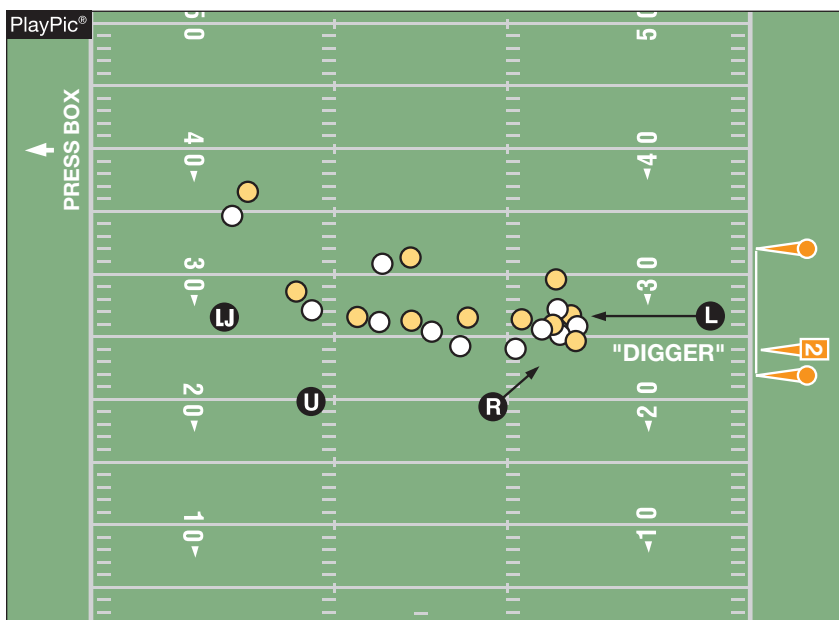
MECHANICS ILLUSTRATED /// 33

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.

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.

# 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 an official sees a fumble, he must drop a beanbag at the yardline 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 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 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 team forming a pile that prevents

the covering official from determining possession, the ball must be “dug out” of the pile. The official closest to the pile becomes the “digger,” the official responsible for uniling the players and determining who has recovered the fumble. The official nearest the digger signals the clock to stop and looks at the clock to be sure it is stopped. The remaining nearby officials echo the signal.

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 official can approach the pile and

assist the digger; the remaining 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 officials and the pile consists of four or fewer players, there is usually no need for a digger. The 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.

Anytime the referee is in the area of the pile, the recovery information should be verbally relayed to the referee. The referee alone then signals.

# SNAP LOCATION AFTER KICK OR PENALTY

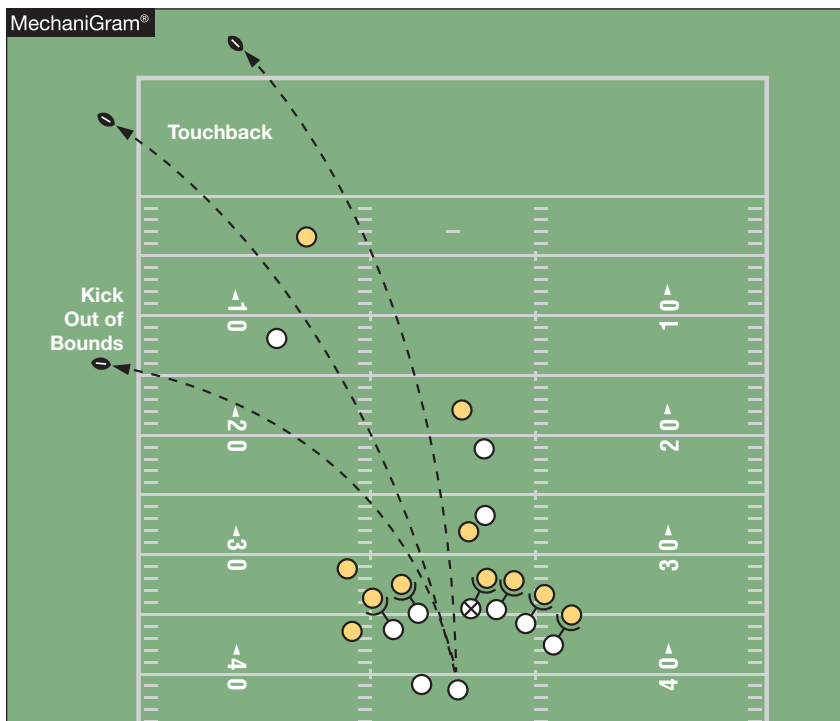
When a punt goes out of bounds across a sideline, team R has no choice when it comes to the location of the next snap. The ball will be snapped from the nearest hashmark just as if the ball was carried out of bounds by a runner. In the Mechanigram below, team R will snap from the hashmark closest to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

However, when a free kick or punt results in a touchback, team R may choose to snap from anywhere between the hashes. Although most teams won't argue if the ball is placed in the

center of the field, understand it is not a requirement.

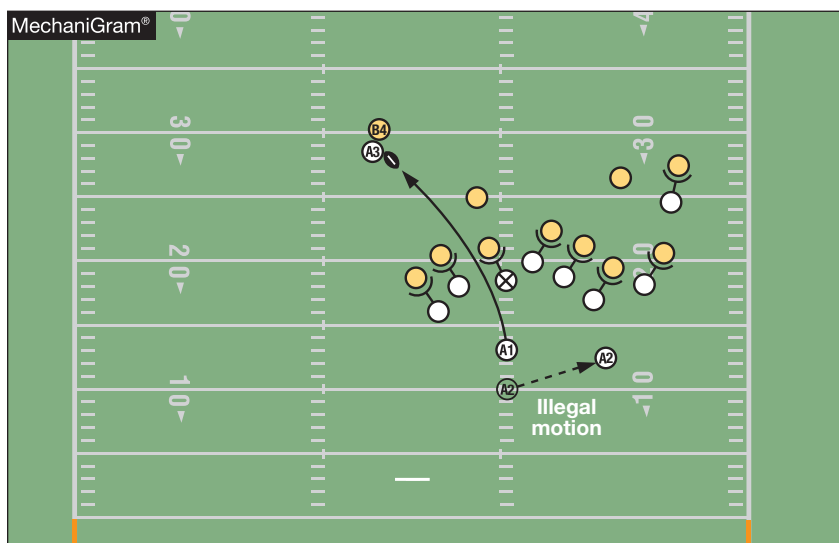
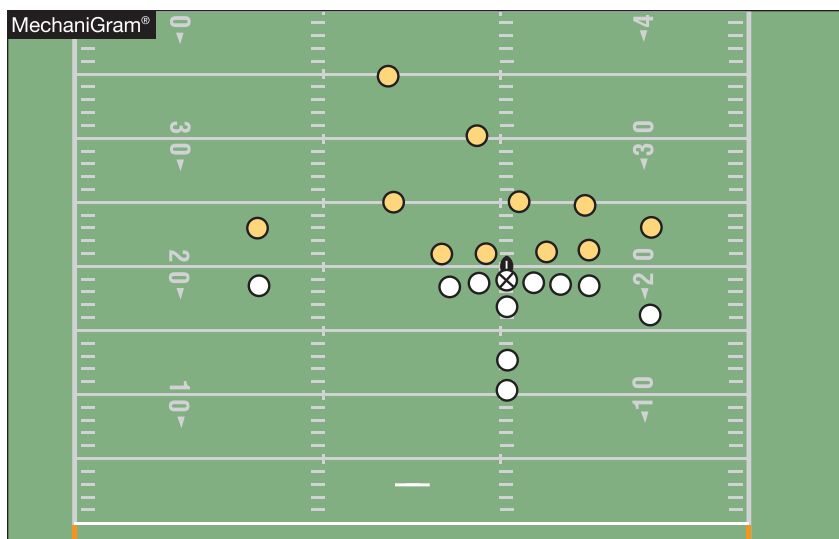
Before the ready-for-play signal, the team that will next snap may designate the spot from which the ball is put in play anywhere between the hashmarks for a try or kickoff, following a safety or touchback, or for the start of each overtime series. The privilege may be repeated if the down is replayed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

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

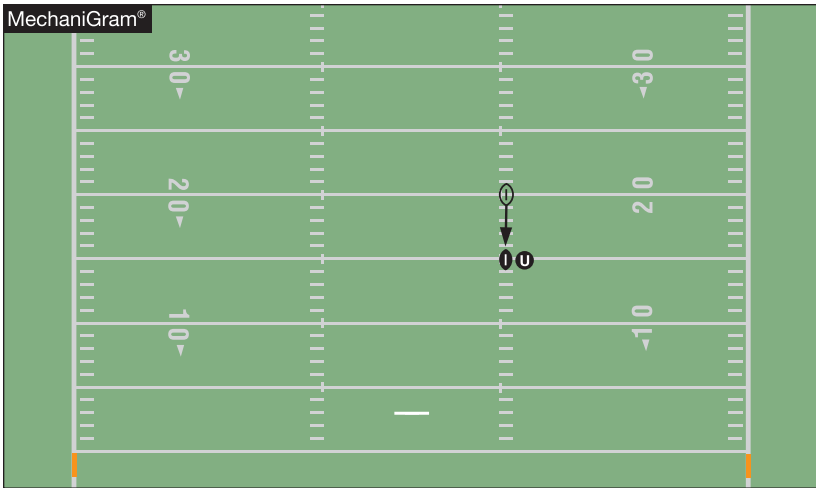




## PREVIOUS SPOT MEANS PREVIOUS SPOT

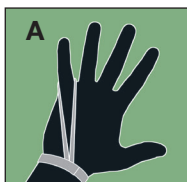


When a penalty has previous-spot enforcement, it not only means the yardline from which the ball was last snapped or free kicked. The penalty must be enforced with consideration to the lateral position of the ball as well. In the top MechaniGram, team A is snapping from the hashmark on its own 20 yardline. 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.

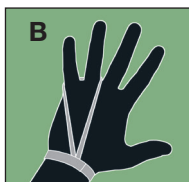


When team B accepts the penalty, the umpire must return to the exact place from which the play started — that is, the same hashmark on team A's 20 yardline.

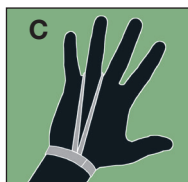
## UMPIRE'S DOWN INDICATORS



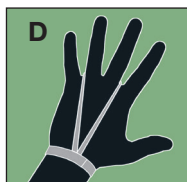
**A**  
Little finger means left hash.



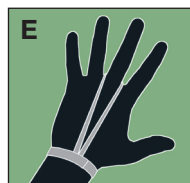
**B**  
Little finger and ring finger means between left hash and left upright.



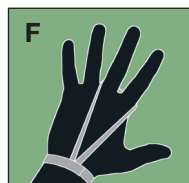
**C**  
Ring finger means left upright.



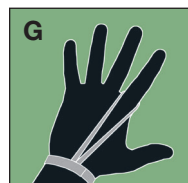
**D**  
Ring finger and middle finger means between left hash and left upright.



**E**  
Middle finger means middle of field.



**F**  
Middle finger and index finger means between right upright and right hash.



**G**  
Index finger means right upright.



**H**  
Index finger and thumb means between right upright and right hash.



**I**  
Thumb means right hash.

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 I.

# CREW OF FIVE CHAPTER 1 PHILOSOPHY

Movement and compromise are the characteristics of football officiating. Twenty-two players are moving around, competing for space and position; the 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 officials work a game. The fifth 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 officials on the crew to use their keys to anticipate plays and get into proper position to cover them.

Significant movement by all 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 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.

Once the ball is snapped, all 22 players are in motion. An 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.

Far too often officials who can't (or won't) run well don't move with the flow of the play. They're afraid of getting in the way and aren't confident they can move quickly enough to avoid players and get good angles. The game suffers because coverage suffers. 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's a tendency to think about spotting the ball for the next play and forgetting about the players. If officials ignore post-play action, players get physical with each other and game control suffers. All 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 who is covering what. 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.

# CREW OF FIVE CHAPTER 2 KEYS

- BALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH DECLARED TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE
- DOUBLE TIGHT ENDS, STRENGTH TO LINESMAN'S SIDE
- DOUBLE WING, DOUBLE TIGHT END FORMATION
- MOTION CHANGES STRENGTH
- MOTION CHANGES FORMATION FROM UNBALANCED TO BALANCED
- MOTION INTO TRIPS
- MOTION DOESN'T CHANGE STRENGTH
- STRAIGHT T
- STRENGTH TO LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE SPLIT END
- STRENGTH TO LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE TIGHT END
- TRIPS TO LINESMAN'S SIDE
- UNBALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE
- VEER
- WISHBONE
- REFEREE AND UMPIRE KEYS

**NOTE:** The line judge will be positioned opposite the press box in the first half and will be responsible for the chains. The linesman will be opposite the press box in the second half and will be responsible for the chains. Although the wing officials alternate sides at halftime, for the purposes of keys, back judges will always use line judges (regardless of the sideline on which they are positioned) when determining strong side or weak side in a balanced formation.

The Mechanigrams that depict the keys and play coverages are considered to illustrate action in the second half of a game.

Keys apply before the snap. As a play develops, officials may be required to shift their focus from their initial keys and go to "zone coverage," observing players in their area.

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 yardline. 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 an 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. Pulling linemen indicate a sweep or trap block. 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 are predetermined by the position you are working in the game. The back judge's main positional key is the widest eligible receiver on the strong side of the formation. 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 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 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 or a wide out. 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 wings. Wing officials should not key the same player as the back judge.

The positional keys:

- **Unbalanced formation** — The back judge keys on the widest receiver on the strong side. The wing official on the strong side keys on the inside player of the formation. The wing official on the weak side keys the end nearest his side, normally a wideout.

- **Balanced formation** — In a balanced formation, strength is always considered to be on the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the widest receiver (usually a split end). The wing officials key on receivers other than the back judge's key and any backs who move toward them at the snap.

- **Three-receiver (trips) formation** — The back judge keys on the two widest receivers and the strong side wing official keys on the inside receiver. The weak side wing official keys on the end nearest him.

- **Double wing formation** — Strength is declared to the line judge's side. The back judge keys the widest receiver on the line judge's side. The line judge keys the inside receiver. The linesman has both receivers on his side.

- **Wishbone** — Another balanced formation, which means strength is declared to line judge's side. The back judge has the end on the line judge's side. The line judge keys the backs. The linesman keys the end on his 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. Legality of motion is always the responsibility of the official away from whom the player is moving.

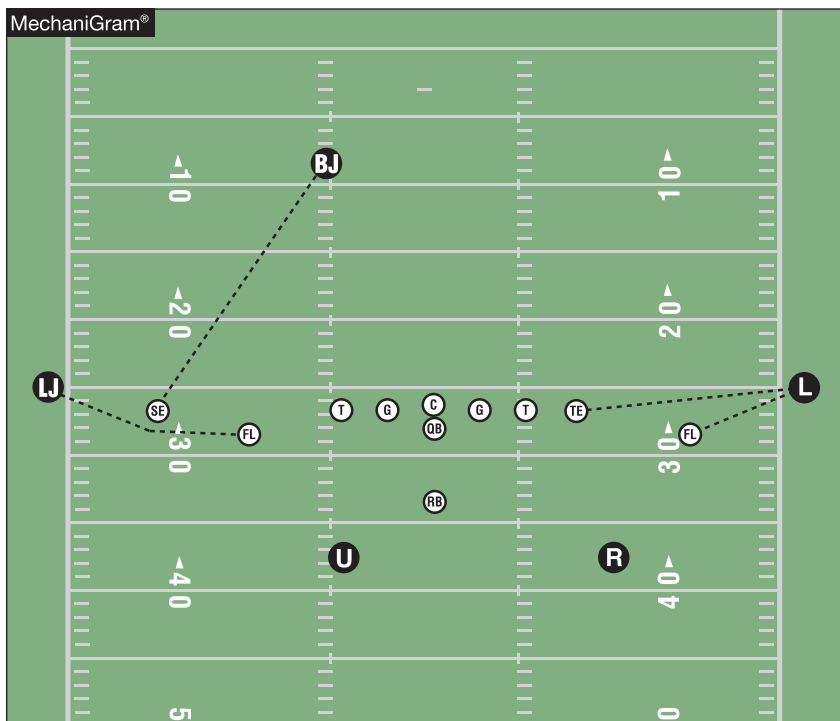
Say team A lines up strong to the linesman's side, but the flanker on the

linesman's side goes in motion toward the line judge. If the motion man gets to the line judge's side of the ball at the snap, the strength of the formation is now on the line judge's side and the keys change. The back judge now has the wideout on the line judge's side, the line judge has the motion man and the 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 linesman is responsible for watching to ensure the motion man does not cut upfield before the snap. If the motion man does not get to the opposite side of the formation 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 are in force: The back judge keys on the two outside receivers and the strong side wing official keys on the inside receiver.

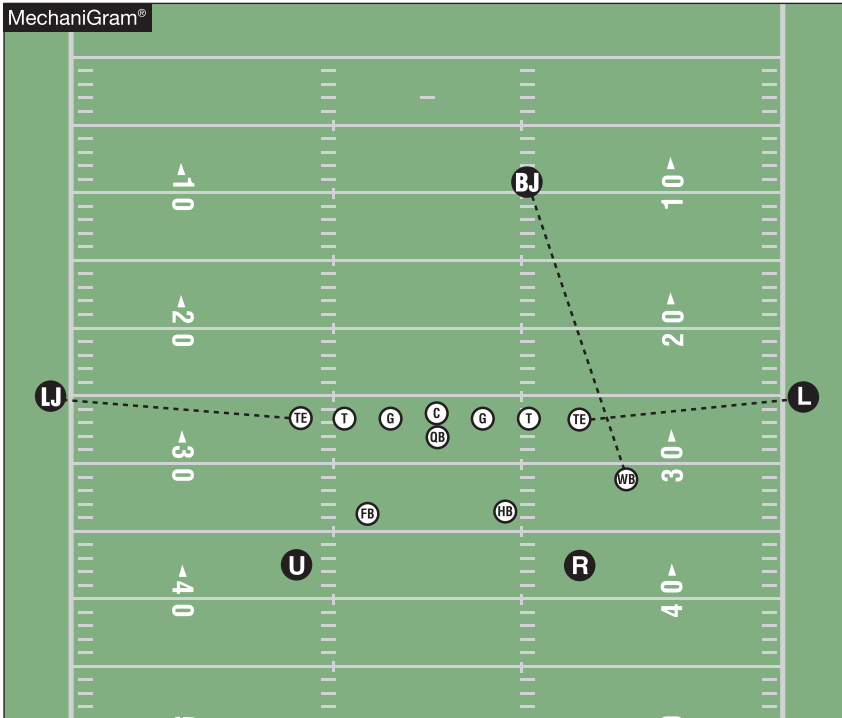


## BALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH DECLARED TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE



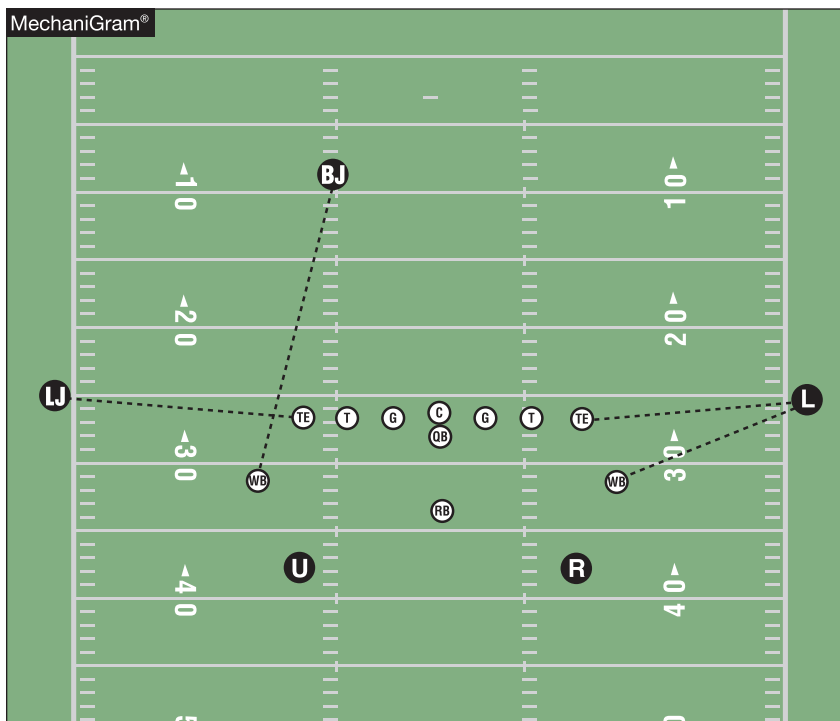
In a balanced formation, strength is always considered to be on the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the widest receiver (in this case, the split end). The line judge keys on the flanker while the linesman has both the split end and flanker on his side. Either wing official may also have the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

## DOUBLE TIGHT ENDS, STRENGTH TO LINESMAN'S SIDE



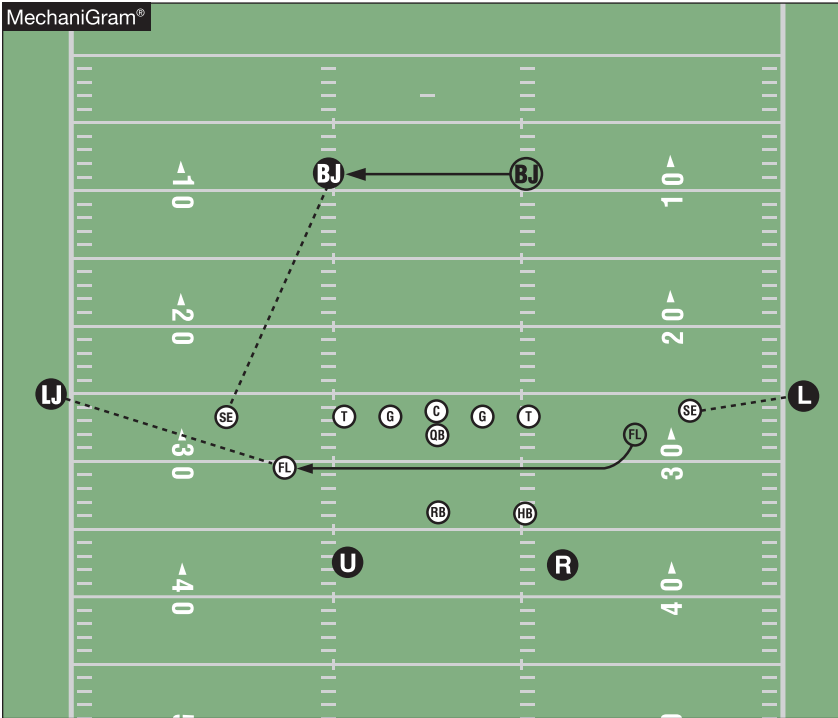
This is primarily a running formation used on short yardage, but teams sometimes throw quick passes out of this formation. The back judge keys on the widest receiver on the strong side (the wingback on the linesman's side in this case). The linesman keys on the tight end. The line judge keys on the tight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

## DOUBLE WING, DOUBLE TIGHT END FORMATION



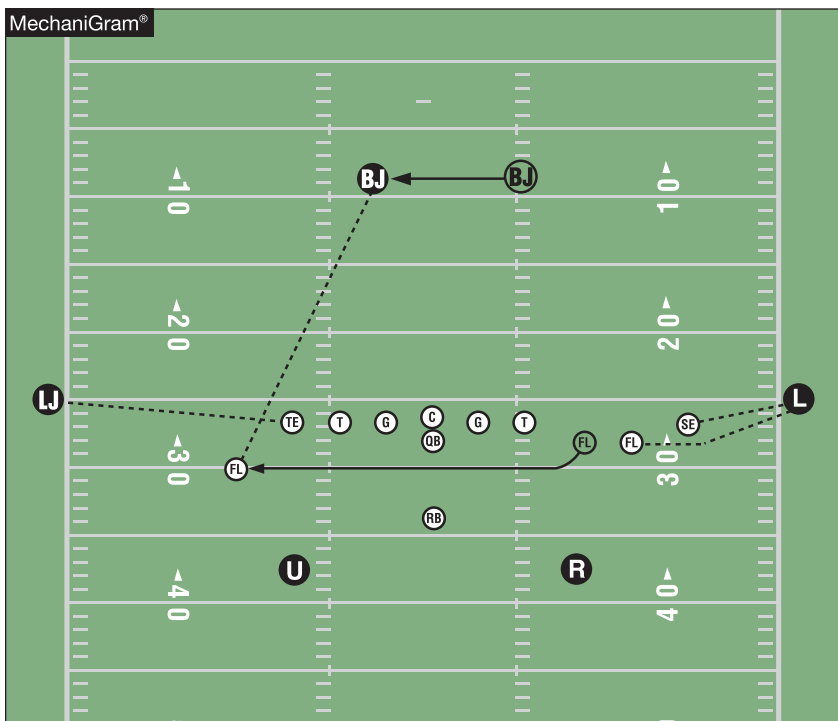
Strength is declared to the line judge's side. The back judge keys on the widest receiver on his side. In this case, that's the wingback on the line judge's side. The line judge keys on the tight end on his side. The linesman has the tight end and wingback on his side. Either wing official may also have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

## MOTION CHANGES STRENGTH



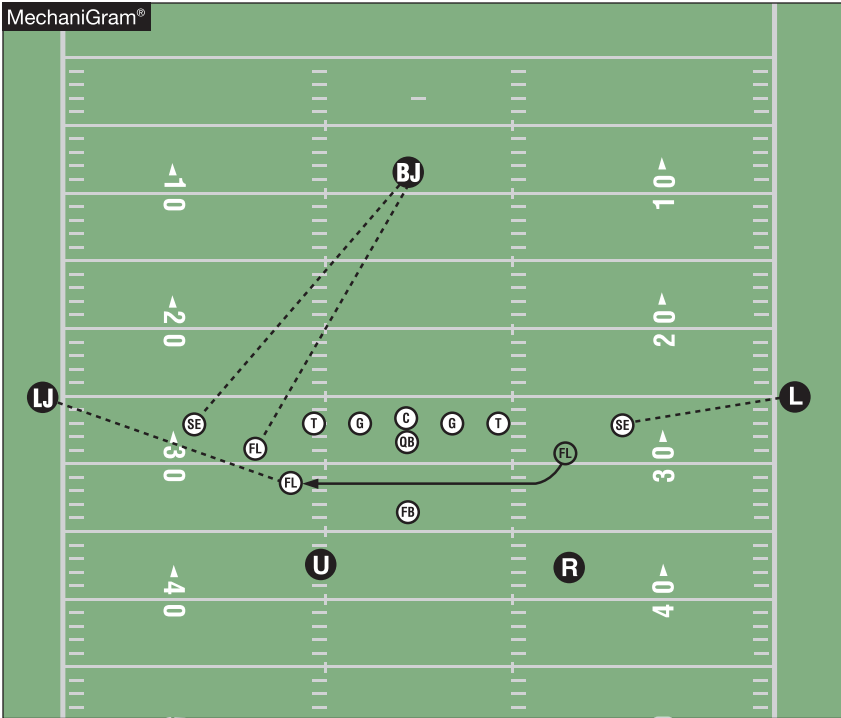
Strength was to the linesman's side, but motion changed the strength to the line judge's side. The back judge shifts position and keys on the strong side split end. The line judge keys on the flanker and the linesman keys on the split end on his side. Although the line judge is keying on the motion man's action after the snap, the linesman is responsible for watching to ensure the motion man does not cut upfield before the snap. Legality of motion is always the responsibility of the official away from whom the player is moving.

## MOTION CHANGES FORMATION FROM UNBALANCED TO BALANCED



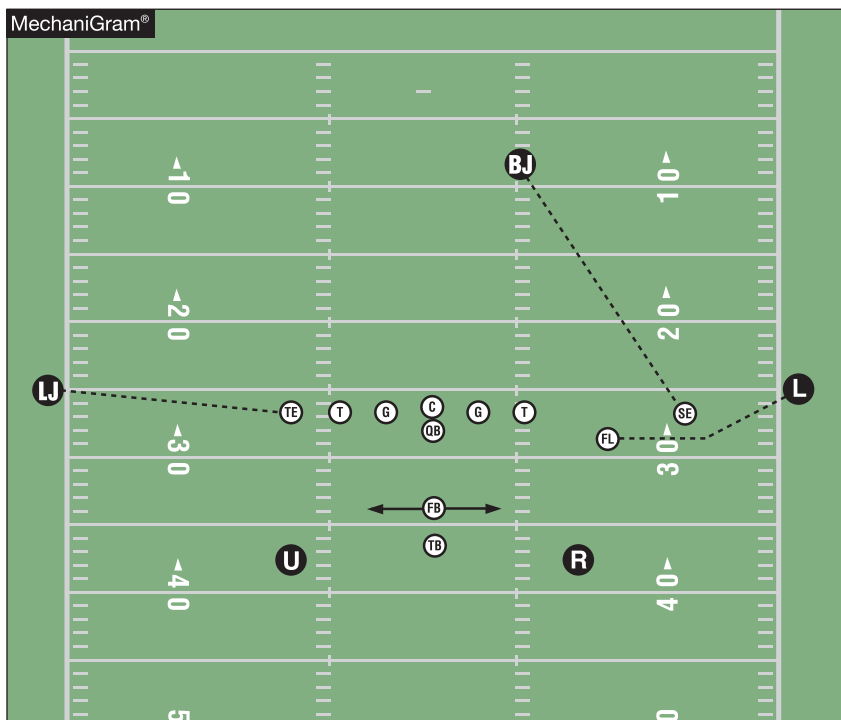
Strength was to the linesman's side, but motion changed the formation from unbalanced to balanced. In a balanced formation, strength is declared to the line judge's side. The back judge shifts position and keys on the strong side flanker. The line judge keys on the tight end and the linesman keys on the split end and flanker on his side. Although the line judge is keying on the motion man's action after the snap, the linesman is responsible for watching to ensure the motion man does not cut upfield before the snap. Legality of motion is always the responsibility of the official away from whom the player is moving.

## MOTION INTO TRIPS



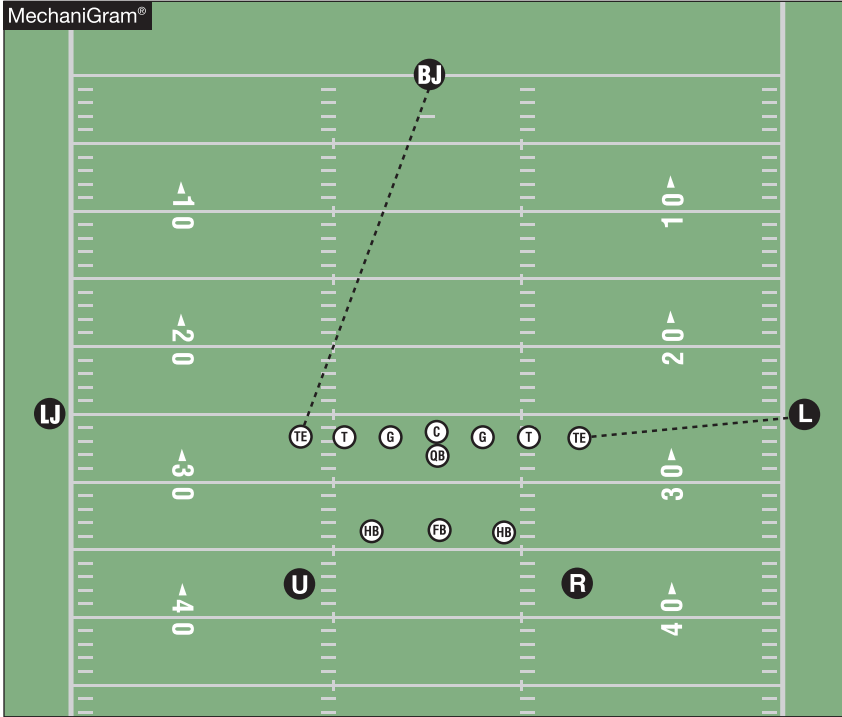
Motion by the flanker turned a balanced formation into a trips formation to the line judge's side. The back judge keys the two outside receivers. In this case, it's the set flanker and the widest man on the line judge's side. The line judge keys on the motion receiver and the linesman keys the end on his side of the line. Although the line judge is keying on the motion man's action after the snap, the linesman is responsible for watching to ensure the motion man does not cut upfield before the snap. Legality of motion is always the responsibility of the official away from whom the player is moving.

## MOTION DOESN'T CHANGE STRENGTH



Strength is to the 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 split end and the linesman keys on the flanker. The line judge keys on the split end. Either wing official may also have the back if he runs a pass route.

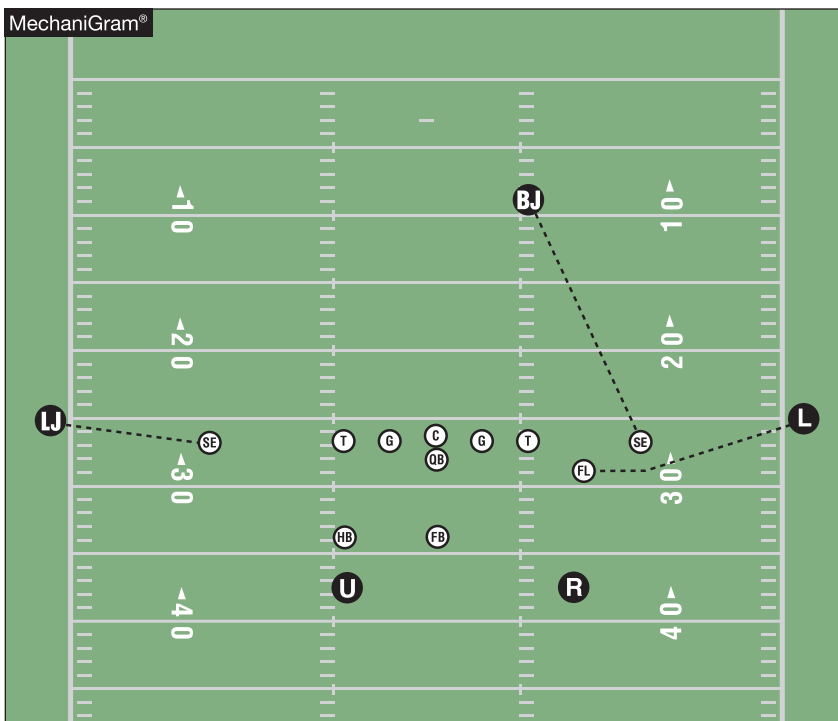
## STRAIGHT T



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 linesman keys on the weak side tight end. The line judge has no formal key, but should look through the tight end to observe the tackle on his side and observe the halfback after the snap. Either wing official may have a back who runs a pass route.



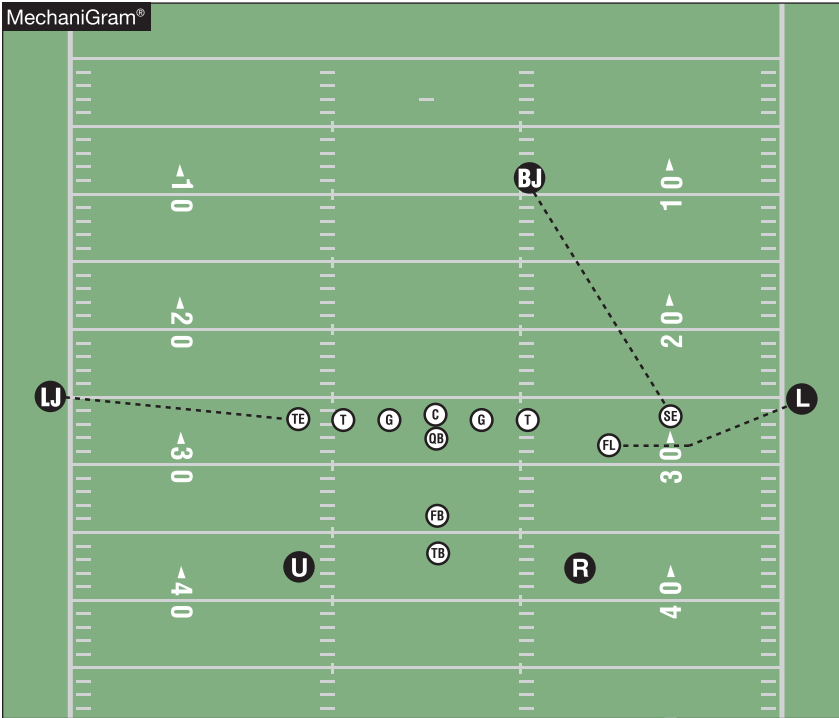
## STRENGTH TO LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE SPLIT END



The back judge keys on the strong side split end and the linesman keys on the flanker. The line judge keys the split 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.

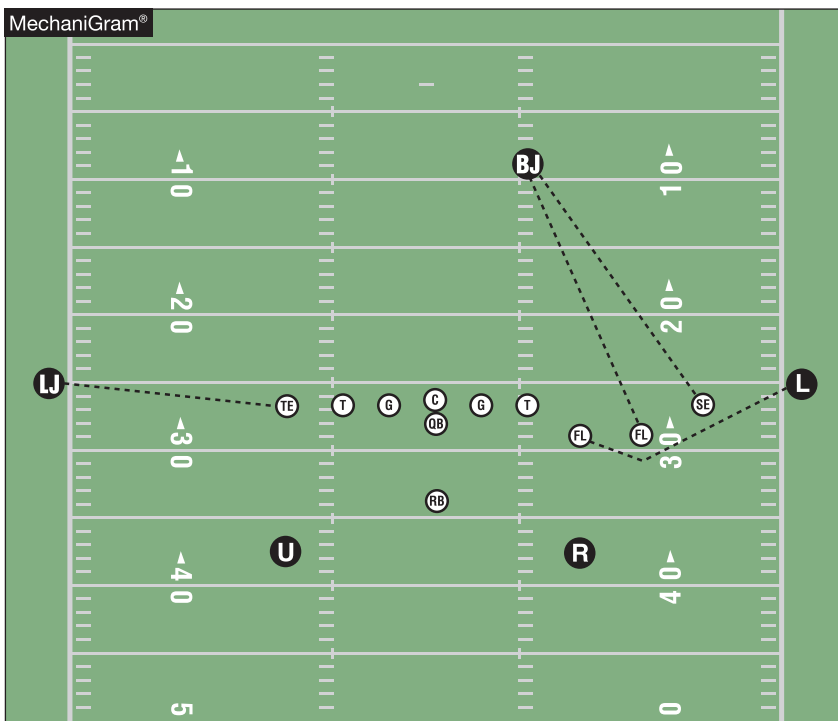
## STRENGTH TO LINESMAN'S SIDE, WEAK SIDE TIGHT END

MechaniGram®



The back judge keys on the split end and the linesman keys on the flanker. The line judge keys the tight end. 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.

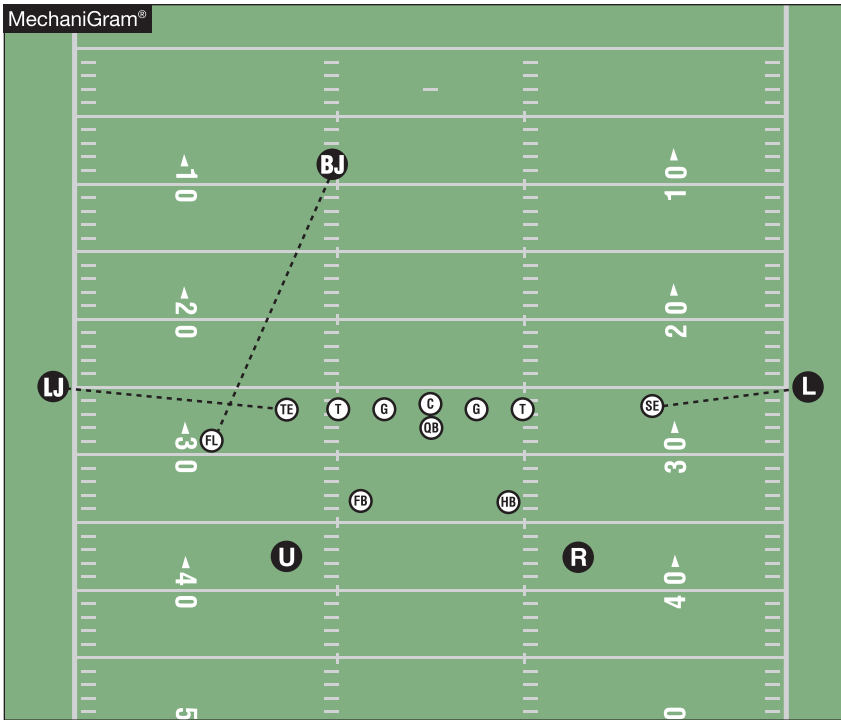
TRIPS TO LINESMAN'S SIDE



The back judge keys on the two widest receivers and the strong side wing official keys on the inside receiver. The line judge keys on the end nearest him. Either wing official may also have the back if he runs a pass route. If the same formation were strong to the line judge's side, the line judge would key on the widest receiver and the back judge on the two inside receivers.

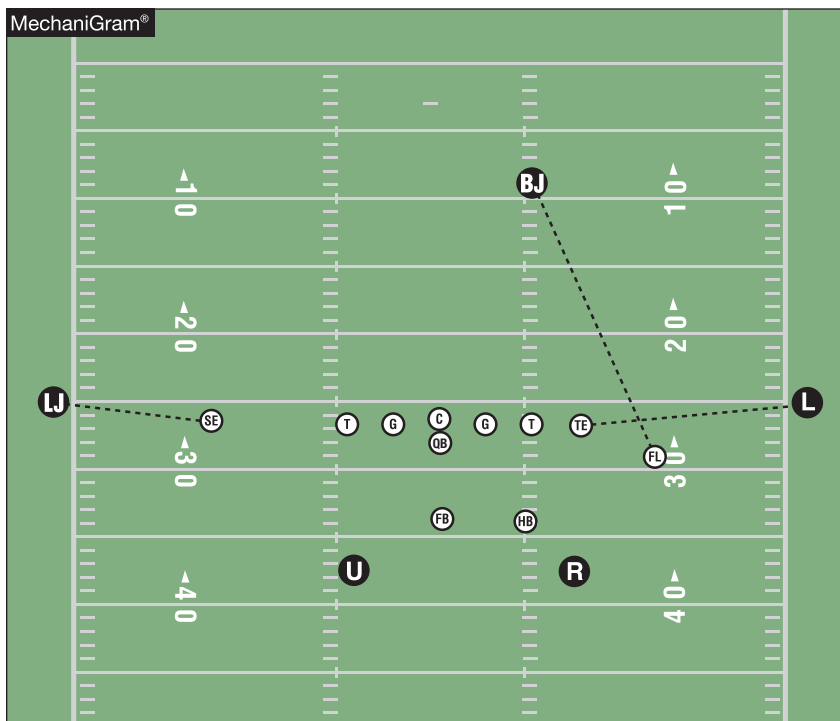
## UNBALANCED FORMATION, STRENGTH TO LINE JUDGE'S SIDE

MechaniGram®



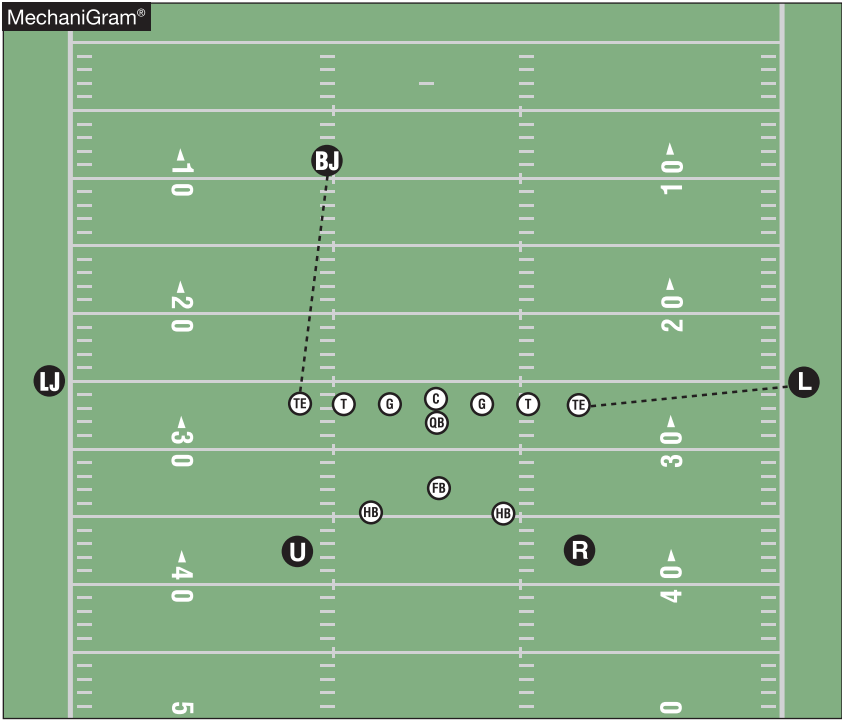
The back judge keys on the flanker and the line judge keys on the tight end. The linesman keys on the split end on his side. Either wing official may also have a back running a pass route.

## VEER



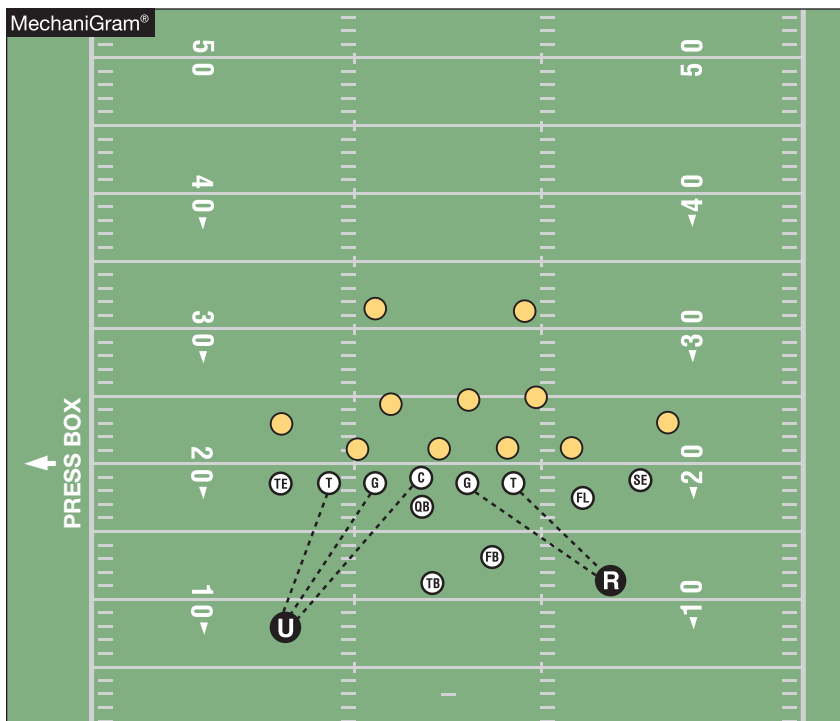
Although primarily a running formation, teams will occasionally throw to the flanker or split end. In this example, strength is to the linesman's side. The back judge keys the flanker and the linesman keys the tight end. The line judge keys on the split end on his side. The fullback's primary function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

## WISHBONE



A balanced formation, which means strength is declared to line judge's side. The back judge keys the tight end on the line judge's side. The line judge keys the backs. The linesman keys the tight end on his side.

## REFEREE AND UMPIRE KEYS



Regardless of the formation, the referee and umpire key on their sides of the offensive line. As a result, in all but the rarest cases, the referee keys on the right guard and right tackle and the umpire keys on the center, left guard and left tackle.

# CREW OF FIVE

## CHAPTER 3

# 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 particularly the right guard and right tackle. 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 center, left guard and left tackle 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 a legal formation and assist the umpire in checking the legality of uniform numbers of offensive linemen and receivers. If the receiver nearest the official is in the offensive backfield, the wing uses the extended arm signal to alert the opposite wing. The linesman and line judge count team B players on scrimmage downs.

The back judge is responsible for

the 25-second count. If the ball has not been snapped 20 seconds after the ready signal has been given, the back judge should use a visible count (upward movement of the arm) to warn team A that 20 seconds have elapsed.

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 also be responsible for forward progress.

Progress should be indicated by using the downfield foot and giving the dead ball signal. 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 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 official responsible for determining the forward progress spot is the 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 hashmark to hashmark.



# CREW OF FIVE

## CHAPTER 4

# COIN TOSS

The coin toss is normally conducted in the center of the field 30 minutes before the game. The toss may be held at an earlier time off the field if both coaches agree.

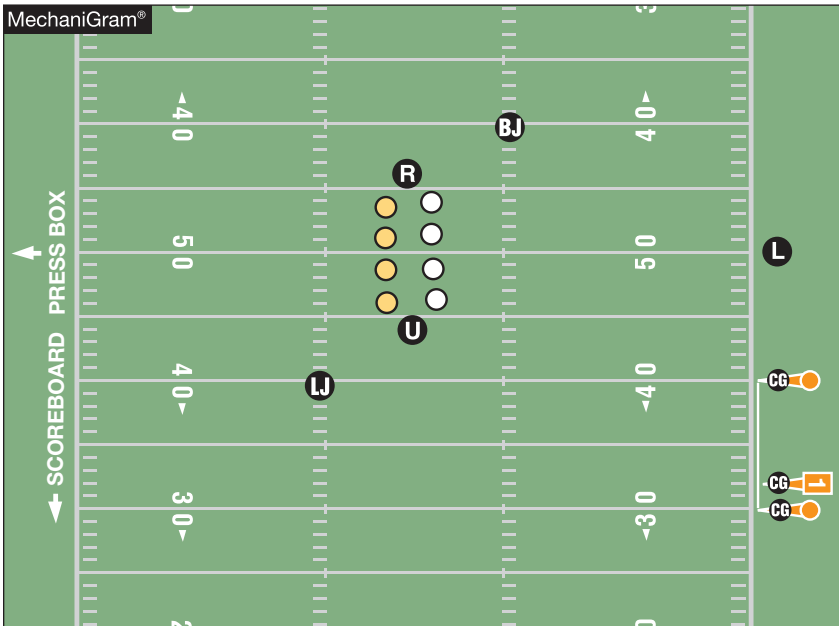
The umpire goes to the sideline with the line-to-gain equipment and the referee to the opposite sideline. The speaking captains (those who will give options for their teams) should be positioned so they are closest to the referee when the group meets in the center of the field. The umpire and referee 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 back judge remains on the hashmark on the side of the field with the chains; the line judge assumes a similar position on the opposite side. The 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. The coin will be caught by the referee and turned or not turned over. If the coin is dropped, the toss should be repeated. The referee may choose to have the coin hit the ground.

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 pressbox, 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 goalline 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 goalline 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 officials join the referee and umpire in the center of the field and record the results of the toss. All officials simultaneously return to their pregame duties.

When the teams come out at halftime, there will not be a meeting with the captains. The wing officials should meet with the head coach of the team on their sideline as quickly as possible to determine their choices for the second-half kickoff. The officials should signal those choices to the referee, who is standing near midfield. The referee will then make the signals during the three-

minute warm-up period, to indicate which team will kick, which will receive and the direction of the kick.

### Overtime Procedure

If overtime is necessary, the officials wait for the three-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 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 goalline in the direction their team will advance and the opposing captains stand with their backs to that goalline. 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.

# CREW OF FIVE

## CHAPTER 5

# TIMEOUTS

- TIMEOUT WITH BOTH TEAMS AT THE SIDELINES
- TIMEOUT WITH ONE OR BOTH COACHES ON THE FIELD
- INJURY TIMEOUT

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

All officials must record the number and team of the player requesting the timeout, the quarter and the time remaining on the game clock. Each official then confirms with the referee the number of timeouts each team has remaining. The linesman and line judge inform the coaches on their respective sidelines of the timeouts remaining.

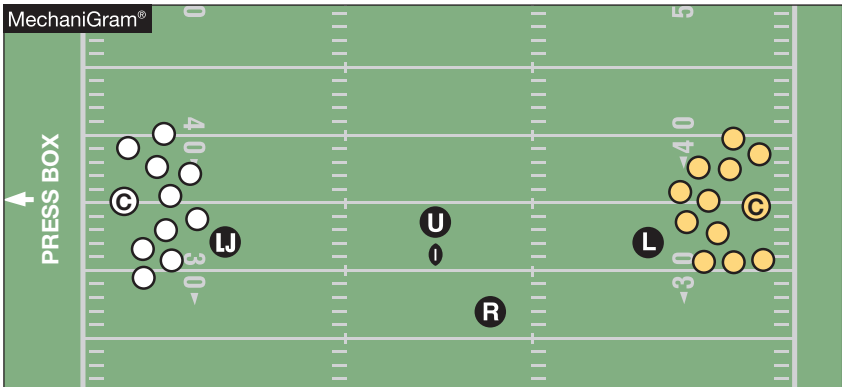
The back judge is responsible for timing the timeout. The one-minute count begins when the referee is

informed of the timeout. When 45 seconds have expired, the back judge sounds his whistle twice so the linesman and line judge can inform their teams. When the minute has expired, the referee whistles the ball ready for play.

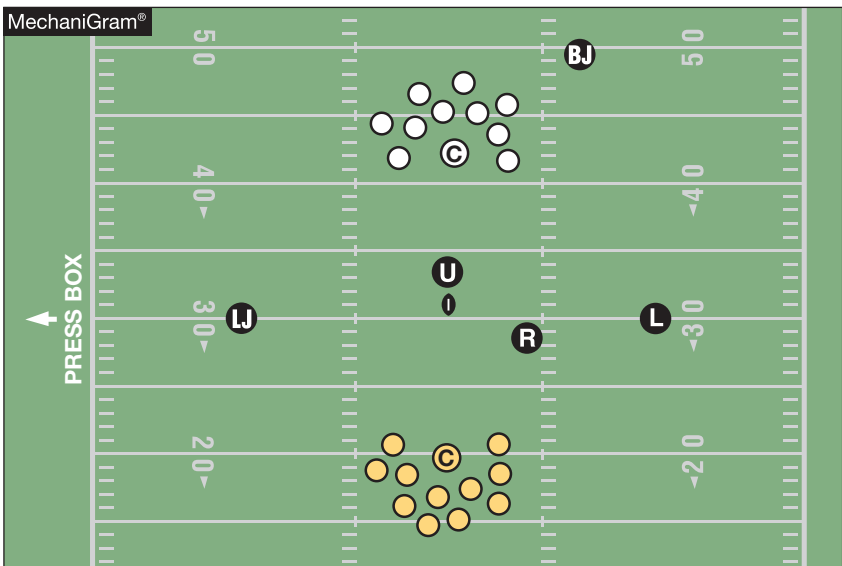
The procedure for signaling an official’s timeout is the same as for a charged timeout. After stopping the clock, the referee has the option of tapping his chest to indicate it is an official’s timeout. Play should resume as quickly as possible.

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

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

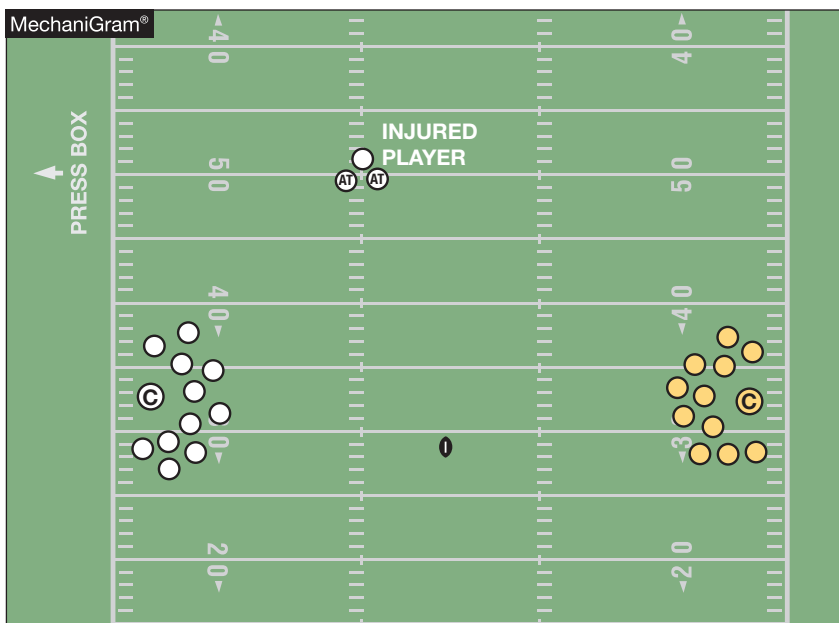
**TIMEOUT WITH BOTH TEAMS AT THE SIDELINES**

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

**TIMEOUT WITH ONE OR BOTH COACHES ON THE FIELD**

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

## INJURY TIMEOUT



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

# CREW OF FIVE

## CHAPTER 6

# MEASUREMENTS

### ■ MEASUREMENT IN SIDE ZONE OPPOSITE THE CHAINS

### ■ SHORT OF A FIRST DOWN

### ■ TEAM A AWARDED AT FIRST DOWN

When the referee calls for a measurement, the linesman should have the box moved behind the lead stake. 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 judge should use his foot to indicate the intersection of the five yardline where the chain is clipped and a line through the ball parallel to the sideline. That is the spot where the linesman will place the clipped part of the chain.

The linesman brings the chain in from the sideline with the chain crew members. Putting one hand on the links on each side of the clip improves the linesman'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 linesman to state that the next down will be first if the ball is beyond

the stake 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 back judge or line 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 judge before the measurement.

The back judge holds the ball in place from the downfield side (the side of the ball opposite from the sideline the chains are coming from). Once the linesman tells the referee he has the chain on the proper mark, the umpire takes the forward stake from the chain crew member, then pulls the stake to ensure the chain is taut. The referee rules whether or not the ball is beyond the front stake.

### **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 stake. The referee uses his hands (or thumb and index finger if the ball is inches short of the front stake) to inform both benches how short the play ended of a first down (see PlayPic, next page).

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 linesman walk to the nearest hashmark. 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 goalline. 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 stake is then moved to the new foremost point of the ball.

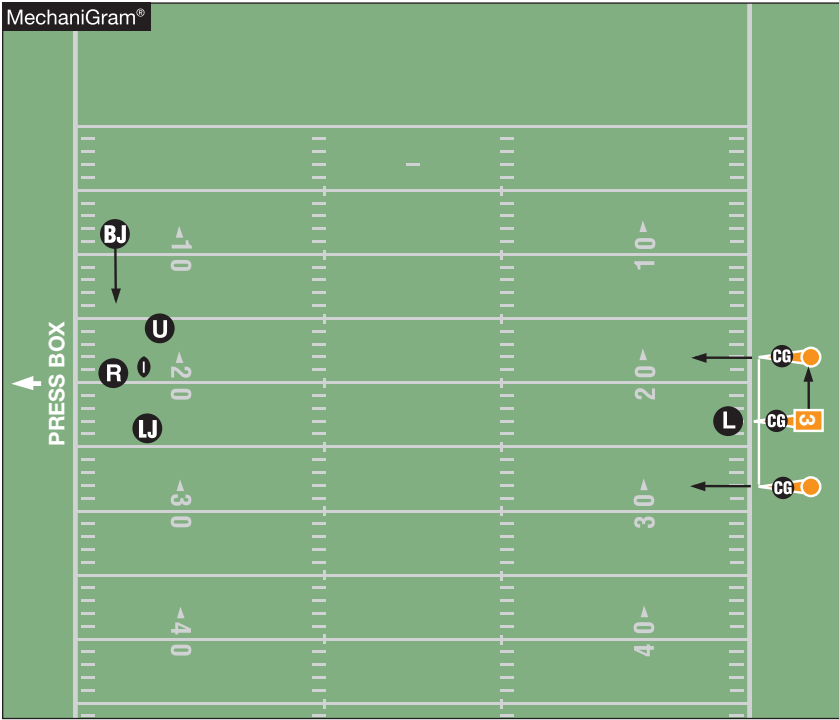
### **First Down**

If the measurement results in the award of a new series, the referee signals the first down. The linesman need not hold the chain as he accompanies the chain crew back to the sideline, but he must go all the way to the sideline and indicate to the chain 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 linesman's signal that the chain 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 chain gang.

**Umpire:** Waits at spot for arrival of chain gang.

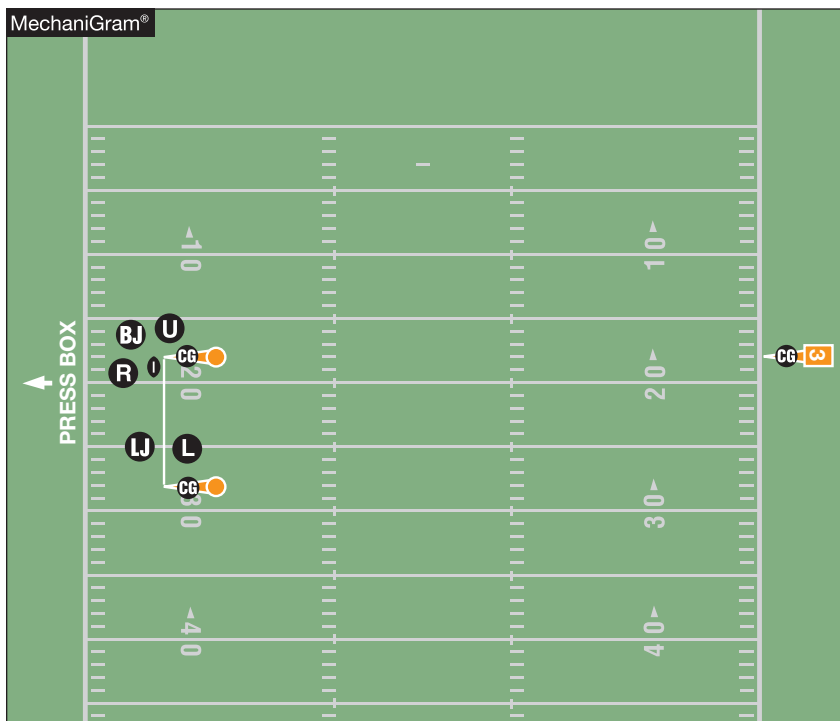
**Linesman:** Has box holder move box behind lead stake. Brings chain in from sideline with chain gang members to spot indicated by line judge.

**Line judge:** Indicates intersection of the five yardline where chain is clipped and line through ball parallel to sideline with beanbag or foot.

**Back judge:** Moves to spot to hold ball in place on ground.



## 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 stake. Uses hands or fingers to inform both benches how short the play ended of first down.

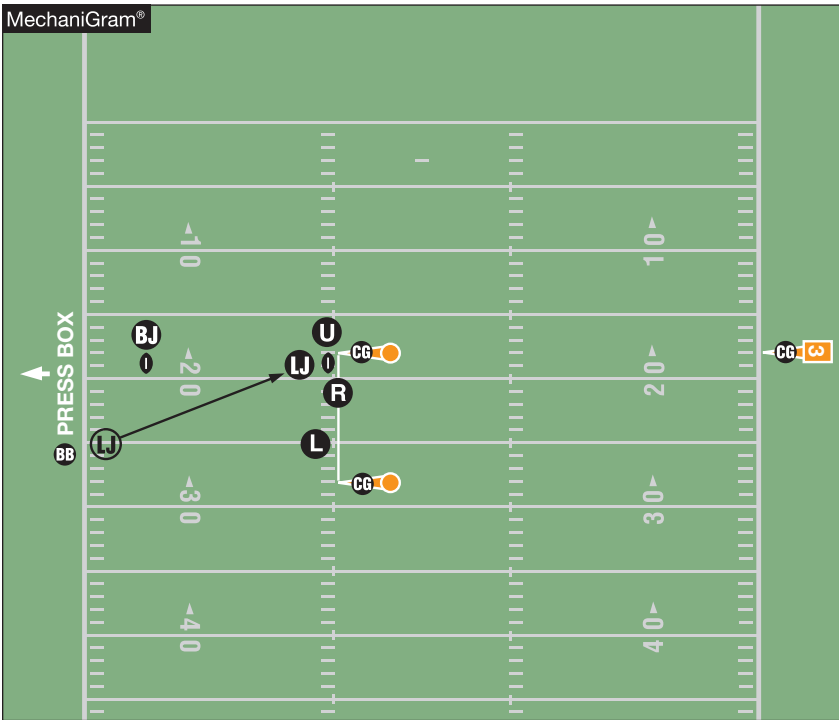
**Umpire:** Holds lead stake.

**Linesman:** Holds chain in place.

**Line judge:** Gets spare ball from ball helper.

**Back judge:** Holds ball in place on ground.

## SHORT OF A FIRST DOWN PART 2



**Action on the field:** Chains are moved to hashmark for ball placement.

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

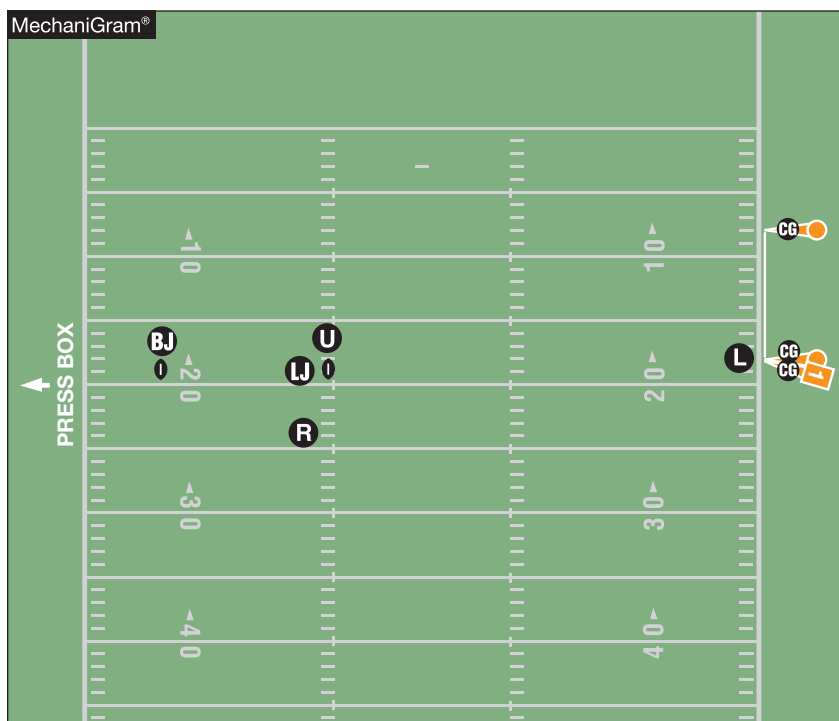
**Umpire:** Maintains control of front stake and walks to nearest hashmark.

**Linesman:** Maintains control of clip and walks to nearest hashmark. Accompanies chain gang back to sideline and sets chains for next down.

**Line judge:** Delivers 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 linesman's signal that chain gang is back in position and other officials are ready before giving ready-for-play signal.

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

**Linesman:** Returns to sideline with chain gang and indicates where new series will begin.

**Line judge:** Delivers ball to umpire for placement.

**Back judge:** Holds ball in place on ground.

# CREW OF FIVE

## CHAPTER 7

# POSITIONING

- FREE KICK
- ONSIDE KICK
- ONSIDE KICK
- SCRIMMAGE KICK
- SCORING KICK

**Referee:** Starting position is on the goalline 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 official, the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready for play signal.

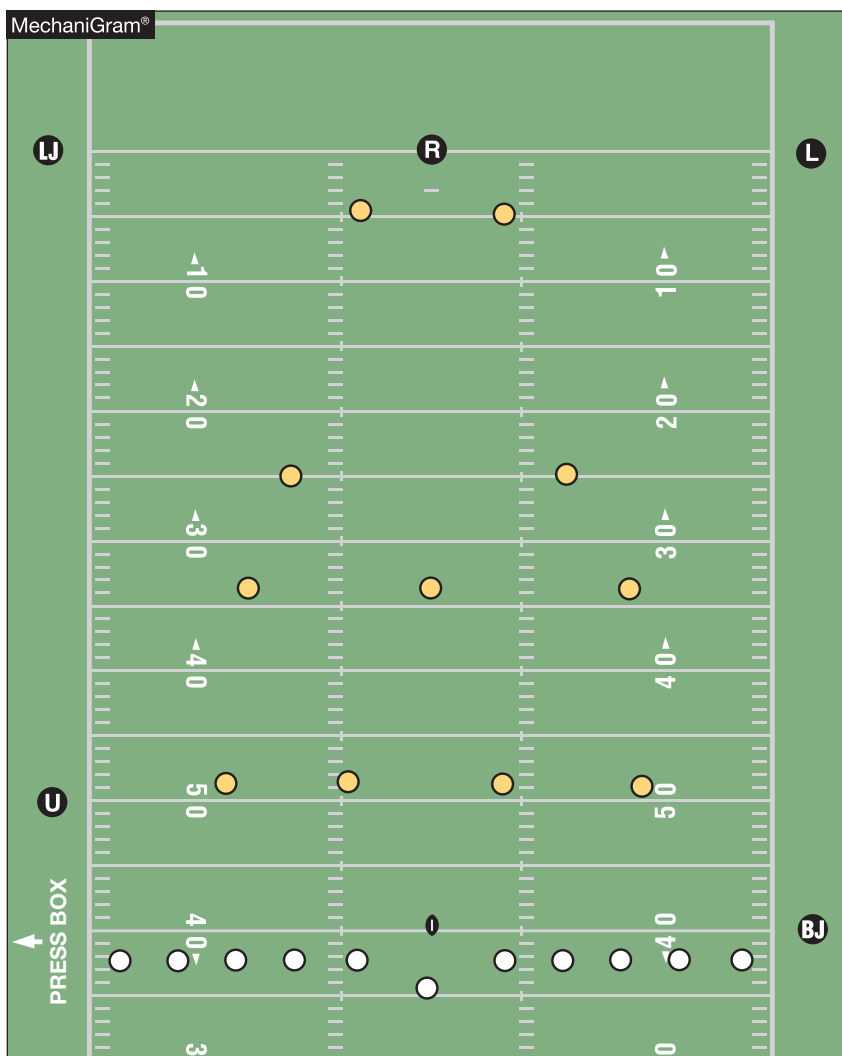
**Line judge:** Starting position is at the goalline pylon on the side opposite the chains, two yards off the sideline. When in position and ready for the kick, raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee.

**Linesman:** Starting position is at the goalline pylon on the side with the chains, two yards off the sideline. When in position and ready for the kick, raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee.

**Umpire:** Starting position is two yards outside the sideline on the 50 yardline (team R's restraining line) on the side opposite the chains, two yards off the sideline. When in position and ready for the kick, raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee. Primary for ruling on a pop-up kick.

**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 his whistle and note whether no team K player other than the kicker is more than five yards from team K's free-kick line. Identifies team K's free-kick line and jogs off to the sidelines.

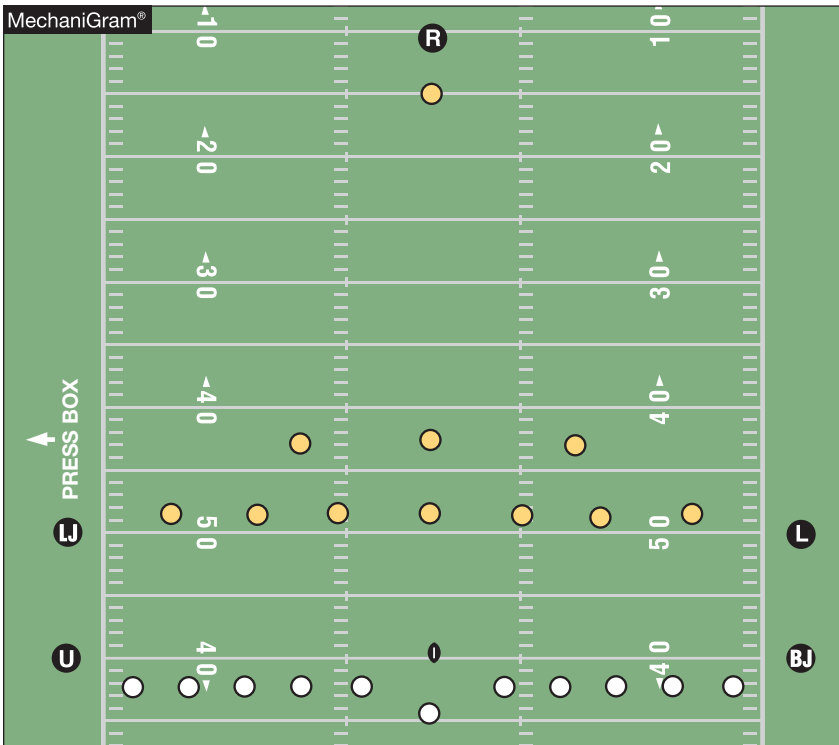
## FREE KICK



Starting position is outside the sideline on team K's free-kick line on the side with the chains, two yards off the sideline. 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.

## ON-SIDE KICK



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

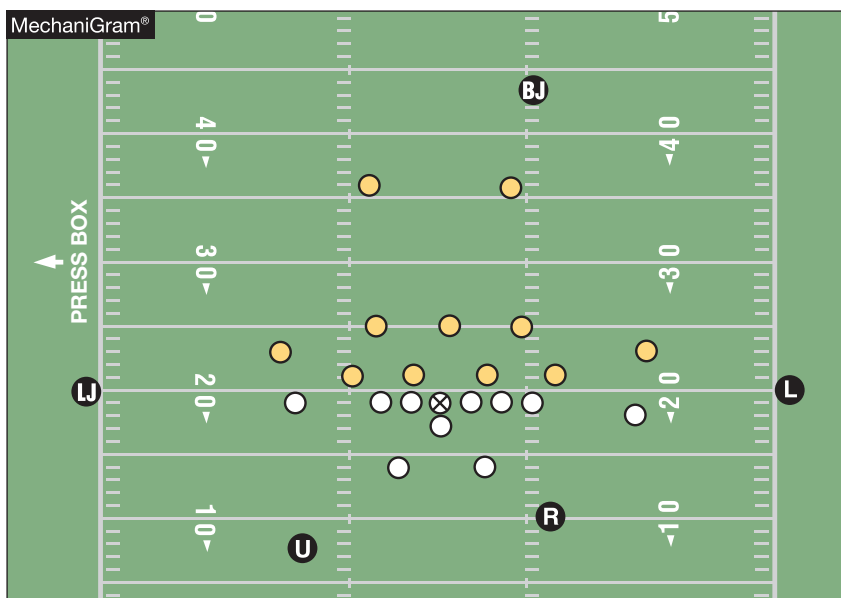
**Umpire:** Starting position is on the same side of the field as the line judge, on team K's free-kick line, two yards off the sideline. Have the beanbag in hand to mark the spot if team K first touches the kick. Be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player recovers the kick regardless if it has traveled 10 yards. Rule on legality of blocks.

**Linesman:** Starting position is on team R's free-kick line, two yards off the sideline. Have the beanbag in hand to mark the spot if team K first touches the kick. Be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player recovers the kick regardless if it has traveled 10 yards. Rule on touching, clock status and possession. Rule on a pop-up kick and legality of blocks.

**Line judge:** Starting position is on team R's free-kick line, two yards off the sideline. Have the beanbag in hand to mark the spot if team K first touches the kick. Be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player recovers the kick regardless if it has traveled 10 yards. Rule on touching, clock status and possession. Rule on a pop-up kick and legality of blocks.

**Back judge:** Starting position is on the linesman's side of the field and on team K's free-kick line, two yards off the sideline. Have the beanbag in hand to mark the spot if team K first touches the kick. Be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player recovers the kick regardless if it has traveled 10 yards. Rule on a pop-up kick and legality of blocks.

## SCRIMMAGE PLAY



**NOTE:** The line judge will be positioned opposite the press box in the first half and will be responsible for the chains. The linesman will be opposite the press box in the second half and will be responsible for the chains.

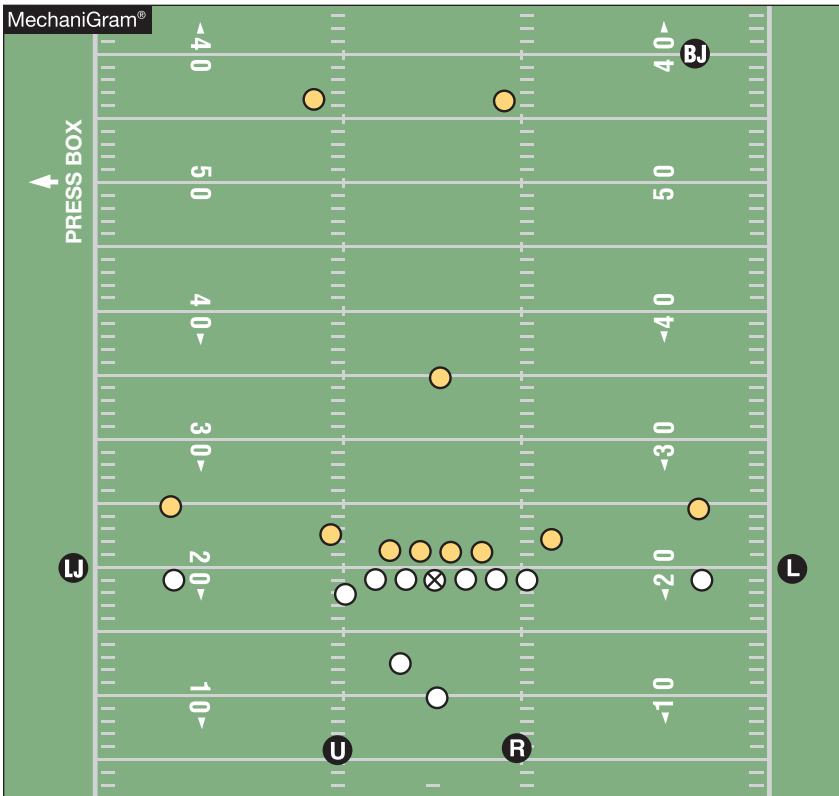
**Referee:** While team A is in the huddle, take a position approximately 10-15 yards from the line of scrimmage and five yards wide of the huddle to be more visible to the clock operator. Once team A is at the line, starting position is on the passing-arm side of the quarterback, approximately 12-14 yards deep and at least as wide as the tight end.

**Umpire:** Starting position is in the offensive backfield approximately 12-14 yards deep and as wide as the tight end, on the left side of the line where the tight end would be. The umpire must be able to see the ball from the time the snapper handles the ball until the time it is snapped.

**Linesman and line judge:** Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage and at least one yard off the sideline.

**Back judge:** Starting position is favoring the strong side of the formation, approximately 20 yards beyond the line of scrimmage and deeper than the deepest defender. If the ball is placed inside team B's 15 yardline, initial position is on the end line.

## SCRIMMAGE KICK



**Referee:** Position is three to five yards outside the tight end and two to three yards behind the kicker, on the right side of the formation regardless if the kicker is right- or left-footed. View the snap as well as the action around the kicker before, during and after the kick. Be ready to move in the appropriate direction if an errant snap leads to a loose ball in the offensive backfield.

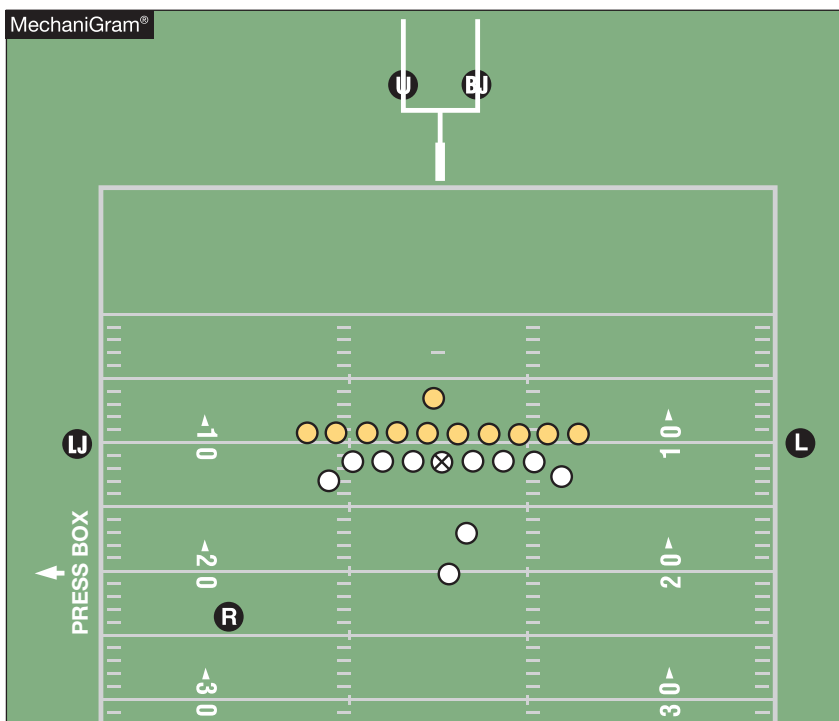
**Umpire:** Position is opposite the referee on the kicking team's side of the ball, three to five yards outside the end and two to three yards behind the kicker, on the left side of the formation regardless if the kicker is right- or left-footed.

**Linesman and line judge:** Starting position on scrimmage kicks is the same as for other plays from scrimmage.

**Back judge:** Starting position is seven to 10 to 12 yards wider than and two to three yards behind the deepest receiver on the chains side of the field. Be prepared to move upfield if the kick is short or downfield if the receiver has to retreat.



## SCORING KICK



**Referee:** Starting position is two to three yards to rear and three to five yards to side of potential kicker, facing holder.

**Umpire:** Starting position is beyond the endline and behind the upright on the line judge's side of the field.

**Wing officials:** Starting position is the same as for a scrimmage play.

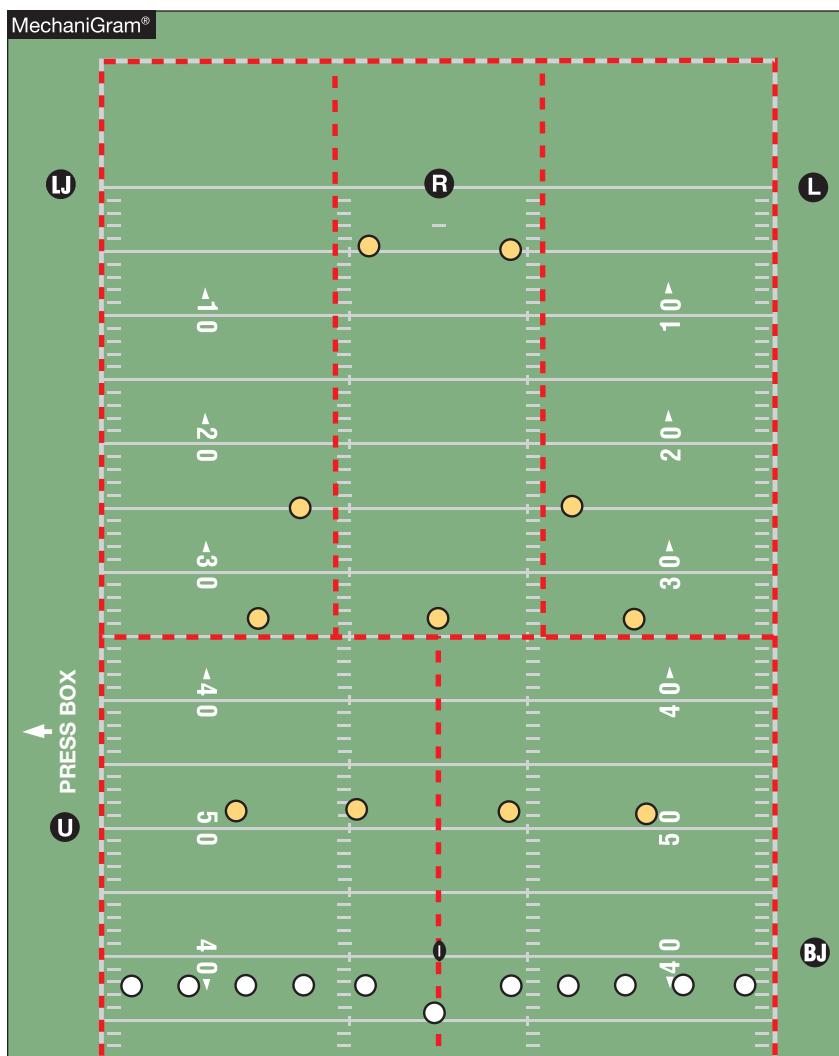
**Back judge:** Starting position is beyond the endline and behind the upright closest to the linesman.

**Note:** On a field goal attempt by free kick, the chains are set to establish the 10-yard neutral zone.

# CREW OF FIVE CHAPTER 8 COVERAGE

- FREE KICK COVERAGE ZONES
- SCORING KICK COVERAGE ZONES
- FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE
- FREE KICK OUT OF BOUNDS
- RUN UP THE MIDDLE
- SWEEP TO LINESMAN'S SIDE
- DEEP PASS
- SCREEN OR PASS TO FLAT
- GOALLINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN
- GOALLINE PLAYS: OFFENSE COMING OUT
- SCRIMMAGE KICK OUT OF BOUNDS
- SCRIMMAGE KICK TO BACK JUDGE'S SIDE ZONE

## FREE KICK COVERAGE ZONES



### Free Kicks

If the ball blows off the tee just prior to the kick, the back judge should sound his whistle and the ball should be re-teed.

If the kick is down the middle of the field, the referee stays with the runner to about team R's 25 yardline. If the return is outside either hashmark, the appropriate wing official has coverage of the runner to team R's 25 yardline, where

either the back judge or umpire takes over.

If a wing official is responsible for the initial coverage of the runner, the referee cleans up behind the play, but must move cautiously in case team R runs a reverse or the runner reverses his field.

If the ball is not kicked deep, adjust coverage as necessary.

After the kick has crossed their face,

the back judge and umpire move onto the field in an area between the numbers and the hashmark so they can get a better view of potential illegal blocks.

All officials move to zone coverage during the kick and during the return. The back judge is responsible for team K's goalline; the line judge and linesman are responsible for team R's goalline.

On kicks inside team R's five yardline, the referee and the nearest line of scrimmage official are responsible for determining whether the momentum exception applies and whether the kick is to be ruled a touchback. If a touchback occurs, the covering official should move quickly toward the middle of the field to prevent late hits on receivers.

### **Free Kicks After a Safety**

For the free kick that follows a safety, the back judge should be at team K's 20 yardline, the umpire at team K's 30 yardline and the position of the remaining officials 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 line judge move behind the upright. The line judge rules whether or not the kick cleared the crossbar while the referee determines if the kick was between the uprights.

The remaining officials assume their normal positions for a free kick.

### **Scrimmage Plays**

The raised open hand signal to signify the ball is dead and is short of the first down is required at the end of each play.

On a running play, the referee and umpire focus on the ball, the runner and the blocking around the runner. If the play goes to the opposite side, the referee and umpire should move toward or parallel to the line of the scrimmage and maintain a position approximately in line with the runner. 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 he 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. He will not have much to observe besides the quarterback because little significant action is likely to take place behind the runner, and the runner himself is being watched by the appropriate wing official.

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. If the quarterback scrambles toward the referee, the referee needs to move to the sideline, keeping 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 must stay with him until he is not threatened. Once the pass has been released, the referee shouts "Gone!" to help prevent roughing the passer but 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 referee must determine whether the resultant loose ball is a forward pass or a fumble. 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. Bagging the spot is optional because a fumble behind the line is a loose-ball play and the basic spot for penalty enforcement will be the previous spot.

Only the referee flags intentional grounding, but because he won't see where the ball landed, he'll need help from another 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 an eligible receiver was nearby, the flag can be picked up. 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 acceptable to throw a late flag, which should be "soft tossed" to the spot of the pass.

Similarly, illegal forward passes are the primary responsibility of the referee, aided by the umpire. 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 wing officials will determine progress and the referee observes players as they unpile. Avoid using a beanbag to mark the spot; hustle to it while officiating the dead-ball activity.

When the referee blows the ready for play signal, the umpire should stand with his feet straddling the ball. After the signal, the umpire moves to his position.

Referees and 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 hashmark 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 hashmark if the runner is downed in the side zone near the sideline. The umpire can help get the ball back to the hashmark and set it at the progress spot.

Before the snap, the wing officials identify the eligible receivers on their side of the field and check the legality of team A's formation. If the receiver nearest the official is in the offensive backfield, the wing uses the extended arm signal to alert the opposite wing. Legality of motion is always the responsibility of the official away from whom the player is moving, even if the player reverses his motion.

Because they will mark forward progress the vast majority of the time, the line judge and 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. The wing away from whom the play is going gives the punch signal (fist extended into team A's backfield) to indicate a backward pass. The opposite wing is secondary. If the ball is snapped between the goalline and either team's five yardline, the referee is primary and the wings are secondary.

Wing officials have responsibility for the passer if he scrambles past the line of scrimmage and are responsible for ineligible members of the offense on passes that cross 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 five 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 five-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 triangle. The wing official tosses the ball to the back judge, who relays it to the umpire.

The back judge notes 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 five-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 goalline until the ball is snapped at or inside team B's 15 yardline; in that case, the back judge's starting position is on the endline.

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

When the pass 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 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 signal, the covering official should indicate that to the referee by twirling the index

finger. If the clock starts on the snap, the covering official crosses the wrists at waist level.

### **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 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 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 endline to endline.

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 observes blocking on the left side of team K's formation. After the ball is kicked, the umpire should move slowly downfield and observe action behind 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.

The 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 endline to endline 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. 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.

The covering 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.

If a blocked kick or fake results in a play toward the goalline, the umpire moves toward the goalline to assist on coverage of the runner.

On a blocked field goal attempt, the wing officials will rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. Those officials also have the sole responsibility for encroachment and rule on the legality of the snap. If a pass is used on the fake,

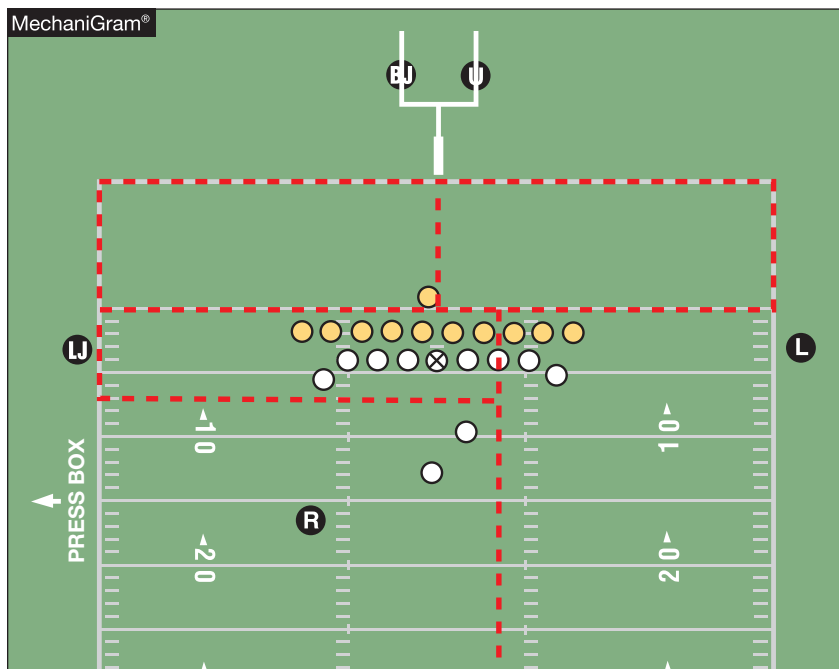
the wing officials must know if the passer was beyond the line of scrimmage. They can also help rule on ineligibles downfield on fake kicks that lead to passes. When a runner approaches the goalline, the wing officials must be at the goalline to rule on the potential score.

The wing officials must move toward the offensive or defensive lineman after the kick and use their voice to encourage players to unpile.

Before signaling, the back judge and umpire confirm their ruling on the kick verbally, using "yes, yes, yes" or "no, no, no." The umpire is responsible for ruling on whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side; the back judge is responsible for ruling on 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 goalline plane and it is obvious it will not score, the back judge sounds his whistle and gives the appropriate signals

## SCORING KICK COVERAGE ZONES



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.

On a blocked field goal attempt, one of the wings will rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone.

If a pass is used on the fake, the wings must know if the passer was beyond the line. They can also help rule on ineligible downfield on fake kicks that lead to passes. When a runner approaches the goalline, the appropriate wing must be at the goalline to rule on the potential score.

The wings can move toward the offensive and defensive linemen after the kick and use their voices to encourage players to unpile.

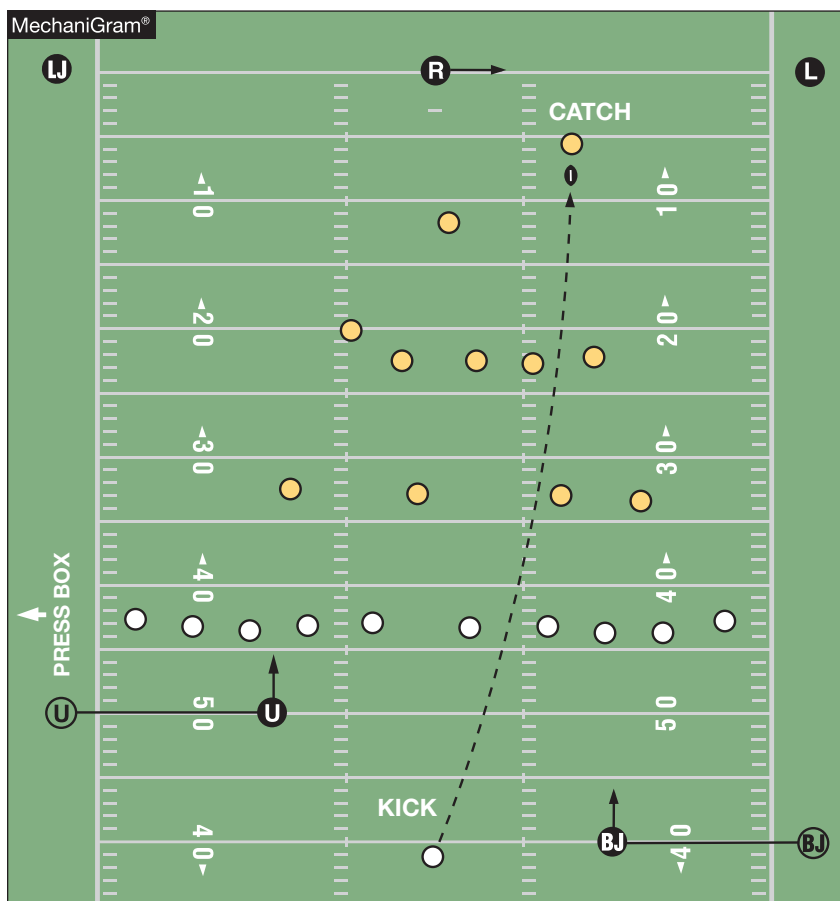
The back judge and umpire should confirm their ruling verbally before signaling, using “yes, yes, yes,” if the kick is good or “no, no, no” if it is no good.

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 goalline 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 umpire and back judge should move along the endline and toward the nearest sideline. Once the sideline has been reached, the appropriate deep official can move toward the goalline to assist on coverage of the runner.



## 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.

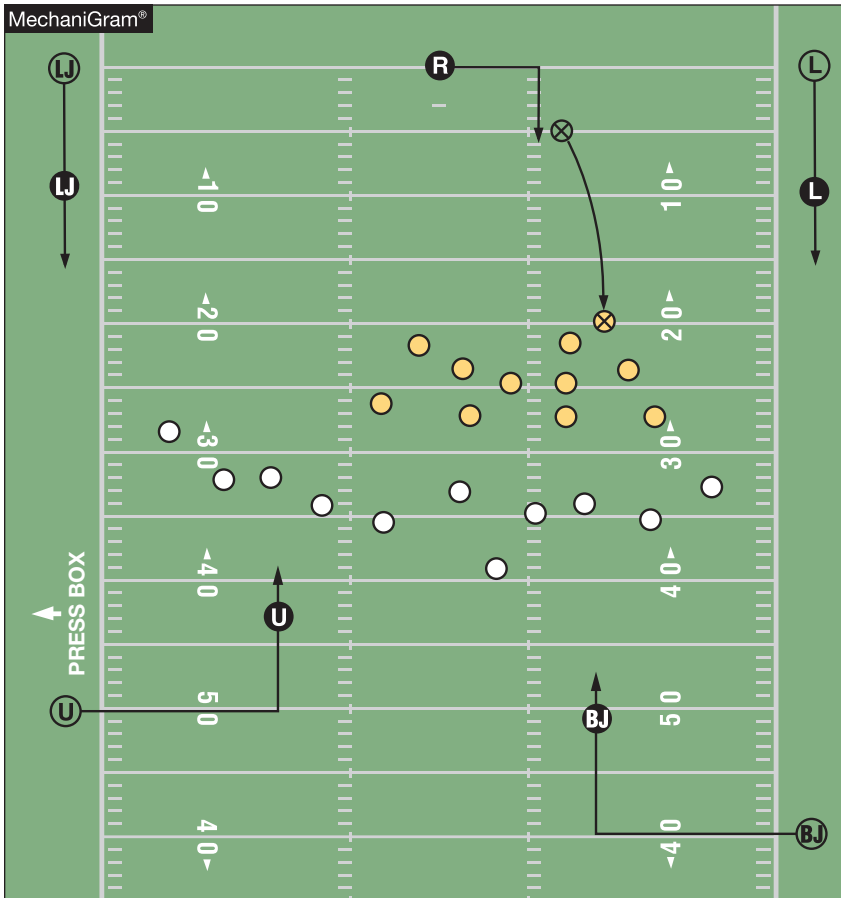
**Umpire:** Watches for pop-up kick, infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him. Moves into field.

**Linesman:** Observes action in his area.

**Line judge:** Observes action in his area.

**Back judge:** Watches for pop-up kick, 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 linesman. Observes action in front of runner (halo principle).

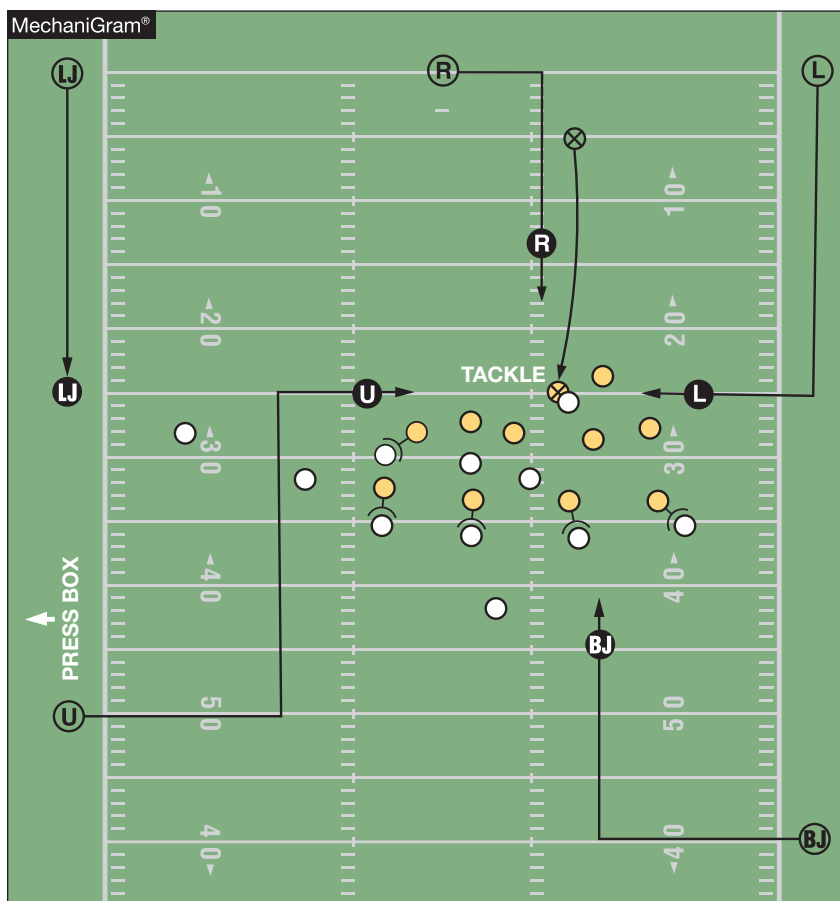
**Umpire:** Moves downfield and observes action in his zone.

**Linesman:** Moves upfield. Takes coverage of runner when runner enters area.

**Line judge:** Moves upfield. Observes blocking in front of runner.

**Back judge:** Moves downfield and observes action in his zone.

### FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE PART 3



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

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

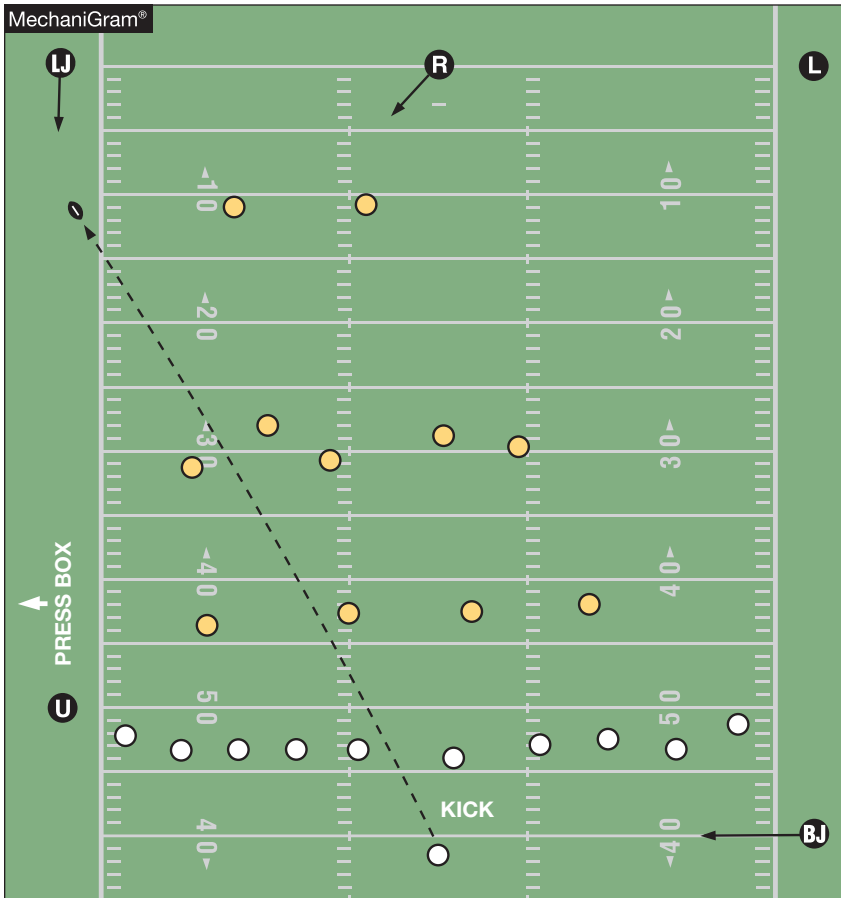
**Umpire:** Observes players. Mirrors spot until linesman marks progress. Moves to middle of the field and spots ball for next down.

**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 chain crew to set chains for new series.

**Line judge:** Observes players and hustles to spot.

**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 line judge's side zone.

**Referee:** Observes action in his area.

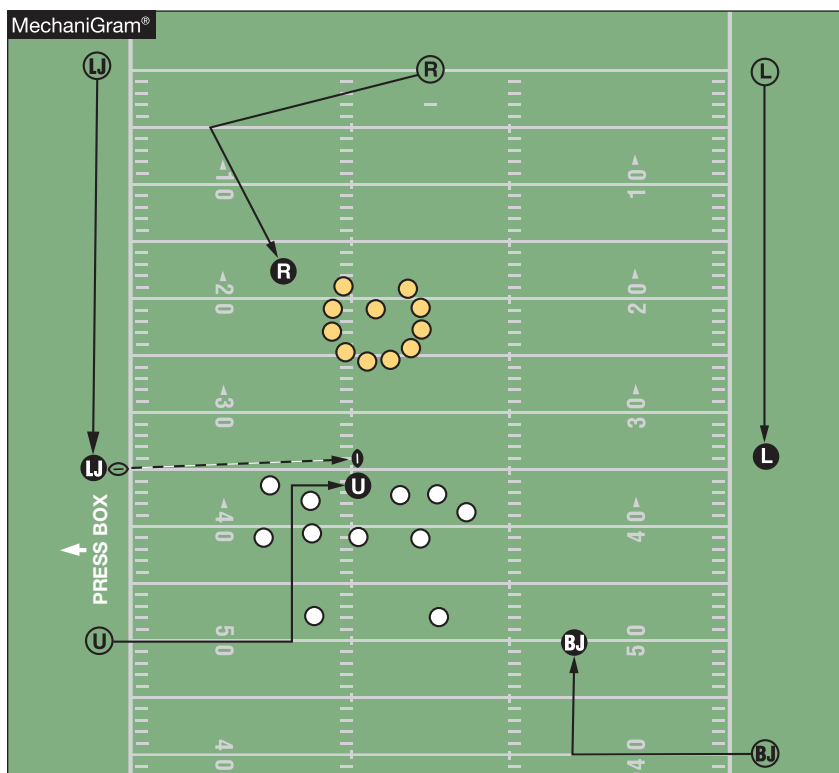
**Umpire:** Watches for pop-up kicks, infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him.

**Linesman:** Observes action in his area.

**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 pop-up kicks, 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 yardline.

**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 yardline, where ball will next be put in play. (If team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

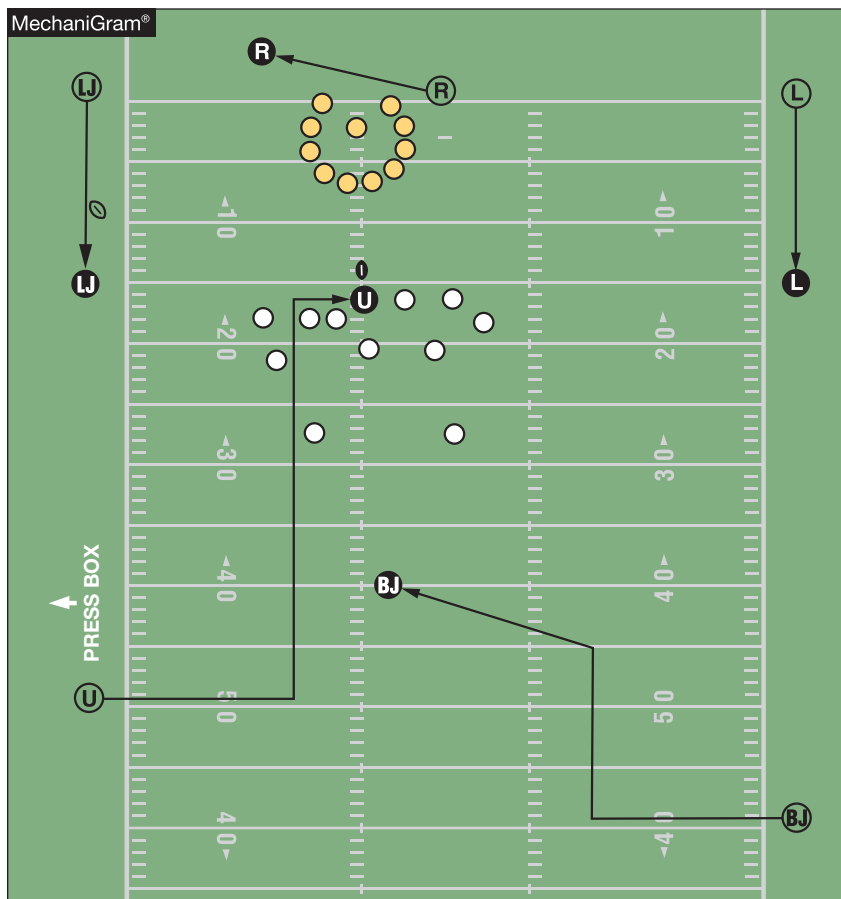
**Umpire:** Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play to referee. Moves to hashmark at team R's 35 yardline to set ball for new series. (If team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

**Linesman:** Observes action in his area. Moves to team R's 35 yardline, where team R will begin new series, assists chain crew in setting chains. (If team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

**Line judge:** Observes action in his area. Moves to team R's 35 yardline, where new series will begin. (If team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

**Back judge:** Observes action in his area. Moves to position for start of new series. (If team R chooses a rekick, 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.

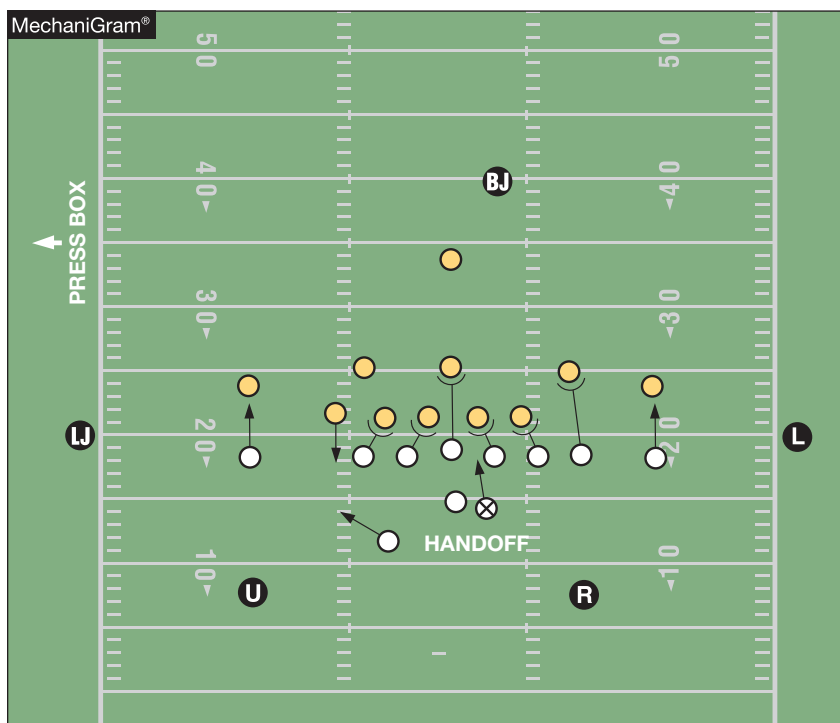
**Umpire:** Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play to referee. Moves to hashmark where new series will begin and sets ball.

**Linesman:** Observes action in his area. Moves to spot where new series will begin and assists chain crew in setting chains.

**Line judge:** Observes action in his area. Moves to spot where new series will begin. Holds spot until umpire sets ball for new series.

**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 left tackle and reads run. Observes handoff and action around quarterback after handoff.

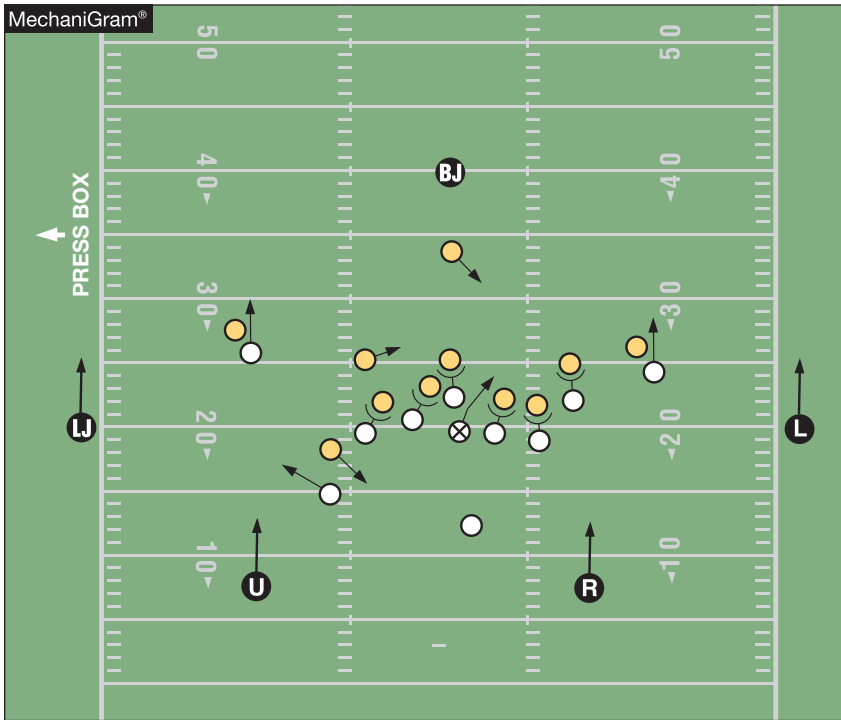
**Umpire:** Reads blocking of center and right guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there.

**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:** Observes action around runner.

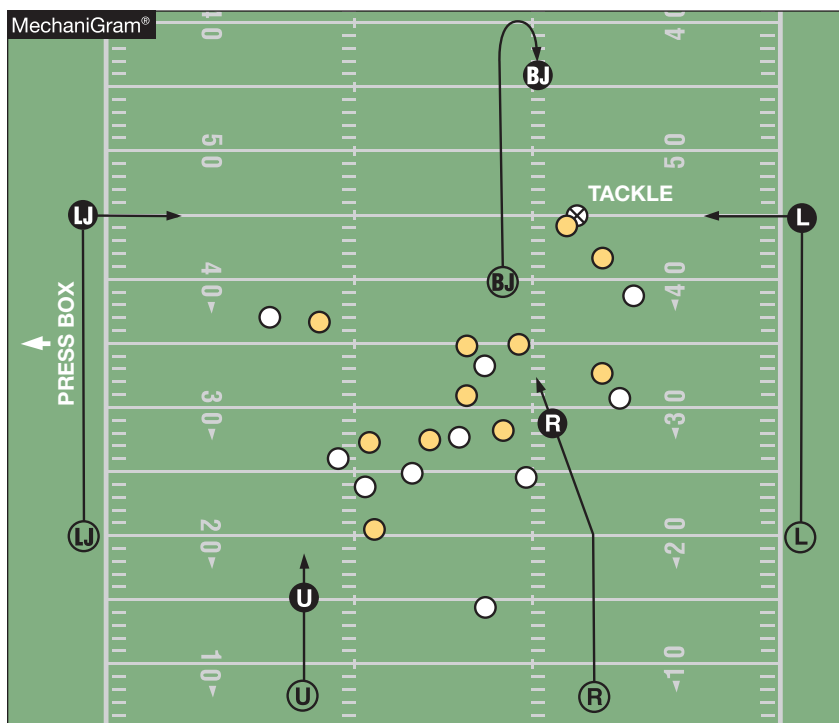
**Linesman:** Moves slowly downfield and observes action in front of runner.

**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 linesman to have chain crew move the chains.

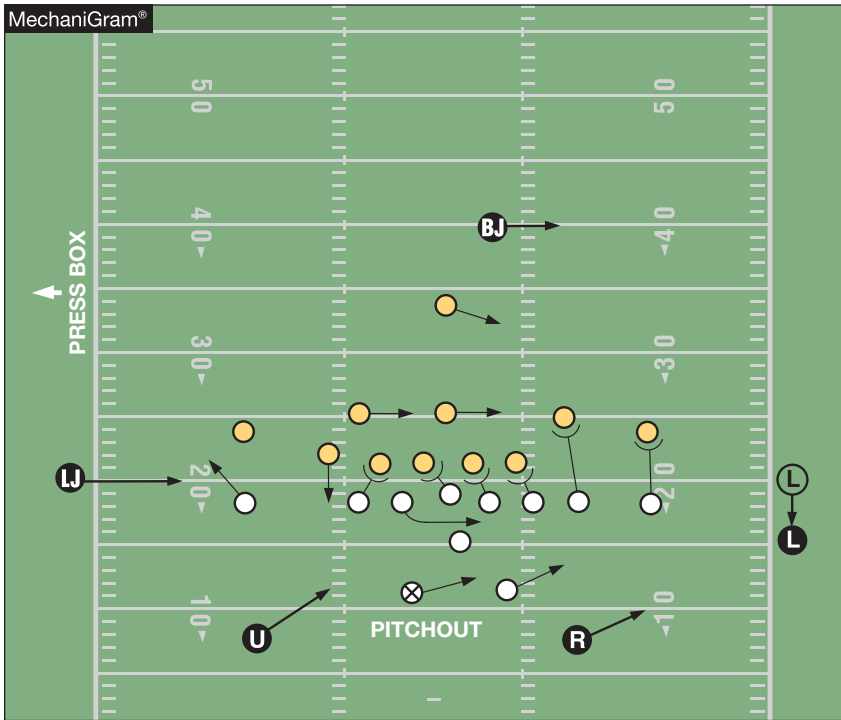
**Umpire:** Moves downfield and observes action behind runner. Observes players in his area.

**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 chain crew to move to spot. Assists chain crew in setting chains for new series.

**Line judge:** Observes action in front of the 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 LINESMAN'S SIDE PART 1



**Action on the field:** Pitchout to back.

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

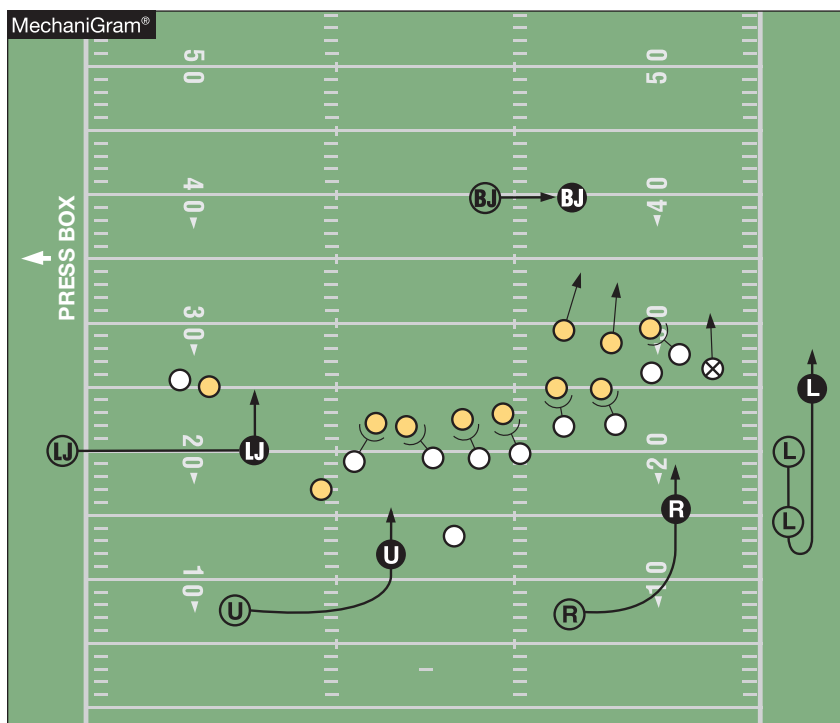
**Umpire:** Reads blocking of center and right guard and reads run. Determines point of attack working backside to frontside. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

**Linesman:** Looks through split end, reads blocking of tight end and reads run. As flow comes to his side, steps backward across sideline 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 LINESMAN'S SIDE PART 2



**Action on the field:** Runner advances.

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

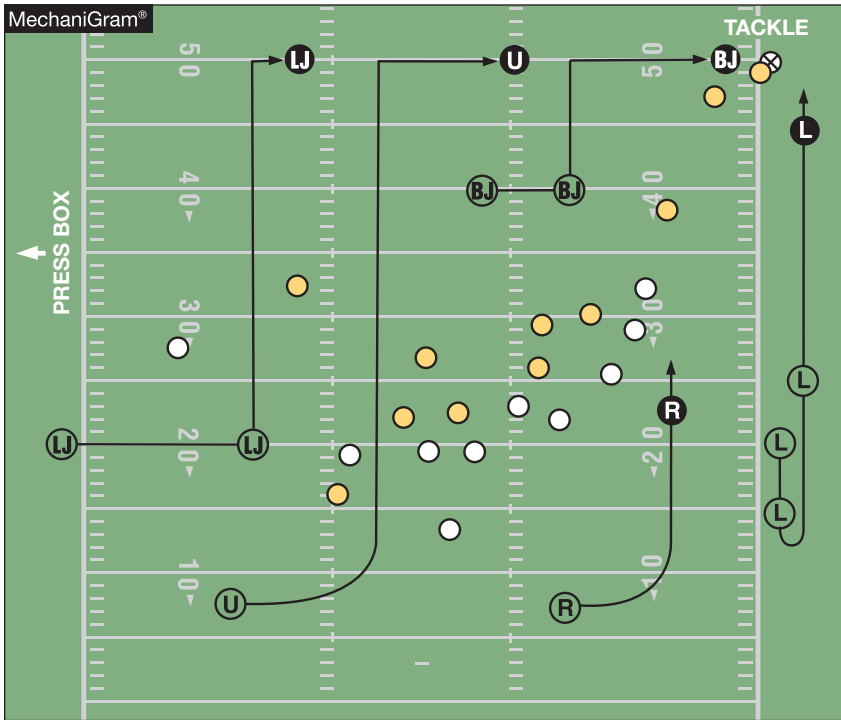
**Umpire:** Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

**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 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 linesman to have chain crew move the chains.

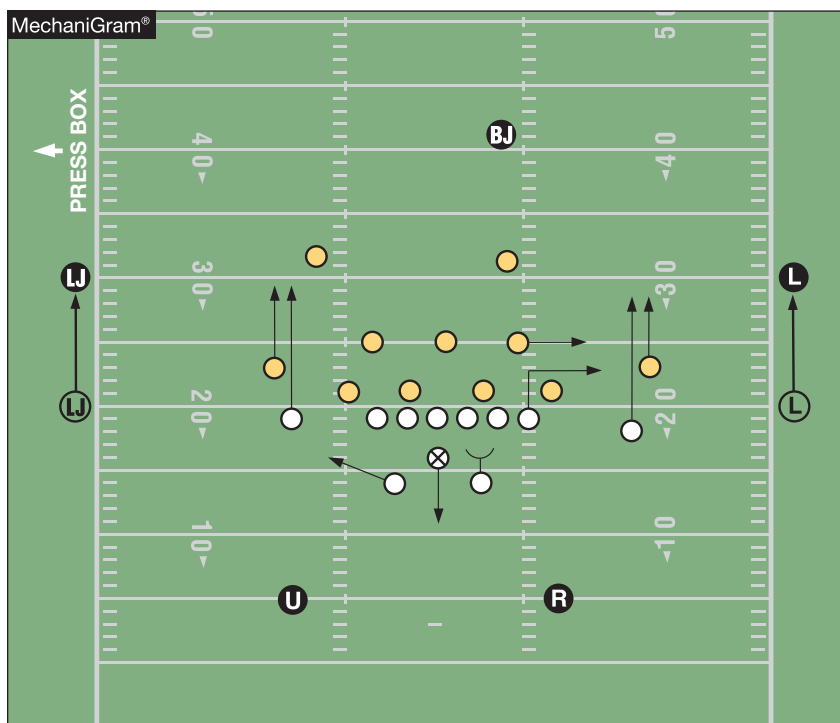
**Umpire:** Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. Once spot is established, hustles to hashmark to set ball for next down.

**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 chain crew to move to spot. Assists chain 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.

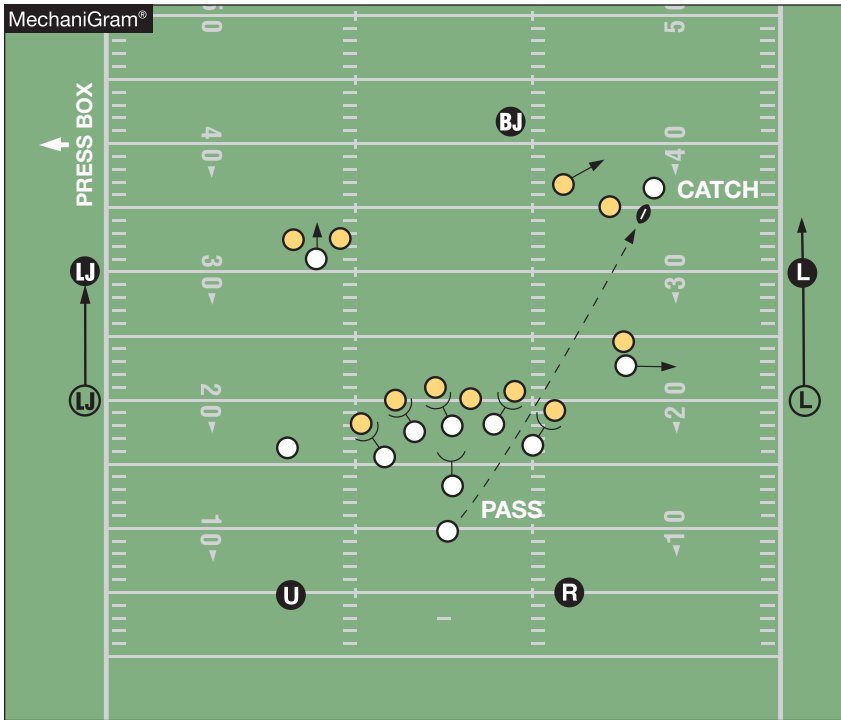
**Umpire:** Observes presnap adjustments and legality of snap. Keys on center and guards; reads pass when linemen retreat. Observes blocking by linemen.

**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.

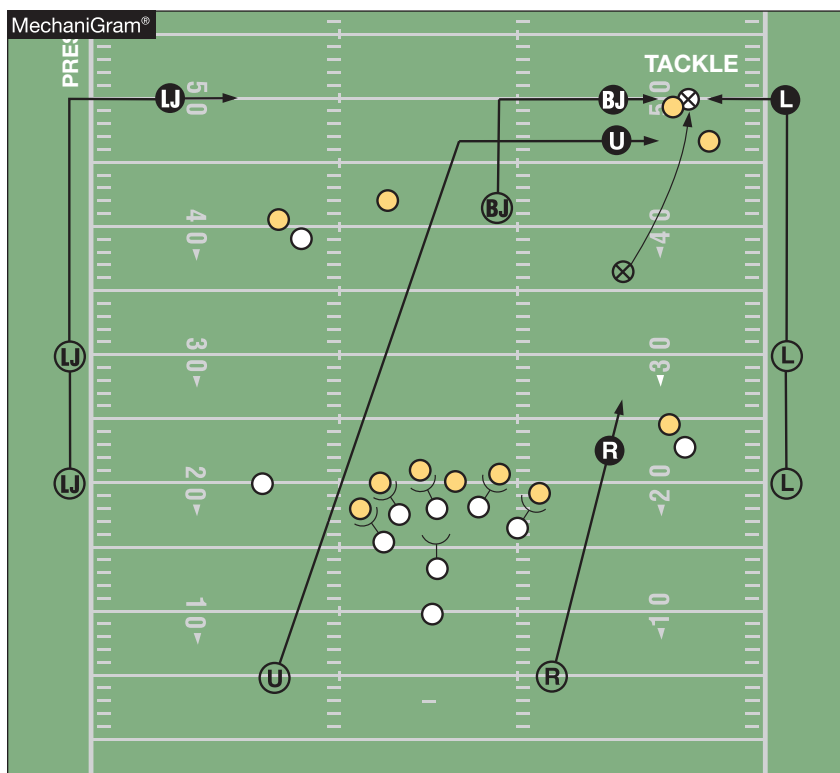
**Umpire:** Pivots to follow flight and moves in direction of the ball.

**Linesman:** Moves downfield when the pass is imminent, then moves quickly to get angle to observe attempted catch.

**Line judge:** Moves downfield when the pass is imminent.

**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 in front of the ball.

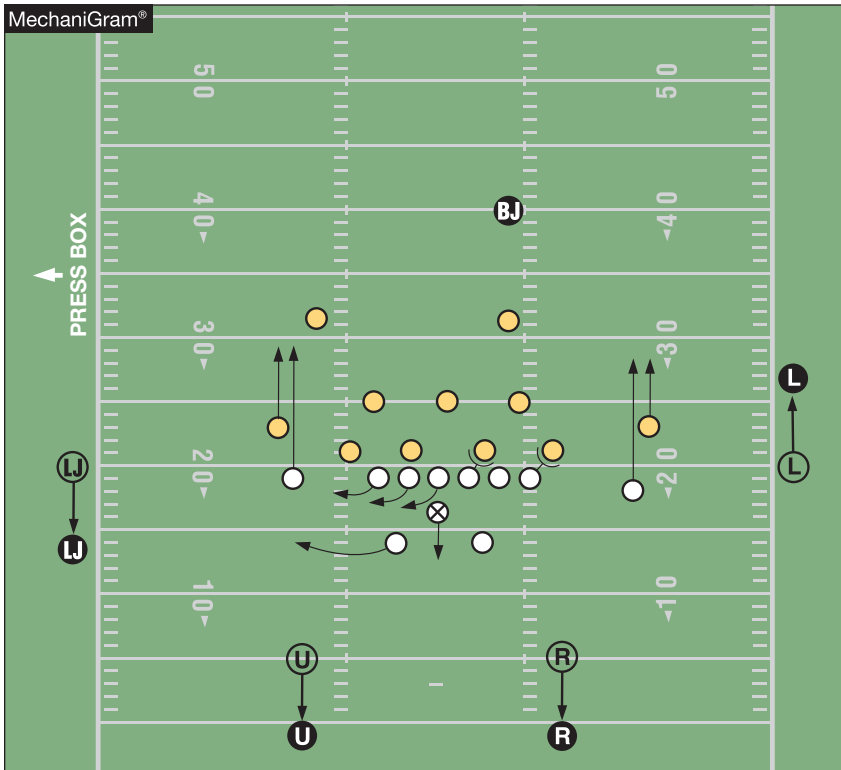
**Umpire:** Moves slowly downfield and observes players in front of the ball. Once spot is established, hustles to hashmark to set ball for next down.

**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. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress. Echoes 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. Observes blocking by linemen.

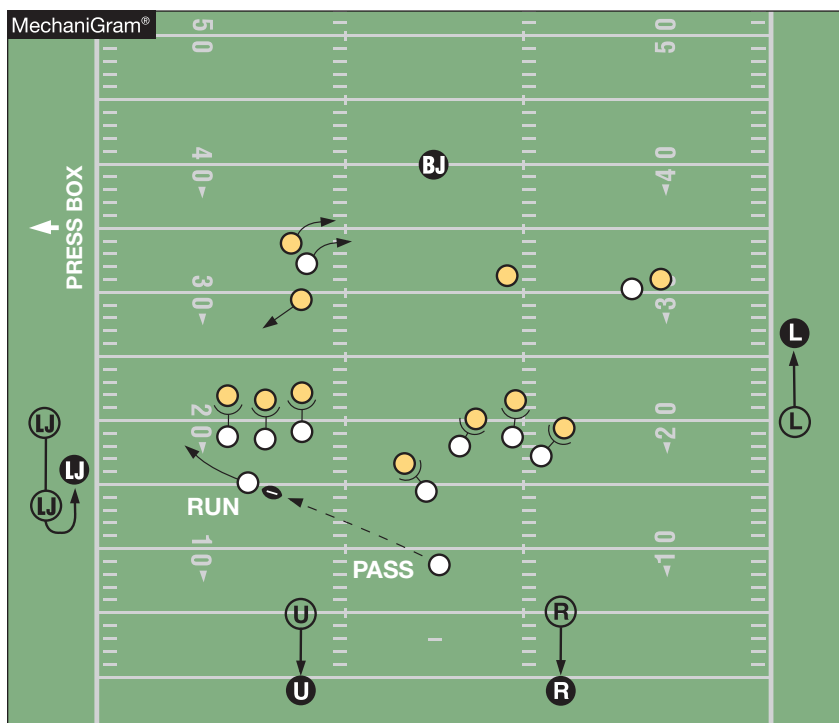
**Linesman:** Identifies the eligible receivers on his side of the field. Uses extended arm signal to alert line judge that end is in offensive backfield. After snap, observes initial blocking, then uses shuffle step to move slowly downfield. Watches initial contact between receivers and defenders.

**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 not longer threatened, moves to follow play.

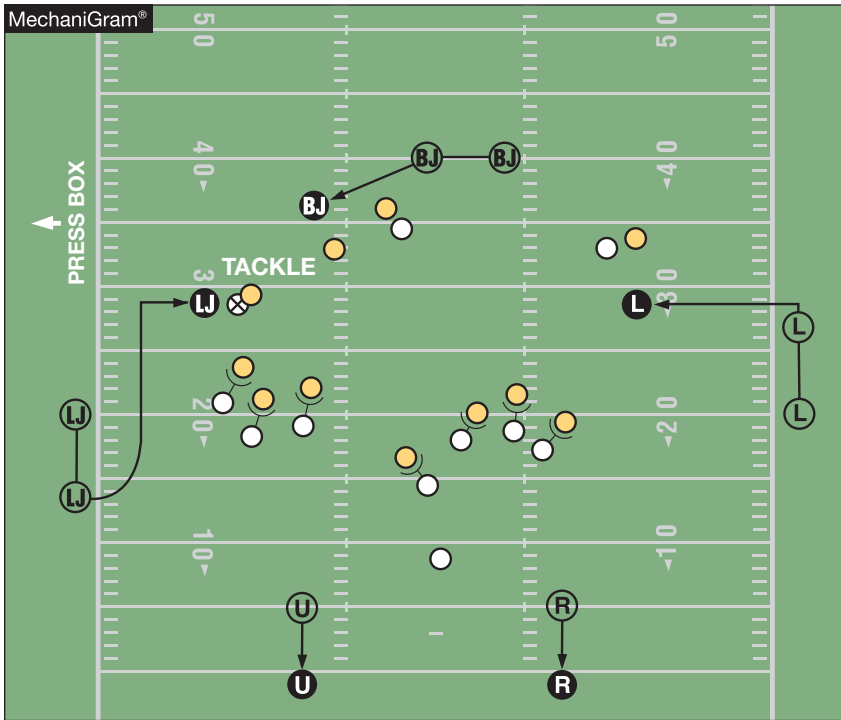
**Umpire:** Observes blocking.

**Linesman:** Moves downfield and observes action of players in his area. If pass is backward, secondary on punch signal.

**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.

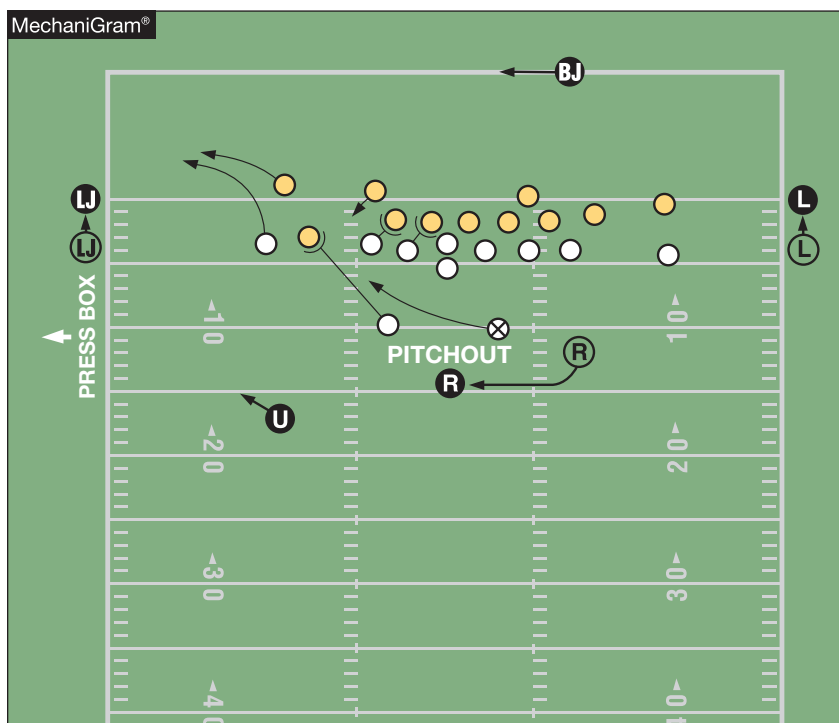
**Umpire:** Observes players in front of the ball. Moves to hashmark to set ball for next play.

**Linesman:** Moves downfield and observes players in his area. Squares off to mark spot of forward progress by mirroring the line judge.

**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.

## GOALLINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN PART 1



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

**Referee:** Primary for forward or backward pass. Reads blocking of left tackle and reads run. Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

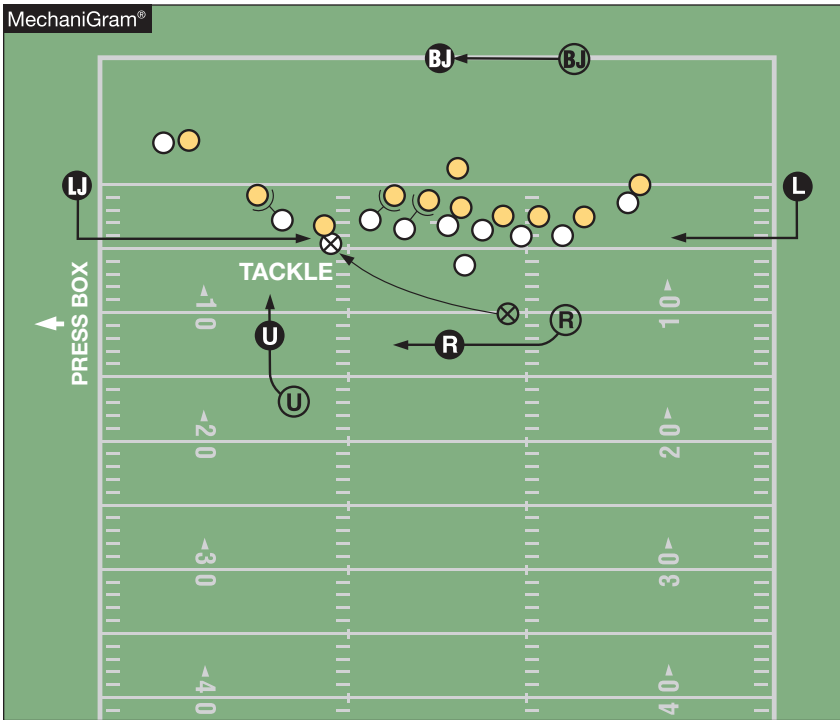
**Umpire:** Reads blocking of center and right guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there. Moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

**Linesman:** Moves immediately to goalline at snap. Observes initial blocking.

**Line judge:** Moves immediately to goalline at snap. Observes initial blocking.

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

## GOALLINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN PART 2



**Action on the field:** Runner stopped short of goalline.

**Referee:** Observes action.

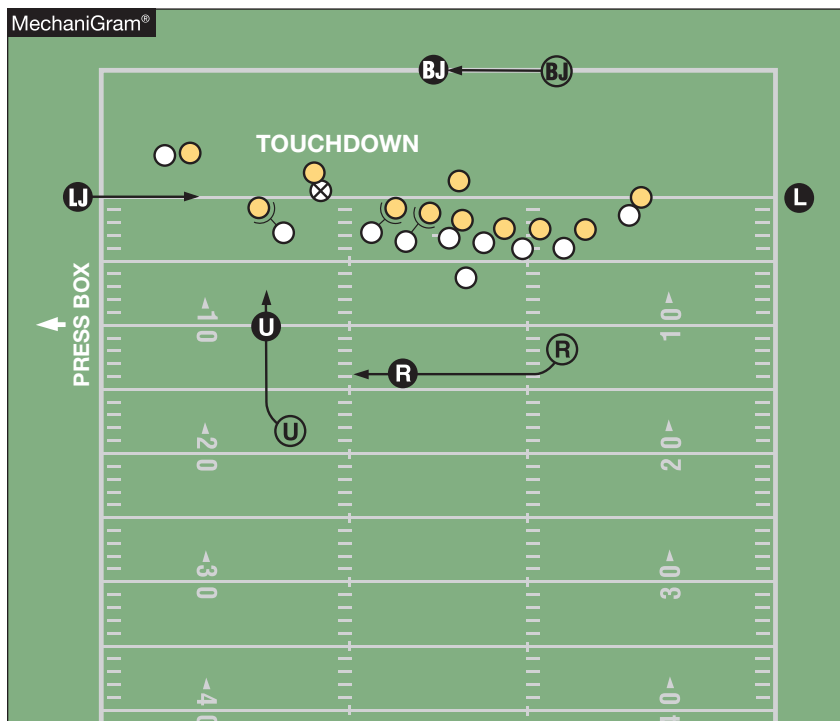
**Umpire:** Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

**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.

## GOALLINE PLAYS: OFFENSE GOING IN PART 3



**Action on the field:** Runner scores.

**Referee:** Observes action.

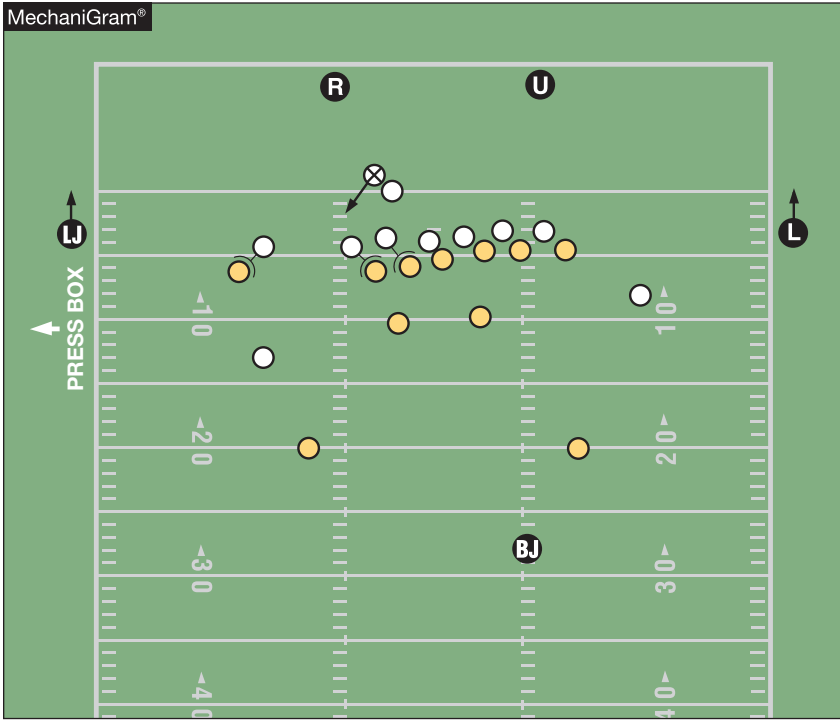
**Umpire:** Observes action.

**Linesman:** Observes action.

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

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

## GOALLINE PLAYS: OFFENSE COMING OUT PART 1



**Action on the field:** Handoff to running back.

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

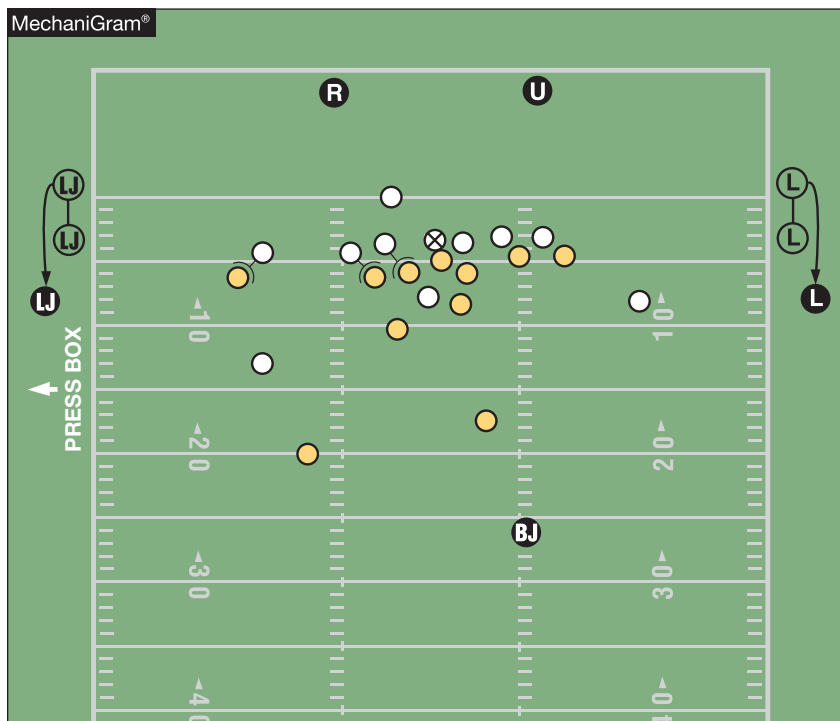
**Umpire:** Reads blocking of center and right guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there. Working backside to frontside, moves with flow of play. Observes blocking and action in front of runner.

**Linesman:** Moves immediately to goalline at snap. Observes initial blocking.

**Line judge:** Moves immediately to goalline 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.

## GOALLINE PLAYS: OFFENSE COMING OUT PART 2



**Action on the field:** Runner advances beyond goalline.

**Referee:** Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

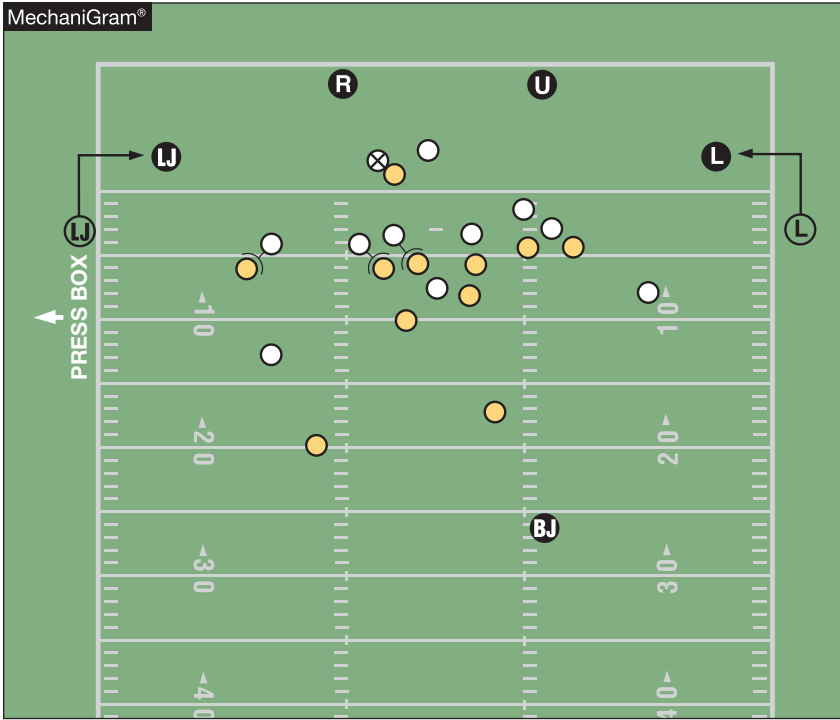
**Umpire:** Moves with flow of play. Observes runner and action around runner.

**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.

## GOALLINE 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.

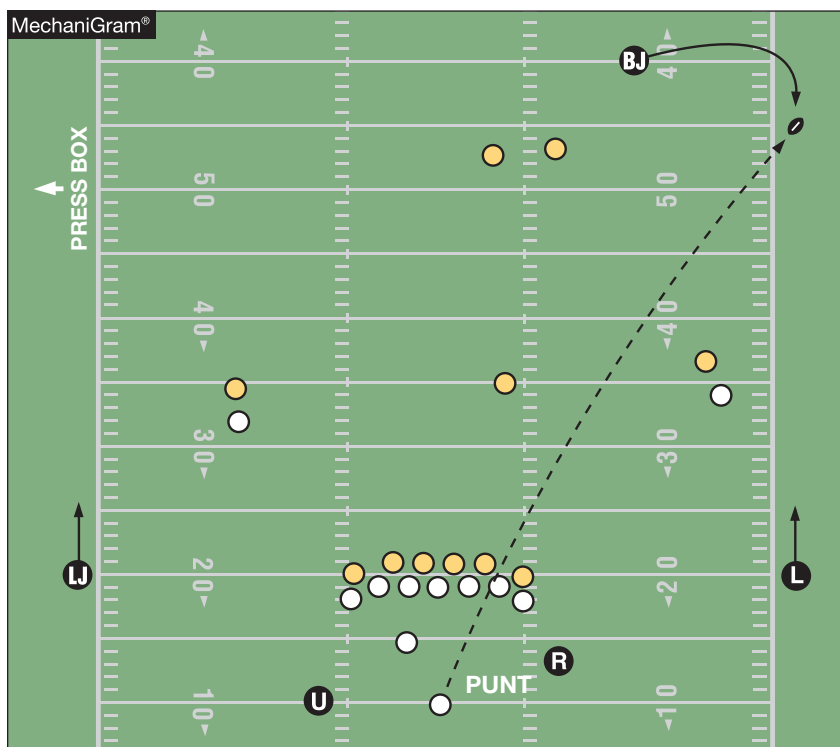
**Linesman:** If runner is clearly downed in end zone in coverage area, hustles in and signals safety. If runner is out of coverage area, hustles in for dead-ball officiating.

**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.

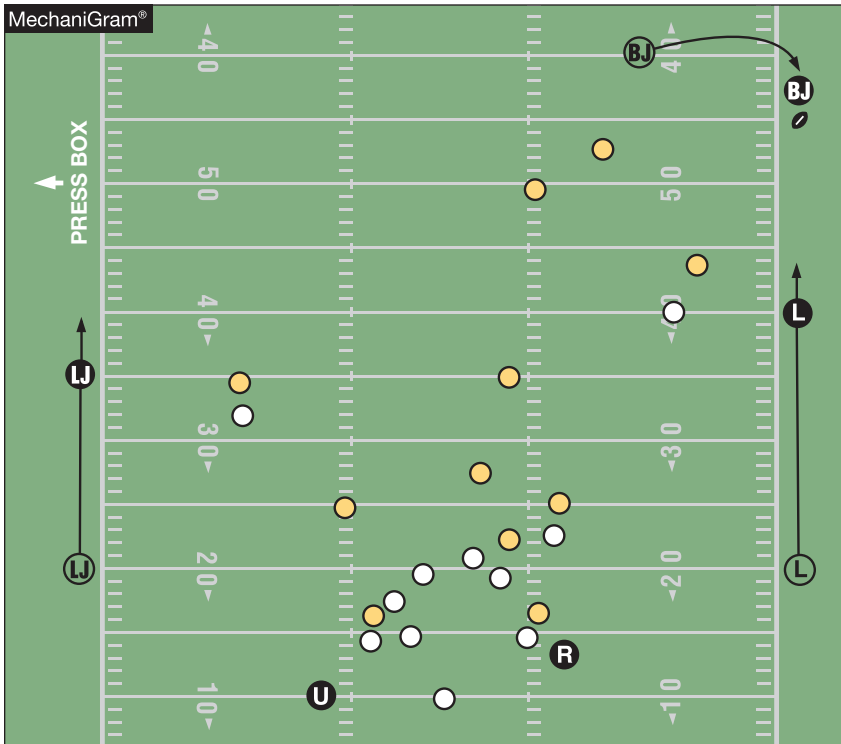
**Umpire:** Observes initial line charge and blocking on the left side of the formation.

**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.

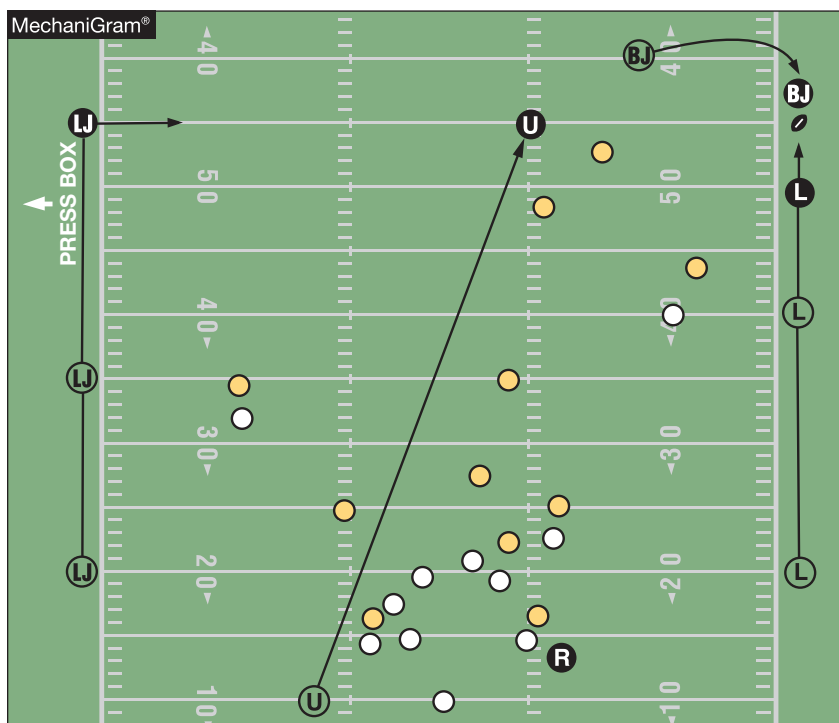
**Umpire:** Observes players as they move downfield.

**Linesman:** Moves down sideline. Observes action of players in front of ball.

**Line judge:** Moves down sideline at the snap. Observes action of players in front of ball.

**Back judge:** Gives stop-the-clock signal when he sees ball go out of bounds. Moves five to seven yards beyond spot where ball apparently went out of bounds, pivots and makes eye contact with referee.

### SCRIMMAGE KICK OUT OF BOUNDS PART 3



**Action on the field:** Ball spotted for new series.

**Referee:** With arm above head, observes back judge walking toward spot. When back judge reaches spot, drops arm with chopping motion. When certain there are no penalty markers down, signals linesman to move chain crew.

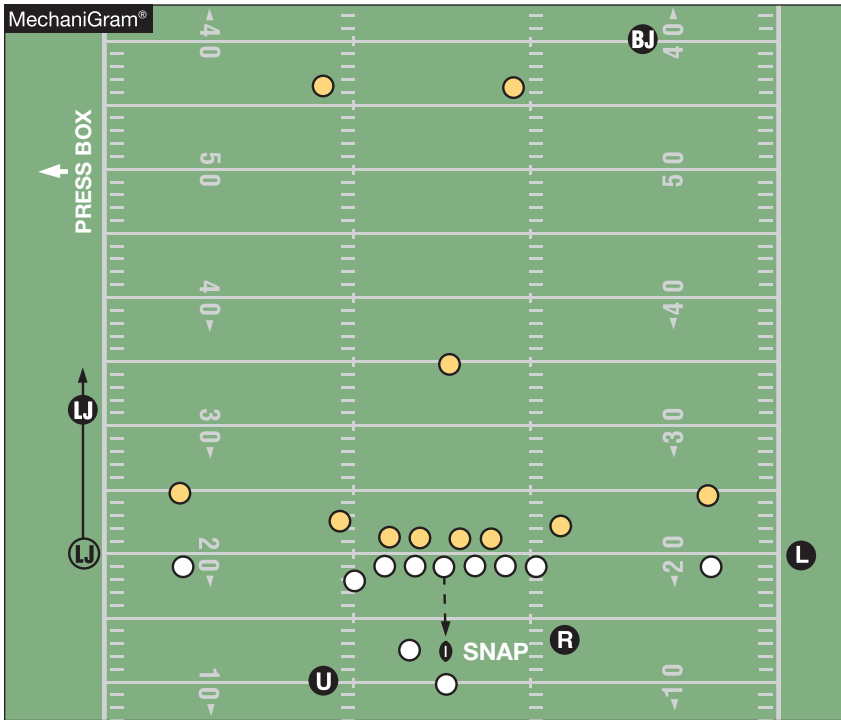
**Umpire:** Continues to move downfield and observes players. Moves to spot to set ball for new series.

**Linesman:** Hustles to dead-ball spot to prevent post-play action. Upon signal from referee, instructs chain crew to move to spot.

**Line judge:** Continues to move downfield after the snap and observes players. Squares off and mirrors back judge's spot.

**Back judge:** Walks slowly toward referee, stopping when referee drops arm with chopping motion. Signals first down for team R.

## 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.

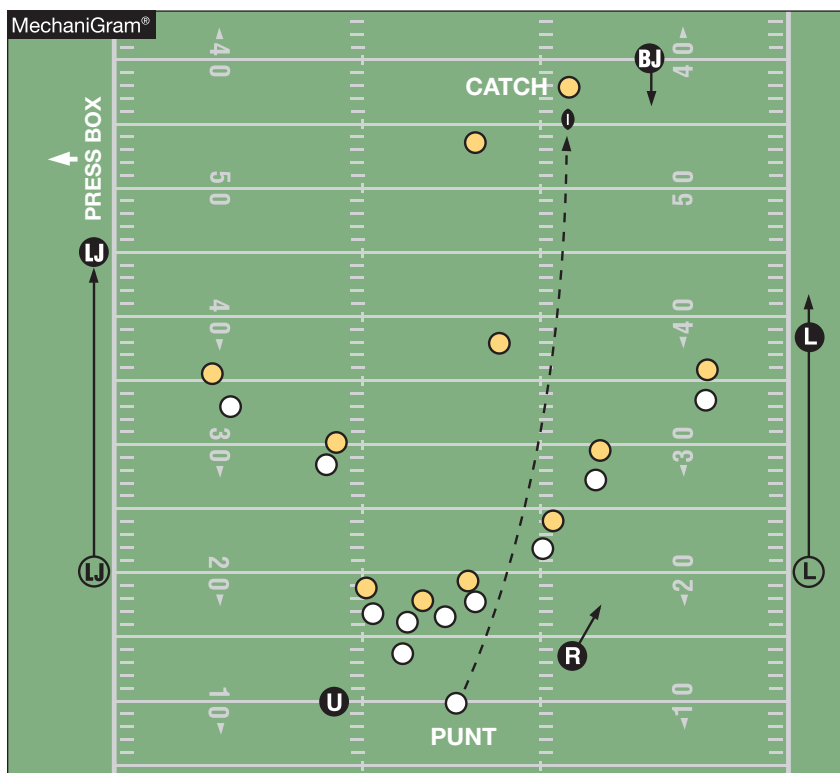
**Umpire:** Observes initial line charge and blocking on the left side of the formation.

**Linesman:** Observes initial line charge and remains on the line to rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone.

**Line judge:** Releases on snap and begins to move downfield, observes action on his side of the field between the neutral zone and the receivers.

**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.

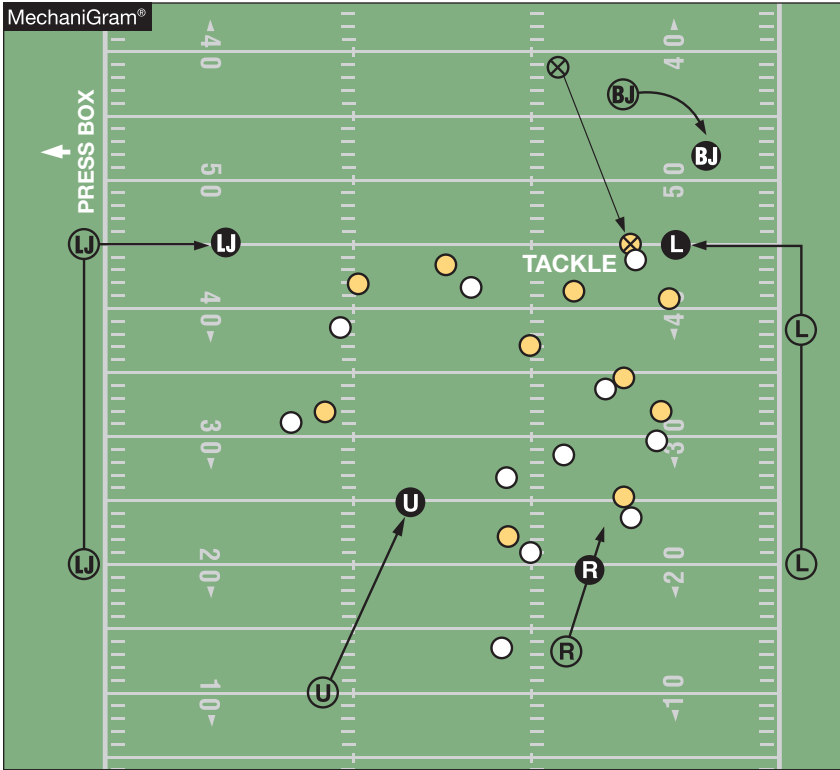
**Umpire:** Observes players as they move downfield. Moves downfield with flow of players.

**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 linesman to move chain crew.

**Umpire:** Observes action of players. Moves to spot to set ball for new series.

**Linesman:** Observes return of players. Upon signal from referee, instructs chain crew to move to spot.

**Line judge:** Observes action of players. Squares off to mirror back judge's spot.

**Back judge:** Observes action of players and takes spot within 15 yards of the end of the kick.

# CREW OF FIVE

## CHAPTER 9

# PREGAME CONFERENCE

Crews shall arrive at the game site within 45 minutes of kickoff. One of many reasons is to facilitate a pregame meeting. 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 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 officials. There is no magic formula for a "successful" pregame conference. There are a number of topics, however, that should be included:

### **Rule Changes/Major Differences**

Cover recent rule changes, especially in the beginning of the season when the rules and interpretations may still be a bit unclear. Cover major rule 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 onside kick situation, etc. If the weather is threatening, discuss how the crew will handle a suspension of play due to lightning.

### **Making the Call**

Go over signals between 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 officials who are sharing coverage to make eye contact and to practice good dead-ball officiating.

### **Reporting Fouls to the Referee**

The referee should tell crew members how he wants fouls reported to him. Does he want the official to identify the offending team by uniform color or by referring to them as offense and defense? Remind 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.).

### **Timeout Responsibilities**

Who's timing the timeout? Where are the officials positioned during the timeout? How are you going to inform the teams that the timeout is over? Who will tell the coach how many timeouts each team has remaining? It is recommended the coach be told how many timeouts each team has left after every charged team timeout.

### **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 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 Officials**

Discuss how the crew will adjust assignments if an official is injured or becomes too ill to work. Which officials will move where is up to the crew, but generally a crew of five works without a back judge when a crewmate is ill or injured.

### **Halftime**

Are you going to let the coaches and teams leave the field before heading off yourselves? It is recommended that the officials 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 officials and teams are properly

notified of the time on the clock so they can return in time. The game manager should let the officials know if someone has been designated or if the officials will be responsible.

### **Leaving the Field**

Will the crew leave the field together or is each 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.



# CREW OF FIVE

## CHAPTER 10

# POSTGAME DUTIES

### Meeting with Coaches

All five crew members will attend the pregame meeting with the coaches. Meet with the home coach first if possible. Either way, the meeting should begin with the referee introducing himself and giving the coach a card listing names of crew members.

With the umpire within earshot, ask the coach if all players are properly equipped. Have the umpire inspect any suspect equipment or tapings. Ask 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 the play will be officiated correctly.

Get the captains' numbers. Some crews also obtain the captains' names. If an 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?"

Unless modified by host management, the coin toss shall occur 30 minutes before kickoff. Tell him he is responsible for having his team on the field for the mandatory three-minute warmup after halftime. Also, if there is a planned extended halftime, make sure the coach is aware of it.

The crew should take the field together in uniform a minimum of 35 minutes before kickoff.

Once on the field, the officials' duties are as follows:

### Referee

- If the game balls are delivered to the officials' lockerroom 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 officials on the field, a visual and touch inspection should be used. Once

approved, game balls should be marked (e.g. official's initials) so only approved balls are used in the game.

- Inspect the field. The referee should walk down both sidelines and along each endline 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 goalpost 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.

- Check with the crew. Verify that the umpire has inspected any tapings or protective equipment, that the linesman has met with the chain 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.

### Linesman

- Inspect the box 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 five-yard defensive penalty will result in a first down), ask a trainer for tape and mark the chain. The ends of the box and chain poles must be properly covered. If they are not, ask game management to remedy the situation.

- Meet with the chain crew.

### Line Judge

- At approximately 30 minutes prior to kickoff (after the coin toss), meet with the game clock operator on or near the field to discuss timing rules and situations.

- Inspect the field. The line judge should walk down both sidelines and along each endline 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 goalpost pads are securely fastened. Check the pylons to ensure they are properly placed.

- Meet with the auxiliary down box operator (when applicable).

### Back Judge

- Meet with the ball helpers.
- If there is a play clock operator, meet approximately 30 minutes prior to kickoff to discuss play clock rules and situations.

### When Duties are Completed

After onfield pregame duties have been completed, the referee, linesman and back judge (crew of five) move to midfield on the 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**

A portion of the Conduct for Officials adopted by the Officiating Development Alliance in 2006 reads, "Sports officiating is an honorable profession requiring those who engage in it to have strong moral character and integrity."

It goes without saying that officials should never bring alcohol, recreational drugs, tobacco, tobacco products or e-tobacco items to a game site. On the day of a game, officials are prohibited from using alcohol or any form of tobacco product (e-cigarette or similar item) beginning with the arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.



# ***ARE YOU READY TO JOIN?***

**ANY GAME. ANYTIME. ANYWHERE.**

## **You are Covered!**

- \$6 million Annual General Liability Coverage
- \$100,000 Game Call and Assigners' Coverage
- \$15,500 Assault Protection
- COVID-19 Liability Coverage
- Free Consultation and Information Services

**EVERY GAME. EVERY SPORT. EVERY LEVEL.**

## **The Finest Training Resources**

- Referee Magazine – 12 Monthly issues
- It's Official – 16-page members-only newsletter every month
- Access to NASO members-only app
- 20% discount on all Referee training products
- Exclusive discount at Ump-Attire.com
- Monthly NASO digital LockerRoom newsletter
- Online sport-specific quizzes

## **For Officials, By Officials**

Your dues also support NASO's efforts to improve working conditions for all sports through such efforts as:

- Assault and independent contractor legislation
- Taking informed stances on select issues in the media
- Recruitment and retention efforts
- Celebrating officials and officiating with national awards

**For more information or to join**  
**[www.naso.org/bookjoin](http://www.naso.org/bookjoin) or call 800-733-6100**



ONLY \$29.95 – 12 MONTHLY ISSUES

# REFEREE MAGAZINE

1

## EVERY MONTH

12 issues delivered directly to your door, featuring 84 pages of the latest officiating news and information.

2

## RULE CHANGES

You will always find the most up-to-date changes, interpretations, and points of emphasis.

3

## SPORT SPOTLIGHTS

Every issue digs deep into the sports you officiate with dedicated sections on Football, Softball, Basketball, Volleyball, Soccer and Baseball.

4

## HOT TOPICS

No one else covers the issues everyone is talking about: Game Fees, Assigning Practices, Dealing with Coaches, and more!



**SUBSCRIBE TODAY**  
**REFEREE.COM / FOOTBALL**

OR CALL 1-800-733-6100