



---

# **2024-2025 NGFFL RULEBOOK**

**WITH  
FUNDAMENTALS,  
INTERPRETATIONS, AND OFFICIAL  
MECHANICS MANUAL**

AUGUST 9, 2024

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHANGES FOR 2024-2025 .....	1
MINOR EDITORIAL CHANGES .....	1
<b>RULE 1 THE GAME, PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT .....</b>	<b>2</b>
SECTION 1 GENERAL .....	2
SECTION 2 THE FIELD AND MARKINGS .....	2
SECTION 3 GAME EQUIPMENT .....	3
SECTION 4 PLAYERS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT .....	3
SECTION 5 COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT .....	5
<b>RULE 2 DEFINITION OF PLAYING TERMS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
SECTION 1 TEAM AND PLAYER DESIGNATIONS .....	6
SECTION 2 BALL – STATUS AND CATCHING, TOUCHING, AND POSSESSION .....	6
SECTION 3 BLOCKING, RUSHING, AND DEFLAGGING .....	7
SECTION 4 SHIFT .....	8
SECTION 5 DOWN AND SERIES .....	8
SECTION 6 LINES .....	9
SECTION 7 OUT-OF-BOUNDS .....	9
SECTION 8 ZONES .....	9
SECTION 9 KICKS .....	10
SECTION 10 ADVANCING THE BALL .....	10
SECTION 11 SNAP .....	11
SECTION 12 HANDING THE BALL .....	11
SECTION 13 PASSING THE BALL .....	12
SECTION 14 FOUL .....	12
SECTION 15 SPOTS USED IN ADMINISTRATION .....	13
SECTION 16 HURDLING .....	13
SECTION 17 TRIPPING .....	13
SECTION 18 TIMEOUTS .....	13
SECTION 19 READY FOR PLAY .....	14
SECTION 20 FORCE .....	14
SECTION 21 POSSESSION .....	14
SECTION 22 RULE .....	14
<b>RULE 3 PERIODS, TIME FACTORS AND SUBSTITUTIONS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
SECTION 1 LENGTH OF PERIODS (HALVES) .....	15
SECTION 2 STARTING AND ENDING EACH HALF .....	16
SECTION 3 STARTING AND STOPPING THE CLOCK .....	17
SECTION 4 BALL READY FOR PLAY AND DELAY .....	18
SECTION 5 SUBSTITUTIONS .....	19
<b>RULE 4 BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT-OF-BOUNDS, &amp; DEFLAGGING .....</b>	<b>20</b>
SECTION 1 PUTTING THE BALL IN PLAY .....	20
SECTION 2 DEAD BALL AND END OF THE DOWN .....	20
SECTION 3 DEAD BALL SPOT, OUT-OF-BOUNDS AND IN-BOUNDS SPOTS .....	21
SECTION 4 DEFLAGGING .....	22
<b>RULE 5 DOWNS AND TEAM POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY .....</b>	<b>23</b>

SECTION 1	SERIES OF DOWNS .....	23
SECTION 2	DOWN AND POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY .....	23
SECTION 3	LINE-TO-GAIN .....	24
<b>RULE 6</b>	<b>KICKING THE BALL .....</b>	<b>25</b>
SECTION 1	KICKOFFS AND PUNTS .....	25
SECTION 2	KICKS DEAD IN THE END ZONE .....	26
<b>RULE 7</b>	<b>SNAPPING, HANDING AND PASSING THE BALL .....</b>	<b>28</b>
SECTION 1	BEFORE THE SNAP .....	28
SECTION 2	POSITION AND ACTION DURING THE SNAP .....	29
SECTION 3	HANDING AND ADVANCING THE BALL .....	29
SECTION 4	FUMBLE AND BACKWARD PASS .....	30
SECTION 5	FORWARD PASS .....	30
<b>RULE 8</b>	<b>SCORING PLAYS AND TOUCHBACKS .....</b>	<b>34</b>
SECTION 1	VALUE OF SCORES .....	34
SECTION 2	TOUCHDOWN .....	34
SECTION 3	TRY-FOR-POINT .....	34
SECTION 4	FORCE, SAFETY AND TOUCHBACK .....	36
SECTION 5	MERCY RULE .....	37
SECTION 6	TIE GAMES AND OVERTIME PROCEDURE .....	37
<b>RULE 9</b>	<b>CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS .....</b>	<b>39</b>
SECTION 1	HELPING THE RUNNER .....	39
SECTION 2	ILLEGAL USE OF HANDS AND HOLDING AND BLOCKING .....	39
SECTION 3	ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT .....	41
SECTION 4	NON-CONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY PLAYERS .....	43
SECTION 5	ILLEGAL SUBSTITUTION .....	44
SECTION 6	ILLEGAL TOUCHING AND ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION .....	45
SECTION 7	ILLEGAL KICKING OR BATTING .....	45
SECTION 8	NON-CONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY NON-PLAYERS .....	46
SECTION 9	GAME ADMINISTRATION AND SIDELINE INTERFERENCE .....	47
SECTION 10	UNFAIR ACTS .....	47
SECTION 11	PROTESTS AND SUSPENSIONS .....	47
<b>RULE 10</b>	<b>PENALTY ENFORCEMENT .....</b>	<b>48</b>
SECTION 1	PROCEDURE AFTER A FOUL .....	48
SECTION 2	DOUBLE AND MULTIPLE FOULS .....	48
SECTION 3	TYPES OF PLAY AND BASIC ENFORCEMENT SPOTS .....	49
SECTION 4	ADMINISTERING PENALTIES .....	50
SECTION 5	FOULS BY TEAM A DURING KICKS .....	50
SECTION 6	SPECIAL ENFORCEMENTS .....	51
SECTION 7	10-SECOND SUBTRACTION FROM GAME CLOCK .....	51
SECTION 8	UNFAIR CLOCK TACTICS .....	52
SECTION 9	FOOTBALL PENALTY ENFORCEMENT .....	52
FLAG FOOTBALL FUNDAMENTALS .....		54
INTERPRETATIONS .....		56
NGFFL OFFICIAL MECHANICS MANUAL .....		70

**NOTE:** The designation “K” refers to any player of the kicking team and “R” refers to any player of the receiving team. The designation “A” refers to members of the offensive team and “B” refers to any member of the defensive team.



## CHANGES FOR 2024-2025

Each change or altered segment is identified in the rules by a shaded background.

- 9.4.4 Defines hate speech and requires that when contest officials witness hate speech
- 9.4.5 or acts of harassment that the alleged offender is penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct, including an immediate ejection from the current game.
- 10.7.1 The 10-second runoff for applicable fouls has been adjusted to apply any time after the two-minute warning in either half.

### Minor editorial changes

- 1.4.8 Codifies that players may wear a towel tucked into the waistband of their shorts
- 4.4.5 or flag belt, as long as the towel is not obstructing any of the three flags, and that a runner wearing a towel is considered deflagged when the towel is removed from the waistband or flag belt.
- 1.4.9.h Clarifies that communication devices are not allowed for coaching or playing
- 9.8.1.g purposes during games or between halves.
- 1.5.1 Defines communication devices and lists examples of types of communication
- 1.5.2 devices that are not allowed and specifies that drones are not allowed over the playing field or team areas when players are present.
- 2.2.9 Adds definition of a forward fumble.
- 2.14.1.c Adds definition of a team unsportsmanlike conduct foul.
- 4.2.1.k Clarifies that a runner with fewer than three flags is considered down when
- 4.4.4 touched anywhere between the shoulders and the knees.
- 7.1.4.c Adjusts rule regarding an illegal shift that converts to a false start when the offensive team never comes to a one-second stop prior to the snap.
- 7.3.3 Clarifies rule regarding using one scrimmage running play per possession by referencing the definition of a scrimmage running play.
- 7.3.4 Aligns the wording with other rules to state that one scrimmage running play can be used per possession.
- 7.4.2 Clarifies rule regarding where to spot the ball in case of a forward fumble.
- 8.4.4 Clarifies rule regarding how and where a team should next put the ball in play following a touchback or safety.
- 9.3.2.a Clarifies that no intentional contact with an official is allowed by players or non-
- NOTE players.
- 9.4.3 Clarifies that a non-player unsportsmanlike conduct foul is applied to the captain of a team, and could lead to disqualification.
- 9.9.1 Codifies rule and penalty enforcement for sideline interference.

# RULE 1 THE GAME, PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

## Section 1 General

- 1.1.1** Football is played between two teams of seven players on a rectangular field. Each team must have a minimum of 6 players to start a game. Each team must have a minimum of 5 eligible players on the field, or the game results in a forfeit. A team may play with up to 7 players, regardless of the number of opposing players.
- 1.1.2** A crew of officials administers the game. Officials' jurisdiction begins with the scheduled coin toss of the game or the first game if multiple games are scheduled. The Referees have authority to rule promptly, in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in these rules. All players, non-players, and others authorized to be within the team area are subject to these rules and are governed by the decisions of the officials.
- 1.1.3** The game officials shall have the authority to make decisions for infractions of the rules. The use of any replay, video, photograph, mobile device, or television monitoring equipment by the game officials in making any decision relating to the game is prohibited.

## Section 2 The Field and Markings

- 1.2.1** The field will be rectangular with the preferred dimensions of 80 yards by 35 yards (plus two end zones of 10 yards deep), although facility limitations may cause the field dimensions to be modified.
- 1.2.2** The sidelines and end lines are the boundary of the football field. These lines demark out-of-bounds; measurements will be from the inside edges of these lines. Each goal line is entirely in its end zone so that the edge toward the field of play and its vertical plane is the actual goal line. Each sideline is entirely out-of-bounds. The inside edge of the end line is the outer limit of each end zone.
- 1.2.3** End zones and in-bounds lines will be marked with brightly colored, flexible cone pylons. These cones will be placed on the out-of-bounds and end zone lines.
- 1.2.4** All non-players, coaches and substitutes must remain in their team box unless they are a substitute or replaced player about to become a player. The team box is within an area 2 yards behind the sideline and bound by the extension of both 10-yard lines. **NOTE:** *If repeated infractions occur: 10 yards and/or disqualification of team personnel.*

**Outside team/coaches' area – 5 yards**

## Section 3 Game Equipment

- 1.3.1** Teams will provide their own footballs. The Referee will decide whether the ball meets the specifications or may authorize substituting a non-sanctioned ball. If the field is wet, the Referee may order the ball changed between downs.
- 1.3.2** In open division play, the football shall meet the following specifications:
- a) Long circumference: 27<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"-28<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"
  - b) Short circumference: 20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"-21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
  - c) Inflated to a pressure of 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> to 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> PSI (pounds per square inch).
  - d) Natural tan color
- 1.3.3** Any football that includes the NFHS, NCAA, or NFL Authenticating Marks shall be considered legal. "Junior-sized" and "Youth-sized" footballs are not allowed in open division play.
- 1.3.4** In Womens+ division play, the football shall meet the following specifications:
- a) Long circumference: 25"-28<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"
  - b) Short circumference: 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"-21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
  - c) Inflated to a pressure of 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> to 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> PSI (pounds per square inch).
  - d) Natural tan color
- 1.3.5** Any football that includes the NFHS, NCAA, or NFL Authenticating Marks shall be considered legal. "Junior-sized" and "Youth-sized" footballs are allowed in Womens+ division play.
- 1.3.6** A down indicator will mark the spot from where the ball is to be snapped and the down. A beanbag or puck will be used to mark the ball's spot and the rush zone line.

## Section 4 Players and Their Equipment

- 1.4.1** Each team will designate up to two players as Field Captains. If all Captains become a non-player, another player will then be designated. The designated captain(s) will confer with officials. A captain's first choice of any offered decision is final. Decisions involving penalties will be made before any charged timeout is granted to either team.
- 1.4.2** Players on each team must wear jerseys that are similarly colored. Jerseys must be long enough to remain tucked into the pants or, if shimmed jerseys are worn, they must be at least 4 inches (approximately the width of the referee's closed fist) above the player's waist while the player is standing. Jerseys should have numbers. Jerseys must not be the same color as the football.
- 1.4.3** All players must wear pants or shorts. The pants or shorts may not be the same or similar color as the football or a player's flags. The pants or shorts must be one solid color (**Exceptions:** a small-sized logo [i.e. Nike Swoosh, Adidas 3-stripe, Puma leaping cat, etc.], a reasonably sized city or team logo, a reasonably sized sponsor logo, and a reasonably-sized player's number.) Pants and shorts cannot have belt loops or pockets. Short pants are preferred.
- 1.4.4** Every player must wear shoes that completely cover the foot. Metal cleats, or those that, in the opinion of the referee, are hazardous may not be worn.

- 1.4.5** Players must wear a belt around their waist that includes three flags that are the same size and dimensions as the Triple Threat brand flags (Flag size: 2 1/4"W x 14 1/2"L), hang at the player's sides & posterior, and are permanently attached and secured to the flag belt. The flags must contrast with the player's pants and should, but don't have to, contrast the opposing teams' flags. Flags may not be looped around the inside of the belt before securing the belt. Flag belts cannot be tied.

**Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 10 yards & automatic first down for A, if by B, + ejection from game**

- 1.4.6** Players may wear an intraoral mouth and tooth protector.

- 1.4.7** Players may wear soft, pliable basketball or wrestling knee pads or soft pads specifically made for scrimmage pants; soft, single-layer, pliable elastic joint braces; stocking caps and other caps without hard bills and prescription or athletic safety eyeglasses. Eyeglasses must be secured with an eyeglass band. Tape, applied in fewer than four layers, may be used to support joints, such as wrists or fingers. Sunglasses are allowed, but plastic frames and lenses must be used.

- 1.4.8** Players may wear a towel that is tucked into their waist or flag belt, as long as it is not obstructing one of the flags on the flag belt. The towel worn cannot be yellow or similar color as the football.

- 1.4.9** No player wearing illegal equipment or failing to wear mandatory equipment shall be permitted to play. Illegal equipment includes:
- a) Helmets;
  - b) Any kind of pads with hard components such as those for shoulder, hand, forearm or thigh, unless specifically authorized by the head referee;
  - c) Any hard or unyielding substance, other than permitted by a specific rule;
  - d) Anything that, in the opinion of the head referee, would confuse, potentially harm or endanger other players or is rough or abrasive;
  - e) Watches, rings or other jewelry;
  - f) Any foreign slippery or sticky substances.
  - g) Any mask that covers the face, mouth, or nose that include graphics, logos, or insignia that engenders ill will or taunts an opponent.
  - h) Communication devices, as defined in Rule 1.5

**If an official discovers illegal equipment, or if a player is not wearing mandatory equipment, the player must leave the game for at least one down and is not allowed to return until the equipment is made legal. The player may be allowed to return without missing a down if the team takes a charged team timeout, but in any event the player(s) may not play with illegal equipment or without mandatory equipment.**

**If equipment becomes illegal through play, the player is not required to leave the game for one down, but they may not participate until the equipment is made legal.**

**If a player begins the down without a flag belt, and it is not discovered by the officials prior to the snap, the play continues, and the ball becomes dead when a player that started the down without a flag belt possesses a live ball (rule 4.2.1.m)**

- 1.4.10** Caps and visors with hard bills may only be worn backwards. Foreign objects attached to a hat or visor are prohibited.
- 1.4.11** Prior to the game, the team captain will verify that all team players are legally equipped. The head referee will determine any questions concerning equipment legality. Each player must properly wear the required equipment while the ball is in play. A player with missing or illegal equipment must correct the deficiency before further participation. An official's timeout may be declared to permit repair of equipment that becomes illegal or defective through use.

## **Section 5      Communication Equipment**

- 1.5.1** Communication devices, including but not limited to cellular phones, still photograph(s), film, analog or digital video(s), headsets, earbuds, headphones, microphones, drones, and/or Internet depictions, shall not be used for coaching or playing purposes during the game.
- 1.5.2** Drones are not allowed over the field or the team area when players are present near or in the playing field. This governance will include all federal, state, and local laws where appropriate.

## RULE 2 DEFINITION OF PLAYING TERMS

### Section 1 Team and Player Designations

- 2.1.1** A player is one of the team members who is designated to start either half of the game or who replaces another player. A player continues to be a player until a substitute enters the field and indicates to the player that they is replaced.
- 2.1.2** A disqualified player is a player barred from further participation in the game, and may be ordered to leave the field, playing area, or venue if necessary.
- 2.1.3** A non-player is a coach, trainer or other attendant, or a substitute who does not participate by touching the ball, hindering the opponent, or influencing play.
- 2.1.4** A quarterback is the player who receives the ball at the snap.
- 2.1.5** A runner is the player who is in possession of a live ball or simulated possession of a live ball.
- 2.1.6** A pass rusher is a Team B player whose intent is to cross the line of scrimmage in an attempt to interfere with a passing play and/or deflag the passer.
- 2.1.7** A back is any A player who has no part of their body breaking the plane of an imaginary line drawn parallel to the line of scrimmage through the waist of the nearest teammate who is legally on the line, except for the player under the snapper, who is always considered a back. A team A player is considered to be on the line of scrimmage if they are within one yard of the line of scrimmage.

### Section 2 Ball – Status and Catching, Touching, and Possession

- 2.2.1** A live ball is a ball in play while a down is in progress. A dead ball is a ball not in play and indicates that the game is between downs.
- 2.2.2** A loose ball is a pass or fumble or a kick or otherwise not in player possession. A loose ball that has not yet touched the ground is in flight. A grounded loose ball is one that has touched ground. Any loose ball continues to be a loose ball until a player catches it and secures possession or the ball becomes dead.
- 2.2.3** A player is in possession of the ball when they are inbounds and has a firm grip and control of the ball with their hands or arms.
- 2.2.4** A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball which is in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball. Catching is always preceded by touching the ball; thus, if touching causes the ball to become dead, securing possession of the ball has no significance.  
  
**EXCEPTION:** *If a player catches a pass and is pushed out-of-bounds, the pass is considered complete if an official judges that the player would have caught the ball in-bounds except for the pushing.*
- 2.2.5** A simultaneous catch is a catch in which there is joint possession of a live ball by more than one player in-bounds.

- 2.2.6 A fumble is any loss of player possession other than by passing, kicking, or handing.
- 2.2.7 A muff is touching a loose ball by a player in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession; this includes an accidental kick.
- 2.2.8 Batting is intentionally slapping or striking, with hand, leg, arm or knee, a loose ball or a ball in player possession.
- 2.2.9 A fumble is forward if the ball first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything else anything nearer the opponent's goal line than the point at which the ball leaves the runner's hand(s). All other fumbles are backward fumbles.

### Section 3 Blocking, Rushing, and Deflagging

- 2.3.1 Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent via contact with hands or body. Blockers must be on their feet before, during and after contact is made with an opponent. A blocker is allowed to contact only that portion of the opponent's body between the waist and shoulders and the blocker's hands or forearms must be in front or to the side of the player being blocked.  
  
***EXCEPTIONS:** A blocker who loses personal body control due to an opponent's aggressiveness after contact shall not be penalized if they contact an opponent other than as specified. This initial point of contact against an opponent must be with open hands with palms contacting an opponent. In any block, the hands or arms may not be swinging forward faster than the blocker's body. Hands must always be in advance of the elbows. Players must block with hands and elbows within the frame of their body. Players are not allowed to cross their arms and thrust forward in the manner of a battering ram.*
- 2.3.2 Clipping is a block against an opponent when the initial contact is from behind and at or below the waist. Doubtful cases involving a side block or the opponent turning their back to a blocker are to be judged by an official according to whether the opponent was able to see or ward off the blocker.
- 2.3.3 Blocking in the back is a block against an opponent when the initial contact is in the opponent's back, inside the shoulders and below the head and above the waist.
- 2.3.4 Blocking below the waist is making initial contact below the waist from the front or side against an opponent other than a runner. Contact with an opponent's hand(s) below the waist that continues into the body below the waist is considered blocking below the waist. Blocking below the waist applies only when the opponent has one or both feet on the ground.
- 2.3.5 Such cases shall not be ruled clipping, blocking in the back, and/or blocking below the waist unless the game official sees the initial contact. When in doubt, the contact is legal and not from behind. When the contact is ruled to be from behind, and the game official has question as to the initial point of contact, it shall be ruled clipping.

- 2.3.6** Pass rushing is the act of crossing the line of scrimmage in an attempt to interfere with a passing play and/or deflag the passer. A pass rusher must avoid charging into any Team A player. When encountering a blocker from Team A, a pass rusher must (a) stop prior to making contact with the blocker or (b) clearly change direction in an effort to move around the blocker. If a pass rusher makes an effort to move around the blocker and the blocker moves into the path of the pass rusher, there is no charging. In any case, the pass rusher may block or contact the blocker using only the techniques described in 2.3.1 above.

**Personal foul, unnecessary roughness – 10 yards + automatic first down for A**

- 2.3.7** Any Team B player may pass rush from any position on the field provided their entire body is on B's side of the football and their entire body is outside the expanded neutral zone or when any team player that began the play with their entire body outside the expanded neutral zone crosses the line of scrimmage. All rush zone restrictions for team B end once the quarterback's initial possession ends.

**Rush zone encroachment – 5 yards**

- 2.3.8** Deflagging is clearly removing the runner's flags. Flag guarding (deflagging interference) is when the runner uses their hand or arm—either intentionally or unintentionally—to obstruct a defender's access to their flags, which includes but is not limited to: dropping the arm below the waist, using a stiff-arm, slapping and/or obstructing the free action of an opponent's hand during a deflagging attempt. The runner's hand may not be moving faster than their body nor shall be below their waist when initial contact with an opponent is made. The runner's arm may not be rigid and straight (stiff-arm).

## **Section 4     Shift**

- 2.4.1** A shift is the action of any offensive player(s) who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap.

## **Section 5     Down and Series**

- 2.5.1** A down is a unit of the game which starts with a legal snap or a kickoff after the ball is declared ready for play and which ends when the ball becomes dead. Between downs is the interval during which the ball is dead.
- 2.5.2** Loss of a down is the loss of the right to repeat a down.
- 2.5.3** A series of downs (series) is a set of four downs, numbered 1, 2, 3 or 4, that is awarded to a team.
- 2.5.4** No series can ever start on a down other than first.



## Section 6 Lines

- 2.6.1 A yard line is any line and its vertical plane parallel to the end lines. The yard lines, marked or unmarked, in the field of play are numbered in yards from a team's goal line to the middle of the field.
- 2.6.2 The boundary lines are the end lines and sidelines and are out of bounds.
- 2.6.3 The goal line is the vertical plane which separates the field of play from the end zone. When related to a live ball in a runner's possession (touching inbounds) while the ball is over the out-of-bounds area, the goal line includes the extension beyond the sidelines. A team's own goal line is the one it is defending.
- 2.6.4 An end line is the outer limit of each end zone.
- 2.6.5 A sideline is the lateral limit of the field of play and the end zones; it extends from one end line to the other.
- 2.6.6 A scrimmage is the action of the two teams during a down which begins with a snap or free kick. The scrimmage line for each team is the vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest the team's goal line. It is determined when the ball is ready for play and remains until the next ready for play signal.
- 2.6.7 Offensive players are on their line of scrimmage when they face their opponent's goal line. Offensive players must be within one yard of the line of scrimmage to be on the line. They may stand, crouch, or kneel. At the snap, both feet of every player shall be outside the outside foot of any adjacent player. All offensive players must be behind the line of scrimmage at the snap.
- 2.6.8 The line-to-gain is the yard line established when a new series (1st down) occurs. Unless there is a penalty, the line-to-gain for a new series is 10 yards in advance of the ball when played for the first down of the series. If the line-to-gain extends into the end zone, the goal line is the line-to-gain.

## Section 7 Out-of-Bounds

- 2.7.1 A player or other person is out-of-bounds when any part of them touches anything other than another player or game official, which is on or outside the sideline or end line.
- 2.7.2 A ball in player possession is out-of-bounds when the runner or the ball touches anything, other than another player or game official, which is on or outside the sidelines or end line. **NOTE:** *If properly placed, the pylons/cones marking the sideline, goal line, and back line are out of bounds. If any legal kick touches a pylon or cone, the result is a touchback.*
- 2.7.3 A loose ball is out-of-bounds when it touches anything, including a player or game official, which is out of bounds.

## Section 8 Zones

- 2.8.1 The offense starts a down behind the line of scrimmage and the defense starts a down beyond the line of scrimmage.

- 2.8.2** The neutral zone is the space between the two free-kick lines during a free-kick down and between the two scrimmage lines during a scrimmage down. For a free kick down, the neutral zone is 10 yards wide and for a scrimmage down it is as wide as the length of the football. It is established when the ball is marked ready for play.
- 2.8.3** The expanded neutral zone extends five yards past the line of scrimmage on B's side of the ball.

## **Section 9 Kicks**

- 2.9.1** Kicking the ball means intentionally striking the ball with knee, lower leg, or foot. Kickoffs are used to start each half.
- 2.9.2** A kicker is the player who punts or free-kicks the football. Players on this team are called kickers and their opponents are called receivers.
- 2.9.3** A kick ends when a player gains possession or when the ball becomes dead.
- 2.9.4** A free kick is a kick that starts each half or follows a safety.
- 2.9.5** To start both halves, all teammates of the kicker must be behind their 30-yard line until the ball is kicked. The ball must be kicked from a fixed position on the ground or punted; it may be controlled by a teammate of the kicker or positioned on a pliable tee which elevates the ball less than 2 inches above the ground or punted. If a teammate holds or controls the ball for the kicker, they may be slightly over the 30-yard line. No material or device may be placed on the ground to improve the kicker's footing. The receivers must have at least 4 players between their 30-yard line and midfield. At least 4 receivers must remain in this 10-yard area until after the ball is kicked.
- 2.9.6** A punt is legally kicking the ball by the player who drops it and kicks it before the ball hits the ground.
- 2.9.7** A scrimmage kick is a punt from at or behind the line of scrimmage. For announced punts, a scrimmage kick formation must be used; it is a formation where all team K players, except the kicker, must be within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage. An announced punt also requires that team R must have a minimum of 4 players in the rush zone (expanded neutral zone) until after the ball is kicked. On an announced punt, no team K player may cross or move off the line of scrimmage until after the ball is kicked. Minor encroachments will be tolerated.
- 2.9.8** An awarded fair catch occurs when the offended team chooses to take the ball after enforcement of a foul for kick-catching interference.

## **Section 10 Advancing the Ball**

- 2.10.1** The ball may be advanced by a scrimmage running play or scrimmage passing play.

- 2.10.2** A scrimmage running play is advancing the ball across the line of scrimmage via a runner. It includes handing the ball and any backward pass thrown behind the line of scrimmage. Only one scrimmage running play may be used in any one possession. A scrimmage running play does not include a legal forward pass.  
**NOTE:** Point after conversions are considered a separate series, so using a scrimmage running play is always allowed on these plays.
- 2.10.3** If the penalty is accepted for a foul which occurs during a scrimmage running play, the spot of enforcement will determine if Team A is considered to have used a running play. If the spot of enforcement is beyond the line of scrimmage, a running play has been used. If the spot of enforcement is at or behind the line of scrimmage, a running play has not been used.  
**EXCEPTION:** The scrimmage running play will be considered used if team A establishes a scrimmage running play, retreats behind the line of scrimmage, and then commits a flag guarding foul.
- 2.10.4** A scrimmage passing play is any play that includes a legal forward pass.
- 2.10.5** Diving is an attempt of the runner to avoid a flag pull or advance the ball by leaning their upper body forward while leaving both feet.
- 2.10.6** Spinning is an attempt of the runner to avoid a flag pull by turning their body at the vertical axis. Spinning is legal.

## Section 11 Snap

- 2.11.1** A snap is handing or passing the ball backward from its position on the ground. The snap begins when the snapper first moves the ball legally other than an adjustment. In a snap, the movement must be a quick and continuous backward motion of the ball during which the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches a back or the ground before it touches a Team A lineman. The snap ends when the ball touches the ground or is possessed by any player. The player who snaps the ball, usually the center, is the snapper.
- 2.11.2** The snap ends when the ball touches the ground or is possessed by any player.
- 2.11.3** Every scrimmage down, including a down that includes a declared punt, shall begin with a legal snap.
- 2.11.4** The snap shall always be from the middle of the field. In an emergency, such as a pool of water on the line, the referee has authority to move the ball to a playable spot.

## Section 12 Handling the Ball

- 2.12.1** Handing the ball is transferring player possession from one teammate to another without passing, fumbling, or kicking it. The ball is still in contact with the first player when it is touched by the receiving player.

## Section 13 Passing the Ball

- 2.13.1 Passing the ball is throwing it. In a pass, the ball travels in flight.
- 2.13.2 A pass ends when it is caught, touches the ground, or is out-of-bounds.
- 2.13.3 A passer is a player who throws a forward pass. They continue to be a passer until the legal forward pass ends or until the player moves to participate in the play.
- 2.13.4 A pass is forward if the ball first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything else anything nearer the opponent's goal line than the point at which the ball leaves the passer's hand(s). All other passes are backward passes. When in question a pass thrown in or behind the neutral zone is forward rather than a backward pass.
- 2.13.5 If a Team B player contacts the passer or ball after forward movement begins and the ball leaves the passer's hand, a forward pass is ruled regardless of where the ball strikes the ground or a player.
- 2.13.6 A catchable forward pass is an untouched legal forward pass beyond the neutral zone where a Team A player has a reasonable opportunity to move toward and catch the ball. When in question, a forward pass is catchable.

## Section 14 Foul

- 2.14.1 A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed. A penalty is a yardage loss that may be imposed by a rule against a team that has committed the foul; it may include a loss of down, but usually includes replaying the down. The types of fouls are:
  - a) **Player**—A foul, other than unsportsmanlike, by a player in the game (hereafter referred to as a foul)
  - b) **Non-player or Unsportsmanlike**—A non-contact foul during the down which is not illegal participation and does not influence the play in progress.
  - c) **Team Unsportsmanlike**—A team foul that is not charged as an unsportsmanlike conduct foul against any coach or captain.
  - d) **Double**—One or more live ball fouls, other than unsportsmanlike, committed by each team.
  - e) **Multiple**—Two or more live ball fouls, other than unsportsmanlike, committed by the same team during the same down at such time that the offended team is permitted a choice of penalties.
  - f) **Dead Ball**—A foul that occurs in the time interval after a down has ended and before a ball is next legally snapped or free-kicked.
  - g) **Simultaneous with Snap**—An action or game situation that becomes an infraction when the ball is snapped.
  - h) **Post-scrimmage Kick**—A foul by R (other than illegal substitution or participation) when the foul occurs during a scrimmage kick play in which:
    - i. the ball crosses the expanded neutral zone.
    - ii. the foul occurs beyond the expanded neutral zone.

- iii. the foul occurs before the kick ends.
- iv. K shall not be the next to put the ball into play.

**2.14.2** A flagrant personal foul is a rule infraction so extreme or deliberate that it places an opponent in danger of serious or catastrophic injury. **NOTE:** *No live ball foul causes the ball to become dead. There are game situations that produce results somewhat similar to fouls but are called violations. They include player disqualification, forfeiture of a game, and players (accidentally) crossing the line of scrimmage before a declared punt.*

## Section 15 Spots Used in Administration

- 2.15.1** The previous spot is where the ball was last snapped.
- 2.15.2** The spot where a run ends is where the runner loses player possession, where an illegal pass is thrown, or where the ball becomes dead in their possession.
- 2.15.3** The succeeding spot, as related to any non-player, unsportsmanlike, or dead foul, is where the ball would next be snapped if a foul had not occurred.
- 2.15.4** The spot of a player foul is where the foul occurs. If a player foul occurs out-of-bounds and during a down, the spot of the foul is at the intersection of the sideline and the yard line extended through the spot on which the foul occurs. (A non-player or unsportsmanlike foul is treated as dead ball foul and is administered from the succeeding spot).

## Section 16 Hurdling

- 2.16.1** Hurdling is the runner jumping so that both feet leave the ground at the same time. The runner may not hurdle to avoid being deflagged. The runner may step over an opponent who is lying prone.

## Section 17 Tripping

- 2.17.1** Tripping is the use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knee.

## Section 18 Timeouts

- 2.18.1** Timeouts are suspensions of play when any player requests a charged timeout or when an official suspends play. Each team is allowed 4 timeouts per non-overtime game, with no more than 3 timeouts used in one half. The duration of each charged timeout is 1 minute. Captains and team attendants may enter the field during timeouts.
- 2.18.2** Successive charged timeouts may be granted during the same dead-ball period. An official's timeout may follow a charged timeout if it is for the continuance of a coach-referee conference, or if safety is involved.

- 2.18.3** An official may suspend play with an official's timeout to administer a penalty, review a misapplied rule, or manage other game-related contingencies. Official's timeouts are discretionary.

## **Section 19 Ready For Play**

- 2.19.1** A ready for play signal is an indication by the referee that a snap or free kick may occur. It is a short blast of the whistle given after administration duties are complete, e.g., administering a penalty and/or after the ball is spotted for the succeeding down. The ready for play signal is given during a dead ball interval. A ball may not be legally snapped or free kicked until the ready for play signal.

## **Section 20 Force**

- 2.20.1** Force is a result of energy exerted by a player that provides initial movement of the ball. The term force is used only in connection with the goal line and in only one direction, i.e. from the field of play into the end zone. Force may result from a carry, fumble, kick, pass, or snap. Force is not a factor on grounded, muffed kicks in R's end zone; they are always a touchback regardless of who supplied the force.

## **Section 21 Possession**

- 2.21.1** A ball in player possession is a live ball held or controlled by a player after it has been handed or snapped to them, or after they have caught or recovered it.
- 2.21.2** A ball in team possession is a live ball which is in player possession or one which is loose following loss of such player possession. A live ball is always in possession of a team.
- 2.21.3** A change of possession occurs when the opponent gains player possession during the down.

## **Section 22 Rule**

- 2.22.1** A rule is one of the groups of regulations that govern the game. A game regulation, commonly called a rule, sometimes states what a player may do, but if there is no such statement for a given act (such as faking a pass), it is assumed that they may do what is not prohibited. In like manner, a game regulation sometimes states or implies that the ball is dead or that a foul is involved. If it does not, it is assumed that the ball is live and that no foul has occurred to affect the given situation. If a foul is mentioned, it is assumed that it is not part of a double or multiple fouls unless so stated or implied. Rules are enforced according to their intent and spirit.

## RULE 3 PERIODS, TIME FACTORS AND SUBSTITUTIONS

### Section 1 Length of Periods (Halves)

- 3.1.1** The game shall be played in two periods (hereinafter called “half”) of 25 minutes each. During the first 23 minutes of each half, the clock will run continuously, except that the clock will stop for player’s timeouts, official’s timeouts, and the 2-minute warning of each half.
- 3.1.2** During the first 23 minutes of each half following an official timeout, the game clock will start with the next ready for play signal. After player timeouts and the 2-minute warning of each half, the game clock will start with the next legal snap of the next timed down. During the last two minutes of each half, the game clock will run according to high school football rules (see 3.3.5 through 3.3.9). The clock will stop for player’s timeouts, official timeouts, penalties, after a first down, after an incomplete pass, after a play ends out of bounds, after a scoring play, or after a change of possession. In the case of a player’s timeout, an incomplete pass, a change of possession, a scoring play, or after a play ends out of bounds, the clock will start on the next legal snap of a timed down. If the clock is stopped for an official timeout or first down, the game clock will start again once the ball is spotted and the ready for play signal is given by the referee. A half may be shortened by agreement of opposing coaches and the Head Referee.
- COMMENT:** *If a timeout is called by a player after a touchdown is scored, the game clock will next start with the legal snap after the non-scoring team takes possession at the 15-yard line. The try is considered an untimed down. If an official stops the clock for an injury after a touchdown is scored, by rule, the clock will start on the ready for play during the try. If the clock reaches 2 minutes during a try, the play shall be allowed to continue but the clock shall stop, and the next legal snap shall occur with 2 minutes on the clock.*
- 3.1.3** An errant snap that touches the ground during the last two minutes of each half does not cause the clock to stop.
- 3.1.4** Games interrupted because of events beyond the control of the officials shall be continued from the point of interruption unless the teams agree to do otherwise. When weather conditions are construed to be hazardous, the officials are authorized to delay or suspend the game.
- 3.1.5** There will be a 10-minute intermission between the halves. By mutual agreement of all captains, the intermission may be reduced.

## Section 2 Starting and Ending Each Half

**3.2.1** Three minutes before the start of the game, the officials and team captains will meet at midfield. One team will arbitrarily be assigned heads and the other team will be assigned tails. The Head Referee will toss a coin to determine which team is permitted a choice of options. The options are: receiving the ball, kicking the ball, or choosing a goal to defend. The captain who loses the coin toss may choose from the remaining option(s). No more than three captains (one captain and two field captains) from each team may be present at the coin toss. The second half is a "mirror" half; i.e., teams will switch directions from the first half, and the team that received the ball to start the first half will kick the ball to start the second half.

**3.2.2** 15, 10, 5, and 2 minutes before the end of each half, and after every play during the last two minutes of each half, the clock operator will notify both teams and officials of the time remaining.

**3.2.3** If time for any period expires during a down (clock indicates 0:00), play shall continue until the down ends, even if a mechanical signal is allowed to sound.

**3.2.4** If a dead ball unsportsmanlike conduct or non-player foul occurs after either half ends, the penalty shall be measured from the succeeding spot.

**3.2.5** A period (half) must be extended by an untimed down if during the last timed down of the period, one of the following occurred:

- a) There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted, except for those fouls listed in 3.2.6.c.
- b) There was a double foul and fouls by each team are accepted.
- c) There was an inadvertent whistle.

If (a), (b) or (c) occurs during the untimed down, the procedure is repeated.

**3.2.6** A period shall not be extended by an untimed down if during the last timed down of the period, one of following occurs:

- a) When the defense fouls during a successful try and the offended team accepts the results of the play with enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding spot.
- b) When the half ends because of a runoff per rule 10.6.
- c) There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted for:
  - i. Unsportsmanlike fouls.
  - ii. Non-player fouls.
  - iii. Fouls that specify a loss of down.
  - iv. Fouls that are enforced on the subsequent kickoff.
  - v. Fouls for which enforcement, by rule, result in a safety.

**NOTE:** *The score is cancelled in the event of an accepted penalty that specifies a loss of down.*

**3.2.7** If a dead-ball foul occurs after time expires for any period, the penalty shall be measured from the succeeding spot.



## Section 3 Starting and Stopping the Clock

- 3.3.1** At the beginning of each half, the clock shall start when the ball is kicked.
- 3.3.2** For a free kick following a safety, the clock shall start when the kick is touched, other than first touching by K if inside the last two minutes of either half or a timeout has been used after the safety was scored.
- 3.3.3** Each team is permitted 4 timeouts per non-overtime game, with no more than 3 timeouts used in one half.
- 3.3.4** Timeouts will last 60 seconds; the ready for play signal will be given immediately after the timeout expires.
- 3.3.5** Whenever the game clock is stopped for a player's timeout or a two-minute warning, it will begin when the ball is legally snapped or kicked.
- 3.3.6** With two minutes or less remaining in either half, the clock shall start with the ready for play signal on a down beginning with a snap if the ball was stopped for any reason other than specified in Rule 3.3.7 or an untimed down:
  - a) For an official's timeout, other than when B is awarded a new series or either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
  - b) Because the ball has become dead following any foul provided:
    - i. There has been no charged timeout during the dead-ball interval.
    - ii. The down is not an extension of a period or try.
    - iii. The action which caused the down to end did not also cause the clock to be stopped.
  - c) Because of an inadvertent whistle
- 3.3.7** With two minutes or less remaining in either half, the clock shall start with the snap or when any punt is kicked if the clock was stopped because:
  - a) The ball goes out of bounds.
  - b) B or R is awarded a new series.
  - c) Either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
  - d) The ball becomes dead behind the goal line.
  - e) A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete.
  - f) A request for a charged timeout is granted.
  - g) A team attempts to consume time illegally.
  - h) The penalty for a delay of game foul due to the expiration of the play clock is accepted.

**3.3.8** With two minutes or less remaining in either half, the clock shall be stopped when:

- a) A first down is declared.
- b) The down ends following a foul.
- c) An official's timeout is taken.
- d) A charged timeout is granted.
- e) The period ends.
- f) The ball is out of bounds.
- g) A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete.
- h) A score or touchback occurs.
- i) An inadvertent whistle is sounded.

**3.3.9** If the game clock is stopped and will start on the referee's signal with three or more seconds remaining in the half, the offense may reasonably expect to throw the ball directly to the ground and have enough time for another play. With two seconds or one second on the game clock there is enough time for only one play.

## **Section 4 Ball Ready For Play and Delay**

**3.4.1** The ball is declared ready for play when, after it has been placed for a down or is back in the vicinity of the line of scrimmage, the referee gives the ready- for-play signal.

**3.4.2** Action or inaction that delays putting the ball in play is delay of game. This includes:

- a) Failing to snap the ball within 30 seconds after the ready for play signal.

**Delay of game – 5 yards, dead**

- b) Failing to attempt to punt the ball immediately after the punter receives the snap.

**Delay of game – 5 yards, live – and could include a correction of time remaining on game clock.**

- c) Unnecessarily carrying the ball after it becomes dead or intentionally consuming time when the down ends.

**Delay of game – 5 yards, dead**

- d) No change in the ruling occurs after a coach-referee conference during which the referee is requested to reconsider the application of a rule after all permissible timeouts have been used.

**Delay of game – 5 yards, dead**

- e) Failure of the offense to assist the officials in resetting the field when requested by an official.

**Delay of game – 5 yards, dead**

- f) Snapping or free kicking the ball before it is marked ready for play.

**(First Offense) – Delay of game – warning, dead**

***NOTE: A first offense warning inside the last minute of either half is subject to the 10-second subtraction from the game clock rule (10.6)***

**(Second or more offense) – Delay of game – 5 yards, dead**

- g) Any other conduct which unduly delays the game.

**Delay of game – 5 yards, dead**

- 3.4.3** Failure to play within 2 minutes after being ordered to do so by the referee shall result in forfeiture.

## **Section 5 Substitutions**

- 3.5.1** No substitutes shall enter during a down. Between downs, any number of eligible substitutes may replace players.

## **RULE 4 Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out-of-Bounds, & Deflagging**

### **Section 1 Putting the Ball in Play**

- 4.1.1** A snap shall put a ball in play for each scrimmage down. After putting a ball in play, the ball remains live until the down ends.
- 4.1.2** After a dead ball has been declared ready for play, it becomes live when it is legally snapped. The ball remains dead, and the down has not begun if a snap is attempted before the ball is ready for play or there is an illegal snap, other snap infraction, or a dead ball foul occurs.

### **Section 2 Dead Ball and End of the Down**

- 4.2.1** The ball becomes dead and the down is ended when:
    - a) a live ball goes out of bounds.
    - b) the runner goes out-of-bounds or allows any part of their body except hand or foot to touch the ground (note: the down does not end if a ball touches the ground while still in control of a player).
    - c) the runner is deflagged (note: if a runner's flag falls off accidentally i.e. without any defensive contact, they is not considered down until touched by a defender).
    - d) a pass is completed when the receiver is deflagged, after first touching the pass in flight prior to completion of the catch.
    - e) the runner's jersey becomes untucked and prevents deflagging.
    - f) any fumbled or muffed ball, including a punt or a free kick muffed in flight, touches the ground, except a muffed snap or a bad snap that touches the ground not in player possession during an announced punt.
      - i. A snap that touches the ground is placed at the original line of scrimmage, and that down counts, including snaps that touch the ground in the end zone or out of bounds behind the goal line.
      - ii. If a fumbled ball touches the ground, it is spotted where the ball touches the ground, unless the ball is fumbled forward, and then it is spotted where the runner loses possession, including forward fumbles that touch the ground in the end zone or out of bounds behind the goal line.
- NOTE:** Touching of a low punt by any player is ignored if the touching is in the expanded neutral zone or on K's side of the line of scrimmage (see rule 6.1.9).
- g) any forward pass (legal or illegal) is incomplete.
  - h) any loose ball is simultaneously caught by opposing players.
  - i) any member of the kicking team catches or possesses a kicked ball.

- j) any score occurs.
- k) a runner has less than three flags and is touched by an opponent between the shoulders and knees, including touching a runner whose three flags are not reasonably in proper position.
- l) an official inadvertently sounds their whistle.
- m) a player that started the down without a flag belt possesses a live ball.

**NOTE:** *The ball belongs to the team originally in possession after a simultaneous catch (see h above).*

**4.2.2** During a down, or during a down in which a penalty for a foul is declined, if an inadvertent whistle occurs while:

- a) A legal pass or snap is in flight or during a legal kick, the down shall be replayed.
- b) The ball is loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass or illegal kick, the team last in possession may choose to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down.
- c) The ball is in player possession, the team in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle may choose to either accept the results of play at the dead-ball spot or replay the down.

**4.2.3** During a down, if a live-ball foul occurs prior to an inadvertent whistle and the penalty is accepted, the penalty shall be administered as determined by the basic spot and takes precedence over inadvertent whistle administration.

### **Section 3 Dead Ball Spot, Out-of-Bounds and In-bounds Spots**

**4.3.1** The dead ball spot is the spot under the foremost point of the ball when it becomes dead by rule or is declared dead by an official.

**4.3.2** When a runner goes out-of-bounds, the in-bounds spot is fixed by the yard line through the foremost point of the ball at the time the runner crosses the plane of the sideline.

**4.3.3** If a ball is declared out-of-bounds and the out-of-bounds spot is between the goal lines, the ball shall be put in play at the in-bounds spot unless a forward pass or forward fumble is involved. If the out-of-bounds spot is behind a goal line, it is a safety or a touchback, unless a bad/muffed snap or forward fumble is involved. If the ball touches a pylon on the goal line, it is out-of-bounds behind the goal line.

**4.3.4** If a ball is declared out-of-bounds during a forward pass, the ball is returned to the spot of the snap if the pass is legal and to the spot of the pass if it is illegal and the penalty is accepted.

- 4.3.5** The post-scrimmage kick spot is the spot where the kick ends. R retains the ball after penalty enforcement from the post-scrimmage kick spot when a post-scrimmage foul occurs. Fouls by R behind the post-scrimmage kick spot are spot fouls.

## **Section 4 Deflagging**

- 4.4.1** The runner is considered “tackled” when a player clearly removes the runner’s flags. The player should hold the flags over their head at the spot of the deflagging.
- 4.4.2** A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag. It is best for the defensive player to attempt to grab only one flag at a time. Attempting to grab more than one flag at the same time may be considered holding if it appears that the deflagger is attempting to obstruct the forward progress of the runner.
- 4.4.3** The runner must keep flags on each side of their body at waist level and across the posterior. Flags not in proper position will cause a runner to be considered deflagged when touched. Allowances will be made for flag position shifts as a result of action that occurs during the down.
- 4.4.4** If a runner has less than three flags and is touched by an opponent between the shoulders and knees, the runner is considered to be deflagged. The ball becomes dead at the spot where the ball was when the runner is touched.
- 4.4.5** If a runner is wearing a towel, the runner shall be considered deflagged if the towel is clearly removed from the flag belt or waist. The ball becomes dead at the spot where the ball was when the towel was removed.

## RULE 5 DOWNS AND TEAM POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY

### Section 1 Series of Downs

- 5.1.1** A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs (a series) to advance to the line-to-gain. Any down may be repeated if provided for by rules (usually a penalty).
- 5.1.2** When a scrimmage down ends and after considering any live ball fouls, except unsportsmanlike fouls, with the ball in the field of play or out-of-bounds between the goal lines, a new series is to be awarded:
- a) to Team A if the ball belongs to A on or beyond the line-to-gain.
  - b) to Team B if the ball belongs to B at the end of any down.
  - c) to Team B if, at the end of the 4th down, the ball belongs to A behind the line-to-gain.
  - d) to the team in possession at the end of the down, if there is a change of possession during the down, unless the penalty is accepted for a foul which occurred before the change of possession.
  - e) to Team R if K punts during any scrimmage down or an unannounced punt goes out-of-bounds.
- 5.1.3** The referee shall have authority to correct the number of the next down prior to a new series of downs being awarded.

**NOTE:** The loss of down aspect of a penalty has no significance following a change of possession or if the line-to-gain is reached after enforcement. The forward-most point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor in establishing the next line-to-gain.

### Section 2 Down and Possession after Penalty

- 5.2.1** When a penalty is declined, the number of the next down is the same as if the foul had not occurred. If a double foul occurs during a down and fouls by each team are accepted, the number of the next down is the same as that of the down in which the foul occurred. After a distance penalty, the ball belongs to the team in possession at the time of the foul. Team possession may then change if a new series is awarded.
- 5.2.2** When a foul by A or B occurs during a scrimmage down and before any change of possession, and before a receiver is first to touch a scrimmage kick while it is beyond the line, the ball belongs to A after measurement. The number of the next down is the same as that of the down during which the foul occurred unless penalty acceptance includes a 1st down or loss of down or the measurement or the advance results in a 1st down.

**5.2.3** When a foul by A or B occurs prior to a scrimmage down or simultaneously with the snap, the number of the next down after measurement is the same as the number established before the foul occurred unless measurement for a foul by B results in a 1st down.

**5.2.4** Following a foul, a series of downs ends when:

- a) the acceptance of a that penalty includes the award of a 1st down.
- b) acceptance of a penalty that includes loss of down or declination of any penalty during 4th down leaves A in possession beyond the line-to-gain.
- c) declination of any penalty leaves B in possession.
- d) there is acceptance or declination of the penalty for any foul which occurs after team possession changes during a down.

After a series of downs ends, a new series, with the line-to-gain ten yards in advance of the ball is awarded unless a team scores. The 1st down is awarded to the team in possession when the foul occurs unless, as in c) and d), declining the penalty leaves the other team in possession.

### **Section 3     Line-to-Gain**

**5.3.1** The line to gain is 10 yards in advance of the ball's foremost point when a new series of downs is awarded. When a new series of downs is awarded, the penalties for all fouls (including non-player and unsportsmanlike) committed prior to the ready for play signal shall be administered before the line to gain is established. The line to gain then remains fixed until the series ends and a new line to gain is established. A new line to gain is established at the beginning of each half after the kickoff and at the end of the down in which a new series is awarded and after considering the effect of any act that occurs during the down.

**5.3.2** The edge of the line-to-gain beanbag marker closest to team A's goal line marks the line-to-gain.

**5.3.3** A ball touching the goal line (vertical) plane when it becomes dead is in the end zone.



## RULE 6 KICKING THE BALL

### Section 1 Kickoffs and Punts

**6.1.1** To start each half, a free-kick line, corresponding to a scrimmage line, is established for each team. These lines are always 10 yards apart. Unless moved by penalty, K's free-kick line is their 30-yard line; R's free-kick line is midfield.

**6.1.2** A free-kick shall be made from any point between the in-bounds lines on K's free-kick line.

**6.1.3** All kickers, except the ball holder, must be behind their free-kick line before and until the ball is kicked.

**Offsides – live ball foul, 5 yards, rekick or added to end of return**

**6.1.4** At least 4 R players must be behind and within 10-yards of their free-kick line until the ball is kicked.

**Offsides – live ball foul, 5 yards, rekick**

**6.1.5** On 4th down and before the ready for play signal, the captain(s) of Team A will be given the option to choose a protected punt; they must declare this option quickly and the referee will announce this decision to the opposing team. The decision is irrevocable, unless a team timeout is used; if the down is replayed, team will be provided a chance to change their option.

**6.1.6** If team chooses an announced punt, they must attempt a punt. Their team must be in scrimmage kick formation; an attempt to punt must occur immediately after the punter receives the snapped ball. All K players, except the kicker must be on their line of scrimmage. At least 4 team R players must be in the rush zone (expanded neutral zone) until after the ball is kicked. Minor encroachments will be tolerated.

**NOTE:** After a team declares a punt, they must punt the ball during that next down. If a team fails to punt the ball on the next down, reasonable allowance should be made to allow a team to replay the down, if that team is confused about their local league rules vs NGFFL rules. Any attempt to intentionally consume time by not punting the ball on the next down is unsportsmanlike conduct and could result in a forfeit.

**NOTE:** Team A may kick, unannounced, on any down, however the ball must be kicked behind the line of scrimmage.

**6.1.7** If any snap (muffed or bad) touches the ground while not in player possession during an announced punt, the ball remains live (see 4.2.1.e.), and ball must still be punted.

**6.1.8** Any R player may catch and advance any kick. If a kicked ball touches the ground after having been touched by R, it is dead at that spot and belongs to R.

**6.1.9** Touching of a low punt by any player is ignored if the touching is in the expanded neutral zone or on K's side of the line of scrimmage.

- 6.1.10** Team K may not gain possession of any kick, even if the kick is muffed by team R. Team K may only gain possession during a scrimmage kick down (punt) if the kick has ended by R establishing possession of the ball, then fumbling during the return, and K recovers that fumble in flight. If any K player touches a kicked ball before R touches the ball, the ball remains live and Team R shall have the choice of taking the result of the play or taking possession at the spot of first touching by K.
- 6.1.11** When any kick is out-of-bounds between the goal lines or becomes dead in-bounds between the goal lines while no player is in possession or in-bounds anywhere while opponents are in joint possession, the ball is awarded to R. Following a punt that goes out-of-bounds without being touched, the ball will be put in play at the in-bounds spot where the ball crossed the out-of-bounds line. Following a free-kick (which starts each half or follows a safety) that goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines untouched by a team R player, R will choose between: 1) putting the ball in play 20 yards beyond K's free kick line; 2) putting the ball in play 5-yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to team R; or 3) electing for a re-kick by K after a 5-yard penalty is enforced.
- 6.1.12** Any kicked ball remains live if it touches the ground and remains in-bounds beyond the line of scrimmage. It may be advanced by any R player or becomes dead if any K player gains possession of the grounded ball. Any grounded, kicked ball that touches the ground behind the line of scrimmage becomes dead and belongs to R.
- 6.1.13** While any kick is in flight beyond the line of scrimmage:
- a) K shall not touch the ball or R, unless blocked into the ball or R, or to ward off a blocker.
  - b) K shall not obstruct R's path to the ball.

**Kick Catch Interference – 10 yds**

**EXCEPTION:** K may catch, touch, muff, or bat a kick in flight beyond the neutral zone if no R player is in position to catch the ball.

**NOTE:** R must be given an unhampered opportunity to catch the ball. Usually, an individual distance of two yards is desirable.

**NOTE:** For kick catch interference, R may accept a 10-yard penalty from the previous spot and replay the down; or they may choose an awarded catch after enforcement of a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul.

## Section 2 Kicks Dead in the End Zone

- 6.2.1** Any kick muffed in flight that touches the ground while the kicked ball is on or behind R's goal line is dead and becomes a touchback. If any kick becomes dead in K's end zone, it is a safety. **NOTE:** K is team in possession during a kick. A kick ends when a player gains possession or when the ball becomes dead.
- 6.2.2** If a kick becomes dead in K's end zone and the force is the kick, it is a safety if the kick is out-of-bounds or K has possession; it is a touchdown if R catches the kick or has possession.

- 6.2.3** Any kicked ball that becomes dead in R's end zone or goes out-of-bounds behind R's goal line, untouched by R, is a touchback.
- 6.2.4** If a live ball becomes dead in the possession of a player on or behind their own goal line, or if a kick becomes dead by rule, and K is responsible for the ball being there, it is a touchback.
- 6.2.5** The ball becomes dead when it is in the end zone and either comes to rest or no R player attempts to recover it (touchback).
- 6.2.6** If the ball comes to rest inbounds and no player attempts to possess it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at the dead-ball spot.

## RULE 7 SNAPPING, HANDING AND PASSING THE BALL

### Section 1 Before the Snap

- 7.1.1** No player shall encroach upon the neutral zone after the ball is declared ready for play and touch the ball or an opponent. After the snapper has made their final adjustment of the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the plane of the line of scrimmage, except for the snapper's right to be over the ball, and touch the ball or an opponent. (**Exception:** For announced punting situations, minor encroachments will be tolerated.)

**Encroachment (dead ball foul) – 5 yards**

- 7.1.2** After the ball is ready for play and until it is snapped, no defensive player may touch the ball or any Team A player.

**Encroachment (dead ball foul) – 5 yards**

- 7.1.3** No offensive or defensive player shall be in the neutral zone or on the opponent's side of the neutral zone at the time of the snap, except for the snapper's right to be over the ball.

**Offsides (live ball foul) – 5 yards**

- 7.1.4** After the ball is ready for play and before the snap, no false start shall be made by any A player. It is a false start if:

- a shift or feigned charge simulates action at the snap.
- any act is clearly intended to cause an opponent to encroach.
- The offensive team never coming to a one-second stop prior to the snap after the ball is ready for play. This is an illegal shift that converts to a false start.

**False Start (dead ball) – 5 yards**

**NOTE:** If a false start causes B to encroach, only the false start is penalized. If B moves into the neutral zone and causes A to false start, only the encroachment is penalized.

- 7.1.5** The snapper may make preliminary adjustments to the ball before assuming a set position and before Team A lineman have assumed positions on their line. During these preliminary adjustments, the snapper may slightly lift the ball off of the ground for lateral rotation without changing the location of the ball, tilt the ball, or remove their hand(s).

- 7.1.6** After gripping the ball following preliminary adjustment or prior to the snap and with the ball resting on the ground with the long axis at right angles to the line of scrimmage, the snapper may not:

- fail to clearly pause before the snap.

**Snap Infraction (dead ball foul) – 5 yards**

- b) abruptly remove both hands from the ball or slide their hand(s) along the ball.

**Snap Infraction (dead ball foul) – 5 yards**

- c) make any movement which simulates a snap.

**Snap Infraction (dead ball foul) – 5 yards**

- d) lift or move the ball in any way, other than a legal snap.

**Snap Infraction (dead ball foul) – 5 yards**

An illegal snap or other snap infraction causes the ball to remain dead.

**NOTE:** *Following the snapper's preliminary adjustments and prior to the snap, the snapper may take their hand(s) off the ball, but only if this does not simulate the start of a play.*

## Section 2 Position and Action During the Snap

- 7.2.1** There are no restrictions to the number of Team A that must be on the line of scrimmage.

- 7.2.3** Only one A player may be in motion at the snap and then only if such motion is not toward the line of scrimmage.

**Illegal Motion (live ball foul) – 5 yards**

- 7.2.4** After a huddle or shift, all Team A players shall come to an absolute stop and remain stationary, simultaneously, without pronounced movement of hands, feet, head, or body for at least one second before the snap.

**Illegal Shift (live ball foul) – 5 yards**

- 7.2.5** A legal snap shall be such that the ball leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches any player or the ground. A scrimmage down must start with a legal snap. An illegal snap causes the ball to remain dead.

**Illegal Snap (dead ball foul) – 5 yards**

- 7.2.6** At the snap, Team A players on the line of scrimmage must have both feet outside the outside foot of the player next to them.

- 7.2.7** No offensive or defensive player shall be in the neutral zone at the time of the snap.

## Section 3 Handing and Advancing the Ball

- 7.3.1** Any player may hand the ball backward at any time.

- 7.3.2** During a down, Team A player may hand the ball forward only behind the line of scrimmage to a teammate. There may be an unlimited number of forward handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. Team A may not hand the ball forward beyond the line of scrimmage. No player may hand the ball forward after a change of possession.

**Illegal Forward Handing – 5 yards & loss of down**

- 7.3.3** In each possession, Team A may use only one scrimmage running play, as defined in 2.10.2. Any number of backward passes and hand-offs may be used before the runner crosses the line of scrimmage. If a shovel or a screen pass is used, its initial direction determines whether it is a forward or backward pass.
- 7.3.4** If more than one scrimmage running play is used during a possession, play shall continue until the ball becomes dead by rule.
- Illegal Procedure – 5 yards from previous spot & loss of down**
- NOTE:** This penalty will be enforced from the previous spot unless the ball becomes dead with Team A in possession more than 5-yards behind the previous spot. If the down ends with Team A in possession of the ball more than 5-yards behind the previous spot, the ball is then placed at the dead ball spot and the down counts.
- NOTE:** Only one scrimmage running play is allowed per possession; the other downs must include a forward pass.
- 7.3.5** If a change of possession occurs during an illegal (second or subsequent) scrimmage running play, a new series will be awarded.

## Section 4 Fumble and Backward Pass

- 7.4.1** During any down, any player in possession may make a backward pass or may lose possession through a fumble. There is no limit to the number of backward passes that may be made, including backward passes beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 7.4.2** Any player that catches a fumble or backward pass before it hits the ground may advance. If a fumble or backward pass hits the ground, it becomes dead and is spotted where the ball touches the ground. If a fumble touches the ground or goes out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble, it is spotted where the runner loses possession.
- 7.4.3** If a backward pass or fumble goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines or becomes dead in-bounds or is caught simultaneously by opposing players, the ball belongs to the passing or fumbling team unless lost after 4th down.
- 7.4.4** If a fumble or backward pass is out-of-bounds and becomes dead behind a goal line, the ball belongs to the team defending that goal and the result is either a touchback or safety, except a forward fumble from the field of play into an opponent's end zone is returned to the spot where the runner lost possession.

## Section 5 Forward Pass

Forward Pass Classification:

- a) **Legal Forward Pass:** From in or behind the neutral zone
- b) **Illegal Forward Pass:** (Ball remains live until declared dead by rule) From a point beyond B's side of the neutral zone or after team possession has changed during the down
- c) **Completed Forward Pass:** Pass caught by any player or pass simultaneously caught by opposing players (ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing team)

- d) **Incomplete Forward Pass:** Pass which touches the ground; pass which goes out of bounds; pass possessed by a player who is in the air but first touches the ground out-of-bounds (except in force-out situation defined in Rule 7.5.5.)

**7.5.1** It is a legal forward pass, if during a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a player of Team A throws the ball with both feet of the passer on their side of the line of scrimmage when the ball is released. Only one legal forward pass (including a forward shuffle or screen pass) is permitted per down.

**7.5.2** An illegal forward pass includes:

- a) a pass from B's side of the line of scrimmage.

**Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards & loss of down**

- b) a pass after team possession has changed during the down.

**Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards & loss of down**

- c) any forward pass after a scrimmage running play has been established.

**Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards & loss of down**

- d) a second or subsequent forward pass thrown during a down.

**Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards & loss of down**

- e) a pass caught by the passer, except when deflected by an opponent. The passer may not intentionally throw the ball at an opponent to facilitate catching their pass.

**Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards & loss of down**

**NOTE:** *Intentional grounding is allowed.*

**7.5.3** If the illegal forward pass as described in (a), (c), or (d) above occurs within one yard of the line of scrimmage, it is a 5-yard penalty and loss of down but does not count as the team's scrimmage running play for that series. However, if the illegal forward pass clearly occurs beyond 1 yard from the line of scrimmage or if the illegal forward pass – as described in (c) above – is thrown after the ball has been advanced more than one yard beyond the line of scrimmage, it shall count as the team's scrimmage running play for that series.

**NOTE:** *If an illegal forward pass occurs during a down, but prior to there was a legal forward pass during the down, there is no impact to the scrimmage running play being open/closed ("the run" being used or not).*

**7.5.4** If a forward pass (legal or illegal) is complete, the ball may be advanced when caught by any player. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by opponents, the ball comes dead and belongs to the passer's team.

**7.5.5** If a forward pass (legal or illegal) is incomplete, the ball becomes dead when the pass touches the ground or goes out-of-bounds. It is also incomplete when a player in the air possesses the pass and alights so that their first contact with the ground or with anything other than a player or game official is on or outside a boundary (first foot needs to be in-bounds). When contact by an opponent causes a receiver, who is airborne, to first contact the ground out-of-bounds, the pass is complete if the covering

official judges that the receiver would have landed in-bounds if no contact had occurred. To complete the catch, the airborne player must have possession of the ball when they touch the ground. When an incompletion occurs, the down counts unless the pass is after a series has ended. If the pass is legal and incomplete, the passer's team next snaps the ball (unless lost after a 4th down) from the spot of the previous snap. If the penalty for an illegal pass is accepted, measurement is from the spot of such pass. If the offended team declines the distance penalty, it has the choice of having the down counted at the spot of the illegal pass; or if the illegal pass is caught or intercepted, of having the ball put in play as determined by the action which followed the catch.

**7.5.6** Pass eligibility rules apply on a legal forward pass. All Team A and Team B players are eligible.

**7.5.7** No player of A or B shall contact and interfere with an opponent beyond the line of scrimmage during a legal forward pass play. For A, the restriction begins at the time of the snap, and for B, when the ball leaves the passer's hand. The restriction does apply even if the pass does not cross the line of scrimmage. It is interference if any player who is beyond the neutral zone contacts and interferes with an opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch, or bat a catchable ball.

**Pass Interference – 10 yards & automatic first down for A, if by B, and see Note.**

- a) Prohibited acts by both teams while the ball is in the air include, but are not limited to:
  - i) Contact by a player who is not playing the ball that restricts the opponent's opportunity to make the catch;
  - ii) Playing through the back of an opponent in an attempt to make a play on the ball;
  - iii) Grabbing an opponent's arm(s) in such a manner that restricts their opportunity to catch a pass;
  - iv) Extending an arm across the body of an opponent, thus restricting their ability to catch a pass, regardless of whether the player committing such act is playing the ball;
  - v) Cutting off the path of an opponent by making contact with them, without playing the ball;
  - vi) Hooking an opponent in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that it causes the opponent's body to turn prior to the ball arriving; or
  - vii) Initiating contact with an opponent by shoving or pushing off, thus creating separation.
- b) Permissible acts by both teams while the ball is in the air include, but are not limited to:
  - i) Incidental contact by an opponent's hands, arms, or body when both players are competing for the ball, or neither player is looking for the ball. If there is any question whether contact is incidental, the ruling shall be no interference.
  - ii) Inadvertent tangling of feet when both players are playing the ball or neither player is playing the ball.



- iii) Contact that would normally be considered pass interference, but the pass is clearly uncatchable by the involved players, except as pertaining to blocking downfield by the offense.
- iv) Laying a hand on an opponent that does not restrict them in an attempt to make a play on the ball.

**NOTE:** It is pass interference only if a legal, catchable forward pass is involved.

**NOTE:** If Pass Interference by any player is conspicuously intentional or unsportsmanlike, their team may be penalized another 10 yards. If the foul is flagrant, (tackling a receiver before the ball is caught), the offending player may be ejected.

### EXCEPTIONS TO INTERFERENCE

1. Unavoidable contact occurs when two or more players are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch, or bat a catchable ball.
2. If the ball has been touched by A or B, restrictions end for all players.
3. If contact on A is immediately made by B and contact does not continue beyond the expanded neutral zone.

**NOTE:** There are no pass interference restrictions during a scrimmage running play.

- 7.5.8** The passer may not pass to themselves. They may catch their own forward pass if the ball first touches an opponent. The passer may not deliberately pass to an opponent to facilitate catching their own pass.

**Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards & loss of down**

- 7.5.9** During a down in which a forward pass is thrown, no B player who is beyond the expanded neutral zone may contact an opponent or obstruct an opponent's opportunity to move freely about the field.

**Illegal Pass-Play Contact – 5 yards**

- 7.5.10** During a down in which a forward pass is not thrown and while the quarterback is dropped back and attempting to find an open receiver, no B player who is beyond the expanded neutral zone may contact an opponent or obstruct an opponent's opportunity to move freely about the field. This restriction ends when the quarterback hands off to a teammate or moves laterally (scrambles) from the initial drop-back position.

**Illegal Pass-Play Contact – 5 yards**

**NOTE:** A defender must use a legal block throughout the play.

- 7.5.11** All illegal pass play contact and pass interference restrictions end when a legal forward pass is touched by A or B.

## RULE 8 SCORING PLAYS AND TOUCHBACKS

### Section 1 Value of Scores

- 8.1.1** The game is won by the team that accumulates the most points.
- a) **Touchdown:** 6 points
  - b) **Safety** (points awarded to opponent): 2 points
  - c) **Successful Try-For-Point** (from either run or pass)
    - i. From the 10-yard line: 2 points
    - ii. From the 5-yard line: 1 point
  - d) **Safety on Try-For-Point** (awarded to opponent): 1 point

### Section 2 Touchdown

- 8.2.1** Possession of a live ball in the opponent's end zone is always a touchdown.
- a) It is a touchdown when the runner advances from the field of play so that the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line.
  - b) It is a touchdown when a loose ball is caught by a player while the ball is on or behind their opponent's goal line.
- 8.2.2** If an opponent of the scoring team fouls during a down in which a touchdown is scored and there is no change of possession; or there was a change of possession and the opponent fouled after the final change of possession; the following rules apply:
- a) Any foul that carries a 5-yard penalty is automatically declined.
  - b) The offended team may choose to enforce the penalty for any other foul on the try or on the subsequent possession following the try.
- 8.2.3** If either team fouls following a down in which a touchdown is scored and prior to the initial ready for play signal on the try, the offended team may choose to enforce the penalty on the try or on the subsequent possession following the try.

### Section 3 Try-for-Point

- 8.3.1** After a touchdown, the scoring team is permitted a try-for-point where the ball is snapped from B's 5- or 10-yard line (as indicated by A).

**EXCEPTION:** *If a touchdown is scored during the last down of the game during championship bracket play, the try-for-point shall not be attempted unless the point(s) could affect the outcome of the game. All tries-for-point scored during regulation play (non-overtime play) shall be attempted during pool play.*

- 8.3.2** The try-for-point begins when the ball is ready for play. It ends when the ball becomes dead or either team scores.
- 8.3.3** During a try-for-point, Team A may score 2 points from a play originating on the 10-yard line, or 1 point from a play originating from the 5-yard line. Either a running play or a pass play may be used to score during the try.
- 8.3.4** During a try-for-point, a team may score 1 point for a safety by their opponent under rules governing play at other times during the game.
- 8.3.5** Team A may change their decision to attempt a 1- or 2-point play after any team timeout is used. The defense shall be given notice of the decision and shall be allowed ample time for player substitution, if necessary.
- 8.3.6** If during a successful try Team A commits a loss of down foul, no point(s) are scored and there is no replay.
- 8.3.7** If an opponent of the scoring team fouls during a down in which a try for point is scored and there is no change of possession; or there was a change of possession and the opponent fouled after the final change of possession; the following rules apply:
- a) Any foul that carries a 5-yard penalty is automatically declined.
  - b) The offended team may choose to enforce the penalty for any other foul on the try or on the subsequent possession following the try.
- 8.3.8** Team A is given the choice of accepting the penalty and replaying the down following measurement or accepting the results of the play and having the penalty administered from the succeeding spot. If A fouls (with no loss of down) during a successful try, the down is replayed after measurement.
- 8.3.9** If during an unsuccessful try-for-point, a foul by A occurs, there is no replay. If B fouls, the down is replayed after measurement.
- 8.3.10** If either team commits a dead ball foul prior to the try-for-point, the down is played after measurement.
- 8.3.11** If a double foul occurs during a try where there is no change of possession and fouls by each team are accepted, or both teams foul before a change of possession, the down is replayed.
- 8.3.12** During a try, if either team fouls after a change of possession:
- a) Distance penalties against either team are declined by rule.
    - i. Exception: If there's a foul by A that directly affects the runner (holding, personal foul, tripping, etc.), then team B shall be awarded an attempt to try for 2 points from A's 10-yard line.
    - ii. Exception: If there's a foul by A that doesn't affect the runner, the penalty is assessed from the succeeding spot (the 15-yard line on the start of the next possession).
  - b) A score by a team committing a foul during the down is canceled.
  - c) If both teams foul during the down and Team B had not fouled before the change of possession, the fouls offset, the down is not repeated, and the try is over.

- 8.3.13** If team B intercepts a pass or fumble during the try and returns it for a touchdown, they score 2 points.
- 8.3.14** Any foul committed by team B after intercepting a pass or fumble in flight during a try negates any score by team B and the try is not repeated.
- 8.3.15** After the try-for-point, the non-scoring team takes possession of the ball at their 15-yard line, unless that spot is moved after enforcement of a penalty carried over from the previous touchdown scoring play or the try to the succeeding spot.

## **Section 4 Force, Safety and Touchback**

- 8.4.1** Responsibility for forcing the ball from the field of play across a goal line is attributed to the player who carries, snaps, passes, fumbles, or kicks the ball. The muffing or batting of a pass, kick, or fumble in flight is not considered a new force because the original force has not been spent.
- 8.4.2** It is a safety when: (also see Rule 6.2)
  - a) A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across their own goal line and it becomes dead there in their team's possession;
 

**EXCEPTION: WHEN A TEAM B PLAYER INTERCEPTS A FORWARD PASS OR CATCHES A KICK BETWEEN THEIR 5-YARD LINE AND THE GOAL LINE AND THEIR ORIGINAL MOMENTUM CARRIES THEM IN TO THE END ZONE, WHERE THE BALL IS DECLARED DEAD IN THEIR TEAM'S POSSESSION OR IT GOES OUT-OF-BOUNDS IN THE END ZONE, THE BALL BELONGS TO TEAM B AT THE SPOT WHERE THE PASS WAS INTERCEPTED OR THE KICK WAS CAUGHT.**
  - b) A player who is either in the field of play or in their end zone, forces a loose ball from the field of play to or across their own goal line by their kick, pass, fumble, snap, muff, or bat and provided that the ball becomes dead there in their team's possession or the ball is out-of-bounds when it becomes dead on or behind their goal line. This does not apply to a legal forward pass that becomes incomplete;
  - c) A player on offense commits any foul for which the penalty is accepted, and measurement is from a spot in their end zone or throws an illegal forward pass from their end zone and the penalty is declined in a situation which leaves them in possession at the spot of the illegal pass and with the ball having been forced into the end zone by the passing team.
- 8.4.3** It is a touchback when:
  - a) any kick in flight is muffed and next touches the ground behind R's goal line (also see Rule 6.2);
  - b) B intercepts a forward pass in their end zone and the ball becomes dead there in B's possession (before B leaves the end zone);
  - c) any kicked ball becomes dead in R's end zone or goes out-of-bounds behind R's goal line, untouched by R;

- d) when a live ball becomes dead in the possession of a player on or behind their own goal line, or if a kick becomes dead by rule, and K is responsible for the ball being there.

**8.4.4** The team whose goal line is involved shall put the ball in play by snap from its 15-yard line after a touchback and by a free kick from its 10-yard line after a safety.

**8.4.5** If a penalty resulting in a safety occurs on the last timed down of a period, the period is not extended.

## **Section 5     Mercy Rule**

**8.5.1** If a team is ahead by 36 or more points with five minutes or less remaining during a game, or a team is ahead by 25 or more points with two minutes or less remaining during a game, then the game is over.

## **Section 6     Tie Games and Overtime Procedure**

**8.6.1** If, at the end of the game, the teams have identical scores, the tie will be resolved by one or more series of unlimited downs. All game rules apply except:

- a) The line-to-gain will be established after any dead-ball penalties that are carried over from regulation are enforced, using the line-to-gain beanbag marker, which shall operate in the same manner as in regulation play.
- b) During overtime play, no try will be made if the winner of the game has been determined.
- c) Only non-player, unsportsmanlike, dead ball fouls or “major” (10-yard) defensive fouls during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try-for-point are penalized from the succeeding spot.
- d) If the defensive team gains possession of a live ball, the ball becomes dead immediately and the down and series has ended for the offensive team.
- e) Any unused second half timeouts cannot be used in overtime.
- f) Each team shall be permitted one timeout during each overtime period (a series for A and a series for B).

When the score is tied at the end of the game, the referee will instruct both teams to return to their respective team boxes. There will be a 3-minute intermission during which both teams may confer with their coaches. All officials and team captains will meet at midfield for the coin toss after the intermission.

The winner of the toss will be given a choice of defense, offense or designating the end of the field to start the overtime. The loser of the toss will choose from the remaining options. All overtime periods are played at the same end of the field.

Each team will be permitted to use one timeout during each overtime period (a series for A and a series for B). In overtime, each team is guaranteed one possession. Each possession starts at the opponent’s 20-yard-line. Series alternate until one team has scored more points than the other. If after two possessions each, the score is still tied, teams must go for 2 points after scoring a touchdown.

The possessions alternate as follows: Series 1-3-5 etc.: Team A, followed by Team B; Series 2-4-6 etc.: Team B, followed by Team A. The team scoring the greater number of points in the overtime plus those accumulated in regulation play shall be declared the winner.

Note: An overtime is considered a new series. Therefore, no more than one scrimmage running play may be used per overtime series.

## RULE 9 CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS

### Section 1 Helping the Runner

- 9.1.1 An offensive player shall not push, pull, or lift the runner.

**Assisting the Runner – 5 yards**

### Section 2 Illegal Use of Hands and Holding and Blocking

- 9.2.1 An offensive player shall not use a blocking technique that

- a) is not permissible by Rule 2.3.1.;

**Illegal Use of Hands – 5 yards**

- b) includes grasping or encircling any teammate to form interlocked interference;

**Interlocked Interference – 5 yards**

- c) uses hands, arms, or legs to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent;

**Holding – 5 yds**

- d) includes blocking beyond the line of scrimmage

- i. prior to a forward pass being thrown, or

- ii. while the pass is in the air, if the block occurs in the vicinity of the player to whom the pass is thrown.

**Offensive Pass Interference – 10 yds**

- 9.2.2 The runner may not grasp a teammate.

**Illegal Use of Hands – 5 yards**

- 9.2.3 The defensive player shall not use a technique which

- a) is not permissible by Rule 2.3.1.

**Illegal Use of Hands / Illegal blocking / Holding – 5 yards**

- b) use their hands to add momentum to charge of a teammate.

**Illegal Use of Hands – 5 yards**

- c) use their hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle, or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent.

**Holding – 5 yards**

- 9.2.4** A defensive player may not intentionally push or block a runner who is near the sideline. A defensive player shall not intentionally hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when trying to remove their flag (this includes tackling and body blocking). Grabbing for more than one flag by a defensive player may be considered illegal blocking if it appears that the deflagger is attempting to obstruct the forward progress of the runner.

**Holding the Runner – 10 yards**

- 9.2.5** No player shall intentionally deflag a player who is not a runner before the player receives the ball.

**Illegal Deflagging – 10 yards**

**EXCEPTION:** *It is not a foul for illegal deflagging if a defensive player deflags a receiver who has touched a forward pass. Following the deflagging, the ball becomes dead once that receiver completes that catch.*

- 9.2.6** No player shall obstruct an opponent with an extended (non-flexed at the elbow aka stiff-arm) hand and arm.

**Personal Foul – 10 yards**

- 9.2.7** The runner shall not:

- a) use their hand or arm, either intentionally or accidentally, to obstruct a defender's access to their flags, including but not limited to dropping the arm below the waist or using a stiff-arm.

**Flag Guarding – 5 yards, loss of down**

- b) jump or hurdle to avoid being deflagged.

**Flag Guarding – 5 yards, loss of down**

- c) lower their head more than halfway between the waist and shoulders to avoid being deflagged.

**Flag Guarding – 5 yards, loss of down**

- d) dive forward in an attempt to gain yardage and/or avoid being deflagged.

**Flag Guarding – 5 yards, loss of down**

**NOTE:** *A runner may spin to avoid being deflagged.*

- 9.2.8** A runner shall not charge into a potential deflagger.

**Personal Foul – 10 yards**

- 9.2.9** A player shall not clip an opponent.

**Clipping – 10 yards**

- 9.2.10** A player shall not block an opponent below the waist.

**Blocking Below the Waist – 10 yds**



**NOTE:** Blocking an opponent from behind is not necessarily blocking in the back or clipping. The intent of the blocking in the back and clipping infractions is to protect players from an unanticipated and unsafe block from the rear. A player turning their back on an opponent or slowing down in front of an opponent to “draw” a clipping penalty will usually be unsuccessful. Additionally, blocking from the rear on the initial line charge and immediately after the snap is not clipping.

- 9.2.11 A player shall not trip an opponent.

**Tripping – 10 yards**

- 9.2.12 The center must be given ample opportunity, before being blocked, to regain their balance after snapping the ball.

**Personal foul – 10 yards**

- 9.2.13 Two-on-one blocking is limited to the expanded neutral zone and behind it.

**Illegal Blocking – 10 yards**

**NOTE:** The only way to “tackle” a runner is by deflagging. Any contact with a runner must be an attempt to deflag.

### Section 3 Illegal Personal Contact

- 9.3.1 No player shall commit a flagrant foul. These include: striking an opponent with a fist, locked hand, forearm, elbow, knee or foot or wearing any illegal equipment that is unsafe to opponents.

**Flagrant Personal Fouls – 10 yards & automatic first down for A, if by B, plus mandatory disqualification for the rest of the game & the team’s next game**

**NOTE:** Fighting causes all fighters to be ejected regardless of who started the fight.

**NOTE:** Any single flagrant foul results in mandatory disqualification. A team may forfeit a game if it allows a disqualified player to become a player. Ejected players must leave the playing area.

- 9.3.2 No player or non-player shall physically or verbally afflict an official.

a) Persons subject to the rules (everyone in the team area, players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, cheerleaders, spectators and other persons affiliated with the teams or institutions) shall not intentionally contact – in a manner such as a shove or a push – or strike an official in an offensive, disrespectful, or unsportsmanlike manner.

b) When in question, the act is considered a flagrant harrying or intimidation.

**Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 10 yards & automatic first down for A, if by B, & disqualification (see Rules 9.3.7 & 9.3.8)**

**NOTE:** Violations will be penalized if they occur anywhere in the playing area/stadium in which the officials have jurisdiction.

**9.3.3** No player shall:

- a) tackle a runner, charge into an opponent or make any other physical contact or verbal affliction that an official determines to be unnecessary and incites roughness. The runner shall not deliberately run into a defensive player;
- b) be positioned on the shoulders of a teammate to gain an advantage;
- c) extend the knee to meet a blocker;
- d) block an opponent who is clearly out of the play or after the ball is clearly dead.

**Personal Fouls – 10 yards & automatic first down for A, if by B, & see Note**

**NOTE:** At the official's discretion, a player may be ejected for 4 or 8 scrimmage plays for those acts considered major but not flagrant.

- 9.3.4** Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer or contacting a passer's arm and/or hand during or after a legal forward pass. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as they are considered out of the play after the pass. Roughing the passer restrictions only apply during a legal forward pass. It is not a foul for roughing the passer if a team B player/rusher is making an attempt to deflag the passer and the passer's passing motion makes contact with the team B player or if the referee judges that the passer intentionally passes into any team B player.

**Roughing the Passer – 10 yards and an automatic first down**

**9.3.5** Defensive players shall not run into or rough the kicker.

- a) Roughing is a live-ball personal foul that endangers the kicker.
- b) Running into the kicker is a live-ball foul that occurs when the kicker is displaced from their kicking position but is not roughed.
- c) Incidental contact with a kicker or holder is not a foul.
- d) When a defensive player's contact against the kicker or holder is caused by an opponent's block (legal or illegal), there is no foul for running into or roughing.
- e) A player who makes contact with the kicker after touching the kick is not charged with running into or roughing the kicker.
- f) When a player other than one who blocks a scrimmage kick runs into or roughs the kicker or holder, it is a foul.

**Running Into the Kicker – 10 yards, plus an automatic first down.**

**Roughing the Kicker – 10 yards and an automatic first down. Also possible ejection for 4 or 8 scrimmage plays, and possible disqualification.**

- 9.3.6** Fighting with another player requires:
- a) disqualification from the current game,
  - b) disqualification from the team's next scheduled game,
  - c) possible current and future tournament disqualification, to be determined by the NGFFL Participant Conduct Committee.
- 9.3.7** Misconduct towards an official requires:
- a) disqualification from the current game,
  - b) disqualification from the team's next scheduled game.
- 9.3.8** Striking an official requires:
- a) current tournament disqualification,
  - b) possible future tournament disqualification, to be determined by the NGFFL Participant Conduct Committee.
- 9.3.9** When a player is disqualified from the game due to a flagrant personal foul in any national or regional tournament that is using all or part of the NGFFL rulebook, the NGFFL Participant Conduct Committee has the authority to review for possible additional sanctions before the next scheduled game or tournament. This review could include:
- a) medical records/history,
  - b) interviewing team captains, team players, city leaders, or observers of the foul,
  - c) interviewing officials that were officiating the game or officials that were observing the game in which the foul occurred,
  - d) reviewing any video evidence of the foul that may exist,
  - e) any other methods to gather information about the foul or a player's history that the NGFFL Participant Conduct Committee may deem necessary to make an informed decision.
- 9.3.10** Additional sanctions for committing a flagrant personal foul in any national or regional tournament that is using all or part of the NGFFL rulebook could include suspension or expulsion from future Gay Bowl tournament games or the entire Gay Bowl/NGFFL tournament.

## **Section 4     Non-contact Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Players**

- 9.4.1** No player may act in an unsportsmanlike manner during the game or intermission. Examples include:
- a) abusive or insulting language or gestures,
  - b) baiting acts or words or insignia worn which engenders ill will,
  - c) using disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with A's signal or movements,

- d) intentionally kicking at any player, official, or the ball (other than a legal kick) or intentionally swinging an arm or fist at any player or official,
- e) leaving the field between plays or using a “hide out play” by placing a player or players near the sideline to gain an advantage unless replaced or unless with the permission of the referee,
- f) failing to place the ball, after it becomes dead, on the ground or immediately return it to a nearby official,
- g) spiking the ball or throwing the ball in the air or from the field of play,
- h) attempting to substitute a suspended player,
- i) taunting an opponent.

**Unsportsmanlike Acts – 10 yards & automatic first down for A, if by B, (enforced from the succeeding spot) & possible disqualification from game for (a) & (d)**

**9.4.2** A second unsportsmanlike conduct foul with a 10-yard penalty results in disqualification.

**9.4.3** When any non-player that is on a team sideline commits an unsportsmanlike conduct foul, the first foul of the game will be a team unsportsmanlike conduct foul (see 2.14.1.c). Any second or subsequent non-player unsportsmanlike conduct foul will be applied to the coaches and captains of the team, and could lead to disqualification. When a non-player commits a second unsportsmanlike conduct foul during a game, they must leave the sideline and playing area, or the team shall forfeit the game.

**9.4.4** Hate Speech or Harassment is behavior aimed at a person’s sex, gender identification, race, religion, creed, age, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or disability that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Hate Speech or Harassment may be verbal, non-verbal, or physical acts during all competitions.

**9.4.5** When contest officials witness hate speech or an act of harassment during a game, the alleged offender shall be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct, including an immediate ejection from the current game. At an NGFFL-sponsored tournament, the incident shall be automatically referred to the Participant Conduct Committee for review.

## Section 5    **Illegal Substitution**

**9.5.1** Any number of eligible substitutes may replace players, under the following conditions:

- a) The substitution must occur between downs. No substitute shall enter during a down.

**Illegal Substitution (live ball foul – 5 yards)**

- b) A replaced player must be off of the field before the ball becomes live.

**Illegal Substitution (live ball foul – 5 yards)**

- c) A replaced player must begin to leave the field within three seconds of being replaced by a substitute.

**Illegal Substitution (dead ball foul – 5 yards)**

- d) A player, replaced player, or substitute is required to leave the field at the side on which their team box is located and go directly to their team box.

**Illegal Substitution (dead ball foul – 5 yards)**

## Section 6      **Illegal Touching and Illegal Participation**

- 9.6.1      No eligible offensive player who goes out of bounds during a down shall touch a legal forward pass in the field of play or end zones or while airborne until it has been touched by an opponent or official.

**Illegal Touching – Loss of down at the previous spot**

***EXCEPTION:** This does not apply to an eligible offensive player who attempts to return inbounds immediately after going out of bounds due to contact by an opponent.*

- 9.6.2      No replaced player, substitute, or non-player shall hinder an opponent, touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate.

**Illegal Participation – 10 yards**

- 9.6.3      It is illegal participation when:

- a) 8 or more players participate at the snap.

**Illegal Participation – 10 yards**

- b) an injured player is not replaced for at least one down unless a half-time occurs.

**Illegal Participation – 10 yards**

- c) using a replaced player or substitute in a substitution or pretend substitution to deceive opponents at or immediately before a snap.

**Illegal Participation – 10 yards**

- d) for a disqualified player to reenter the game.

**Allowing a Disqualified Player – possible game forfeit**

## Section 7      **Illegal Kicking or Batting**

- 9.7.1      No player shall intentionally kick the ball other than as a punt or free kick.

**Illegal Kicking or Batting – 10 yards**

- 9.7.2 No player shall bat a loose ball other than a pass or a fumble in flight or a low scrimmage kick in flight which they are attempting to block in the expanded neutral zone. A backward pass behind the line of scrimmage and in flight shall not be batted forward by the passing team.

**Illegal Kicking or Batting – 10 yards**

**NOTE:** Any pass in flight may be batted in any direction, unless it is a backward pass behind the line of scrimmage batted forward by the passing team.

- 9.7.3 A ball in player possession may not be batted or stripped by any player.

**Illegal Batting – 10 yards**

## Section 8 Non-contact Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Non-Players

- 9.8.1 No coach, substitute, trainer, or other team attendant shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner during the game or intermission. Examples are:

- a) using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures,

**Non-Player Fouls – 10 yds & automatic first down for A, if by B and possible disqualification from game**

- b) attempting to influence or indicating an objection to a decision of an official,

**Non-Player Fouls – 10 yds & automatic first down for A, if by B**

- c) disrespectfully addressing an official,

**Non-Player Fouls – 10 yds & automatic first down for A, if by B and possible disqualification from game**

- d) failing to be ready to start either half,

**Non-Player Fouls – 10 yds enforced on kickoff and possible forfeiture of game**

- e) be on the field except as a substitute or replaced player,

**Non-Player Fouls – 10 yds & automatic first down for A, if by B**

- f) abusively or derisively harrying an opponent.

**Non-Player Fouls – 10 yds & automatic first down for A, if by B and possible disqualification from game**

- g) using any illegal communication equipment as outlined in Rule 1.5 for coaching or playing purposes.

**Non-Player Fouls – 10 yds & automatic first down for A, if by B and possible disqualification from game**

- 9.8.2** A non-player shall not be outside their team box except to become a player. Attendants and coaches may not enter the field except during a timeout or unless sanctioned by the referee.

**Non-Player Foul – 5 yards, if repeated infractions occur, 10 yards and/or disqualify the offending teammate.**

## Section 9 Game Administration and Sideline Interference

- 9.9.1** While the ball is alive and during the continuing action after the ball has been declared dead:

- a) Coaches, substitutes and authorized attendants in the team area must be behind the sideline.

**Administer as a dead-ball foul.**

**First infraction: Warning for sideline interference. No yardage penalty.**

**Second and third infractions: Delay of game for sideline interference, five yards from the succeeding spot.**

**Fourth and subsequent infractions: Team unsportsmanlike conduct (see 2.14.1.c) for sideline interference, 10 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules.**

- b) Physical interference with an official is a foul charged to the team for unsportsmanlike conduct.

**Administer as a dead-ball foul. Team unsportsmanlike conduct. 10 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules.**

## Section 10 Unfair Acts

- 9.10.1** No player or non-player shall hinder play by an obviously unfair act which has no specific rule coverage. Neither team shall commit any act which, in the opinion of the referee, tends to make a travesty of the game.

**Unfair Acts – Referee enforces any penalty they consider equitable, incl. the award of a score.**

- 9.10.2** No player shall hide the ball under a jersey.

**Unfair Acts – Referee enforces any penalty they consider equitable, incl. the award of a score.**

**NOTE:** Repeated fouls will cause the game to be forfeited.

## Section 11 Protests and Suspensions

- 9.11.1** The Team A or B captain may elect to challenge an official's penalty enforcement any time a penalty has been called. A captain may not challenge an official's actual call, only the enforcement of that call. If a team correctly challenges the enforcement of a penalty, the correct rule is enforced. If a team incorrectly challenges the enforcement of a penalty, it will be assessed one timeout. If the team has no timeouts, the captain will be assessed a delay of game foul and the team penalized 5 yards.

## RULE 10 PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

### Section 1 Procedure after a Foul

- 10.1.1** A penalty is completed when it is accepted, declined or offset according to rule, or when the choice is obvious to the referee.
- a) Any penalty may be declined, but a disqualified or ejected player must leave the game whether the penalty is accepted or declined.
  - b) When a foul is committed, the penalty shall be completed before the ball is declared ready for play for any ensuing down.
- 10.1.2** When a foul occurs during a live ball, the referee shall, at the end of the down, notify both captains. They shall inform the captain of the offended team regarding the rights of penalty acceptance or declination and shall indicate to them the number of the ensuing down, distance to be gained and status of the ball for each available choice. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined. If the penalty is declined, there is no loss of distance. In case of a double foul, team A captain is consulted first to choose to accept or decline team B's foul. After team A chooses its option, the option then goes to team B with an option to accept or decline team A's foul. The captain's choice may not be revoked.
- 10.1.3** When a foul occurs during a dead ball between downs or prior to a snap, the official shall not permit the ball to become live. The referee shall notify the captains and the captain of the offended team will be presented with the options and the effect of acceptance or declination on the down and distance to be gained. The captain may accept or decline the penalty.
- 10.1.4** When a live ball foul by one team is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence.
- 10.1.5** When the same team commits a live ball foul followed by one or more dead ball fouls, all fouls may be penalized.

### Section 2 Double and Multiple Fouls

- 10.2.1** It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls, other than unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls, during the same down in which there is no change of team possession. Team A is first offered the option to accept or decline the penalty for Team B's foul then Team B is offered the option to accept or decline the penalty against Team A. If both fouls are accepted, the penalties offset, and the down is replayed at the previous spot.
- 10.2.2** It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls, other than unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls, during the same down in which there is a change of team possession and the team in possession at the end of the down fouls prior to the final change of possession. The penalties offset and the down is replayed at the previous spot. This does not apply if the team in possession at the end of the down commits only post-scrimmage kick fouls as in 2.14.1.g.
- 10.2.3** If both teams commit fouls, other than unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls, during the same down in which there is a change of team possession and the



team in possession at the end of the down does not foul prior to the final change of possession, or their only foul was a post-scrimmage kick foul, that team is first offered the option to accept or decline the penalty against their opponent. The opponent is then offered the same option. If both fouls are accepted it is a double foul, the penalties offset, and the down is replayed at the previous spot.

- 10.2.4** When two or more live ball fouls are committed by the same team (multiple fouls), only one penalty may be measured, except when foul(s) for unsportsmanlike conduct occurs. In such cases, the penalty (or penalties) for unsportsmanlike conduct is administered from the succeeding spot as established by the acceptance or declination of the penalty for the previous foul. When only one penalty is to be administered, the offended captain may choose which one it shall be, or they may decline all penalties.
- 10.2.5** If both teams commit 10-yard unsportsmanlike, non-player or dead-ball personal fouls, the penalties for an equal number of these fouls will offset. Any remaining penalties will be enforced separately and in the order of occurrence. A subsequent unsportsmanlike, non-player, or dead-ball personal foul after enforcement of another will not have an offsetting penalty and will be enforced in order of occurrence.
- 10.2.6** A dead ball foul is not coupled with a live ball foul or another dead ball foul to create a double or multiple fouls.
- 10.2.7** A foul during a try is not paired with a dead ball foul to create a double or multiple fouls.

### **Section 3    Types of Play and Basic Enforcement Spots**

- 10.3.1** If a foul occurs during a down, the basic enforcement spot is fixed by the type of play. There are two types of play: loose ball play and running play. Loose ball play is action during a scrimmage kick; legal forward pass; a backward pass or fumble made by A from on or behind its scrimmage line. A loose ball also includes the run or runs which precede such a legal forward pass, kick, or fumble. A running play is any action not included in loose ball play.
- 10.3.2** If a foul occurs during loose ball play, the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot.
- 10.3.3** If a foul occurs during a running play, the basic enforcement spot is the spot where the related run ends. The run ends where the player loses possession if their run is followed by a fumble or pass. If the runner does not lose possession, their run ends where the ball becomes dead.
- 10.3.4** The basic spot is the previous spot:
- For a foul which occurs simultaneously with the snap or free kick.
  - For a foul which occurs during a loose ball play, as defined 10.3.1. See 10.5.1 for special enforcement on roughing the passer.
  - For a foul which occurs during a down in which a legal kick occurs, and an inadvertent whistle ends the down prior to possession by either team.

**10.3.5** The basic spot is the succeeding spot:

- a) For an unsportsmanlike foul.
- b) For a dead-ball foul.
- c) For a non-player foul.
- d) When the final result is a touchback.

**10.3.6** The basic spot is the spot where the kick ends when R commits a post-scrimmage kick foul (2-16-2h). R fouls behind the post-scrimmage kick spot are spot fouls.

## **Section 4 Administering Penalties**

**10.4.1** The penalty for any dead ball foul, any non-player foul or an unsportsmanlike foul is administered from the succeeding spot, unless the foul is committed by team B and is prior to the ready for play after a touchdown scoring play.

**10.4.2** The penalty for a foul that occurs simultaneously with a snap is administered from the previous spot.

**10.4.3** The penalty for a foul during a running play or loose ball play is administered from the basic spot, except:

- a) if a foul by either team occurs – except flag guarding by team A (see 10.4.3.c), personal foul by team A, and illegal forward pass – behind the line of scrimmage, before a change of team possession, the penalty is administered from the previous spot. (Exception: If Team A's foul occurs in its own end zone, the penalty is a safety.)
- b) if a foul by the offense (other than in 10.4.3.a above) occurs behind the basic spot, the penalty is administered from the spot of the foul.
- c) a flag guarding foul by team A is always enforced from the spot of the foul.
- d) if a foul by team B occurs during a scrimmage running play, and team A chooses to enforce the foul from the previous spot in order to retain their scrimmage running play for possible use later during that possession.

**10.4.4** Any live ball foul is penalized according to the all-but-one enforcement principle (see below) except:

- a) a foul which occurs simultaneously with the snap (see 10.4.2).
- b) a foul by either team behind the line of scrimmage before a change of team possession (see 10.4.3).
- c) a foul by the opponents of the scoring team during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try-for-point.
- d) kick catch interference, which is penalized from the previous spot or from the spot of the foul.

## **Section 5 Fouls by Team A During Kicks**

**10.5.1** Penalties for all fouls by the kicking team other than kick-catch interference during a free kick play or a scrimmage kick play in which the ball crosses the neutral zone are enforced either at the previous spot (**Exception:** Penalty option is

a safety for fouls in Team A's end zone.) or at the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team R, at the option of Team R.

## **Section 6      Special Enforcements**

- 10.6.1** The following fouls have special enforcement provisions and options for the offended team:
- a) Free kick out of bounds untouched by R (See 6.1.11).
  - b) Kick-catching interference (See 6.3.4. & 10.5.3).
  - c) Unfair acts (See 9.9.1).
  - d) A foul by the opponents of the scoring team on a successful try (See 8.3.7).
  - e) Fouls that occur during or after a touchdown scoring play (See 8.2.2 through 8.2.6).
  - f) Roughing the passer (See 9.3.4. and 10.6.5).
- 10.6.2** A measurement cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line. If the ordinary distance penalty is greater than this, the ball is placed halfway from the spot of enforcement to the goal line.
- 10.6.3** For kick-catch interference, the offended team may choose a 10-yard penalty from the previous spot with K retaining the ball and the down being replayed or the offending team may accept an awarded fair catch after the enforcement of a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul.
- 10.6.4** If the offensive team throws an illegal forward pass from its end zone or commits any personal foul or other foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from on or behind the goal line, it is a safety. For a defensive team foul, if the enforcement spot is on or behind the offended team's goal line, any measurement is from the goal line.
- 10.6.5** The enforcement spot is the end of the last run for roughing the passer when the last run ends beyond the neutral zone and there has been no change of team possession.
- 10.6.6** A disqualified player must always be removed.
- 10.6.7** The referee's decision to forfeit a game is always final.

## **Section 7      10-Second Subtraction from Game Clock**

- 10.7.1** With the game clock running and any time after the two-minute warning in either half, if a player of either team commits a foul that causes the clock to stop immediately and the penalty for that foul is accepted, the officials may subtract 10 seconds from the game clock at the option of the offended team. The fouls that fall in this category include but are not limited to:
- a) Any foul that prevents the snap (e.g., false start, encroachment, defensive offside by contact in the neutral zone, etc.),
  - b) Incomplete illegal forward pass,
  - c) An illegal shift committed by the offensive team never coming to a one-second stop prior to the snap after the ball is ready for play,

d) Any other foul committed with the intent of stopping the clock.

**10.7.2** The offended team may accept the yardage penalty and decline the 10-second subtraction. If the yardage penalty is declined the 10-second subtraction is declined by rule.

**10.7.3** The 10-second runoff does not apply:

a) If the game clock is not running when the foul occurs.

b) If the foul does not cause the game clock to stop.

c) To delay of game penalties caused by expiration of the play clock (3.4.2.a).

**10.7.4** If the fouling team has a timeout remaining, they may avoid the 10-second subtraction by using a timeout. In this case the game clock starts on the snap after the timeout.

**10.7.5** Either half can end as the result of the 10-second runoff.

**10.7.6** Offsetting fouls do not involve any run-off.

**10.7.7** After the penalty is administered, if there is a 10-second subtraction, the game clock starts on the referee's signal. If there is no 10-second subtraction, the game clock starts on the snap.

## **Section 8      Unfair Clock Tactics**

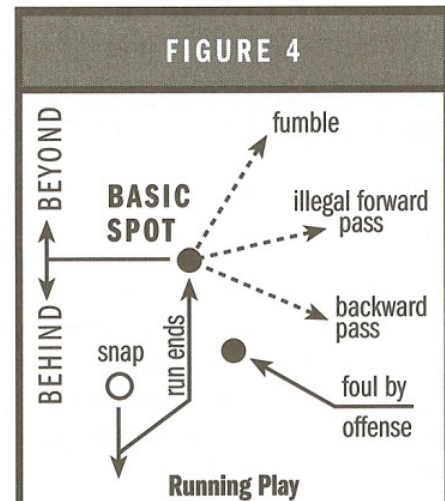
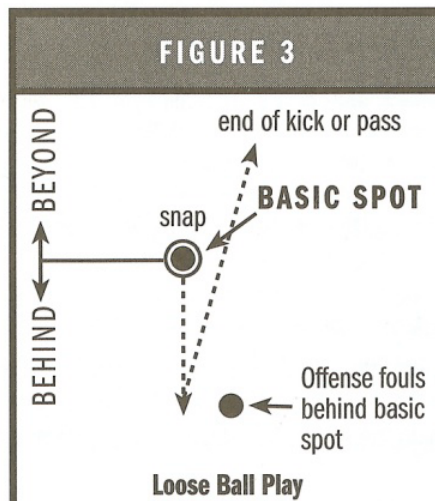
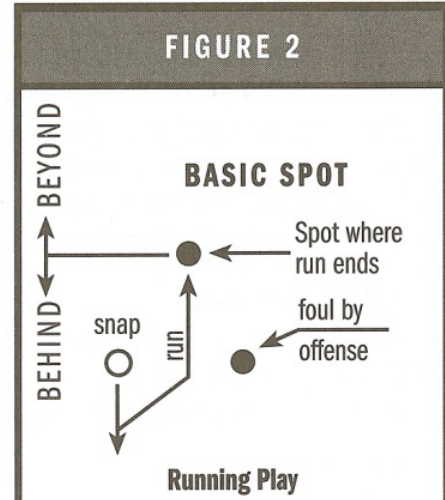
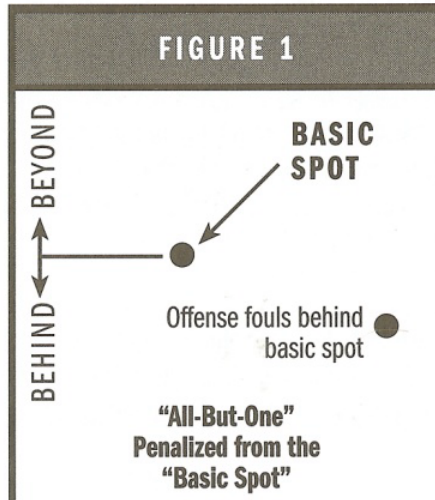
**10.8.1** The referee shall order the game clock or play clock started or stopped whenever either team conserves or consumes playing time by tactics obviously unfair. This includes starting the game clock on the snap if the foul is by the team ahead in the score.

**10.8.2** If the game clock is stopped only to complete a penalty for a foul by either team inside the last two minutes of a half, it will start on the snap, at the option of the offended team.

## **Section 9      Football Penalty Enforcement**

**10.9.1** Enforcement provisions apply to all player fouls. These provisions are not complicated by exceptions or special penalties. Enforcement philosophy is based on the fact that a team is given the advantage of the distance that is gained without assistance of a foul. It is assumed that the only foul that could aid this is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot. Therefore, all fouls but this one (a foul by the offense behind the basic spot) are penalized from the basic spot. Whenever the ball is live, one of two types of plays is in progress, that is, either a loose ball play or a running play. If a foul does occur, the kind of play determines the basic spot. The basic spot is the previous spot (spot of the snap) for loose ball fouls and fouls simultaneous with the snap. The basic spot for running plays is where the related run ends. "All but one" means all fouls except those by the offense are enforced from the spot of the foul if the foul occurs behind the end of the run (the basic spot). If a foul occurs during a running play, the enforcement spot is the end of the run or if the foul is by the offense and occurs behind the end of the run, from the spot of the foul. (See figure below.)

## BASIC ENFORCEMENT SPOTS



## FLAG FOOTBALL FUNDAMENTALS

### 1) Possession

- a) A live ball is always in possession of a team.
- b) A live ball is in player possession or is loose.
- c) A loose ball is in possession of the team whose player was last in possession.
- d) A player in possession of a live ball is a runner.
- e) A player cannot fumble before gaining possession.
- f) No foul causes loss of the ball.
- g) After a distance penalty, the ball belongs to the team which was in possession at the time of the foul according to applicable rules. Team possession may then change if a new series is awarded.
- h) Possession of a live ball in the opponent's end zone is always a touchdown.

### 2) Downs

- a) A down begins when the ball becomes live and ends when it becomes dead.
- b) Whether the next down will be first is determined at the time the ball becomes dead and after considering the effect of any act, except a nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul, which occurred during the down.
- c) If the penalty is accepted for any live ball foul by either team during the last timed down of a period, the period must be extended by an untimed down, except for unsportsmanlike fouls, nonplayer fouls, fouls that specify a loss of down, or fouls as specified in Rule 3-2-6.
- d) No series can ever start on a down other than first.

### 3) Dead Ball

- a) A game official's whistle seldom kills the ball. It is already dead by rule.
- b) No live-ball foul causes the ball to become dead.
- c) A dead ball may become live only by a legal snap or free kick.
- d) Catching is always preceded by touching of the ball; thus, if touching causes the ball to become dead, securing possession of the ball has no significance.

### 4) Kicks

- a) A kick always ends as soon as any player secures possession.
- b) Any R player may catch or recover a kick and advance.
- c) First touching of a kick by K is always ignored if the penalty is accepted for a foul during the down.
- d) Free-kick lines are always 10 yards apart.
- e) Touching of a low scrimmage kick by any player is ignored if it occurs in or behind the expanded neutral zone. Such touching may cause the ball to go out of bounds.

### 5) Passes

- a) A handed ball is not a pass.
- b) Any pass in flight may be batted in any direction by an eligible receiver unless it is a backward pass batted forward by the passing team.
- c) A forward-pass interference foul can occur only beyond the neutral zone.

- 6) Blocking
  - a) Blocking by either team is permissible, unless it is kick-catching interference or pass interference, a personal foul or an illegal block.
- 7) Fouls
  - a) No live-ball foul causes the covering official to sound their whistle immediately.
  - b) A live-ball foul followed by a foul by the opponents after the ball becomes dead is not paired as a double foul.
  - c) It is a foul to bat any loose ball which has touched the ground, except K may bat a grounded scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone toward their own goal line and may bat a scrimmage kick in flight beyond the neutral zone toward their own goal line when no player of R is in position to catch the ball.
  - d) A foul during a try is not paired with a dead-ball foul to make double or multiple fouls.
  - e) A double foul results only when both teams commit fouls, other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer, during the same live-ball period or if team possession changed during the down and the foul by the team in final possession was prior to the change or if there were a change of possession and the team in final possession accepted the penalty for its opponent's foul.
  - f) While it is possible to have several running plays during a down, with each one having its own basic spot of enforcement (where the related run ended), there can only be one loose-ball play during a down.
- 8) Penalty Measurement
  - a) The distance penalty for any foul may be declined.
  - b) Penalties are either 0, 5, or 10 yards.
  - c) Any live-ball foul is penalized according to the all-but-one enforcement principle except:
    - i) Fouls which occur simultaneously with the snap.
    - ii) A foul by the opponents of the scoring team during a successful try, field goal or touchdown when the score is accepted.
    - iii) A nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul.
    - iv) Roughing the passer when the dead ball spot is beyond the neutral zone and there has been no change of team possession.
    - v) Fouls by the kicking team (other than kick-catch interference or fouls that result in a safety).
  - d) Penalty enforcement for any dead ball, nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul is from the succeeding spot unless the foul occurs on a scoring play and the scoring team chooses enforcement on the start of team B's next possession.
  - e) The penalty any illegal forward pass is a loss of 5 yards and the down is counted except for a forward pass following change of team possession.
  - f) No penalty directly results in a safety, but if a distance penalty is enforced from behind the offender's goal line toward their end line, it is a safety.
  - g) The penalty for a live-ball foul by the defensive team is administered from the basic spot, except when that spot is in the end zone.
  - h) The loss of down aspect of a penalty has no significance following a change of possession or if the line to gain is reached after enforcement.

## INTERPRETATIONS

A rule interpretation, or approved ruling, is an official decision on a given statement of facts. It serves to illustrate the spirit and application of the rule. Any approved rulings that have been altered significantly are shaded for ease of reference. All new approved rulings are also shaded for ease of reference.

LANCE BURAGE, NGFFL Director of Officials

### Rule 1.3 Game Equipment

- I. Following a very long incomplete pass, a team B player assists team A by “chasing down” the ball and throwing it back towards the team A huddle. Before they throw the ball back, they tell the back judge, “This ball sure feels flat to me.”

**APPROVED RULING:** The back judge should blow their whistle, stop the clock, and bring the ball to the referee, who will give it a “squeeze test”. If the referee determines that the ball is underinflated, it shall not be allowed to be used in the game until the team inflates it to the proper inflation level. If another ball is not available and there is no air pump available, they must play with the opposing team’s ball.

- II. Snapper A2 takes the field with an Under Armour branded ball that is black and royal blue in color. After being told by the referee that they can’t play with that ball, they insist that it is the proper size and is inflated to the proper pressure according to rule 1.3.2. The back judge says that it should be okay for them to play with that ball.

**APPROVED RULING:** The football must be a natural tan color. Also, the referee decides whether the ball meets the specifications in the rulebook, not the back judge. If another ball is not available, they must play with the opposing team’s ball or forfeit the game.

### Rule 1.4 Players and Their Equipment

- I. The crew of officials walk onto the field before the start of a game, and they notice that Team B is wearing shorts with vertical white piping along the sides of the team’s shorts.

**APPROVED RULING:** The team of officials should approach the team’s captain(s). The referee should inform the captain that in order to play the game, the team’s shorts must be a solid color, with exceptions only for a small-sized logo [i.e. Nike Swoosh, Adidas 3-stripe, Puma leaping cat, etc.], a reasonably-sized city or team logo, and a reasonably-sized player’s number. The following are examples of shorts that are NOT allowed:





- II. During the first half and in between downs, A6 runs onto the field wearing a solid red mask that covers the player's mouth and most of their face.

**APPROVED RULING: A6 should be allowed to participate in the next down. This is legal equipment, as long as there are no graphics on the mask that include graphics, logos, or insignia that engenders ill will or taunts an opponent.**

- III. During the first half and in between downs, A6 runs onto the field wearing a mask that includes an "evil skull" logo that covers the player's mouth and most of their face. The line judge asks them to remove it, saying it is not legal equipment. A6 immediately removes the mask, and hands it to a non-player on the sideline.

**APPROVED RULING: A6 should be allowed to participate in the next down.**

- IV. During the first half and in between downs, A6 runs onto the field wearing a mask that includes an "evil skull" logo that covers the player's mouth and most of their face. The line judge asks them to remove it, saying it is not legal equipment. A6 protests, saying it's too cold.

**APPROVED RULING: The line judge should blow their whistle and call an official's timeout if the illegal equipment is not immediately remedied. In that case, the player has to leave the game for at least one down and is not allowed to return to the game until the mask is removed. If the player refuses to leave, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty should be enforced. If the player still refuses to leave, a second unsportsmanlike conduct penalty should be enforced, and the player should be ejected. If the player still refuses to leave, the team risks a forfeit.**

- V. During the first half and between downs, A3 runs onto the field wearing a hard-billed cap with the bill facing forward. The line judge notices immediately and asks them to turn it backwards. A3 complies immediately.

**APPROVED RULING: A3 should be allowed to participate in the next down.**

- VI. During the first half and between downs, A3 runs onto the field and gets into position wearing a hard-billed cap with the bill facing forward. The referee notices immediately after blowing the ready for play and asks them to turn it backwards. A3 complies immediately.

**APPROVED RULING: A3 should be allowed to participate in the next down.**

- VII. During the second half and between downs, A3 runs onto the field and gets into position wearing a hard-billed cap with the bill facing forward. The back judge notices with 7 seconds left on the play clock, all players are set, and the snap is imminent.

**APPROVED RULING: The back judge should blow their whistle and call an official's timeout. The player has to leave the game for at least one down and is not allowed to return to the game until the hat is turned backwards.**

- VIII. Team A is down by 4 points, has the ball, and is out of timeouts. There are 20 seconds left in the game when receiver A3 is deflagged in bounds and short of the first down. A3 hurries back to the line, but A3 is struggling to put their flags back on. Right before the ball is snapped, A3 gives up on getting the flags on and throws them on the ground and gets set for the snap.

**APPROVED RULING: As soon as A3 throws their flags on the ground, they are "giving up" on attaching them around their waist. If the snap is imminent, the**

covering official should immediately kill the play and A3 must leave the game for one play. The goal here would be to get A3 off the field and a replacement player (with flag belt) on the field as quickly as possible, and then the Referee should blow the ready-for-play and signal to start the clock.

#### **Rule 2.2.4 Catch**

- I. Receiver A7 is stretching to catch a legal forward pass. As A7 is going to the ground in the act of catching the pass, (a) A7 gains firm control of the ball with one foot down inbounds and falls out of bounds, maintaining firm control; (b) A7 gains firm control of the ball with one foot down inbounds, falls out of bounds and loses firm control of the ball when contacting the ground.

**APPROVED RULINGS:** (a) Catch by A7. (b) Incomplete pass. Although the NGFFL definition of a catch doesn't include any additional requirements to complete the catch if the receiver is "going to the ground," the generally accepted interpretation across all levels of football is that losing possession when a player contacts the ground is not maintaining possession.

#### **Rule 2.2.4 Simultaneous Catch**

- I. Two opposing players receive a legal forward pass while both are off the ground, and both players return to the ground inbounds at the same time.

**APPROVED RULING:** Simultaneous catch; the ball is awarded to the passing team.

- II. Two opposing players receive a ball while both are off the ground, and one player returns to the ground inbounds before the other.

**APPROVED RULING:** No simultaneous catch. The legal forward pass is completed or intercepted by the player who first returned to the ground.

#### **Rule 2.5.2 Loss of Down**

- I. 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10 for team A. A4 catches a pass and runs for a 30-yard gain. During A4's run and 12-yards past the line of scrimmage, A5 illegally blocks B3 in the back.

**APPROVED RULING:** The end of the run after the pass is the basic spot because the foul occurred during a running play. This is penalized by the "all-but-one" principal, which means it is penalized from the spot of the foul. After you back up 5-yards from the spot of the foul, that leaves team A with 3-yards to go before the line to gain. Since a block in the back is not a "loss of down" foul, the down must be repeated. The next down is 3<sup>rd</sup> & 3.

**Rule 3.3.9 Minimum Time for a Play After Spiking the Ball**

- I. Late in a half Team A, out of timeouts, makes a first down, stopping the clock which reads 0:02. Team A intends to spike the ball and run an additional play. The referee appropriately blows their whistle and signals, which starts the game clock. The quarterback takes the snap and immediately throws the ball directly to the ground. The game clock shows 0:01.

**APPROVED RULING:** The half has ended. One second should run off once the referee starts the clock, and one second should run off during the snap and the spike of the ball into the ground. Because the clock only had two seconds on it when the referee gave the ready for play signal, the half is expired. If team A had wanted to run one more play, they should have snapped the ball and simply run a play, rather than spiking the ball into the ground.

- II. Late in a half Team A, out of timeouts, makes a first down, stopping the clock which reads 0:03. Team A intends to spike the ball and run an additional play. The referee appropriately blows their whistle and signals, which starts the game clock. The quarterback takes the snap and raises the ball high over their head before throwing it directly to the ground. The game clock shows 0:00.

**APPROVED RULING:** Time in the half has expired. Although there were 3 seconds on the game clock when the referee signaled it to start, there is no guarantee of enough time to run an additional play other than spiking the ball. The offense must execute the spike in a timely manner.

**Rule 3.4.2 Ball Ready for Play and Delay**

- I. Early in the second half, the referee steps off the 5-yard rush puck zone and turns to begin to move into position. Before the referee can get into position and blow the ready for play whistle, A4 snaps the ball to A1. This is the first-time team A has done that during the game.

**APPROVED RULING:** The referee should drop their flag and blow the whistle and shut the play down. Team A is guilty of a delay of game foul. Since it is the team's first infraction of the game for snapping the ball before the ready for play, the referee should warn them that if it happens a second time, it will carry a penalty of 5-yards. The referee should get in position and blow the ready-for play.

- II. Early in the second half, the referee steps off the 5-yard rush puck zone and turns to begin to move into position. Before the referee can get into position and blow the ready for play whistle, A4 snaps the ball to A1. This is the second time team A has done that during the game.

**APPROVED RULING:** The referee should drop their flag and blow the whistle and shut the play down. Team A is guilty of a delay of game foul. Since it is the team's second infraction of the game for snapping the ball before the ready for play, a penalty of 5-yards should be enforced. After resetting the punts, the referee should get in position and blow the ready-for play.

- III. With 45 seconds left in the first half and the clock running, the referee steps off the 5-yard rush puck zone and turns to begin to move into position. Before the referee can get into position and blow the ready for play whistle, A4 snaps the ball to A1. This is the first-time team A has done that during the game.

**APPROVED RULING:** The referee should drop their flag and blow the whistle and shut the play down. Team A is guilty of a delay of game foul. Since it is the team's first infraction of the game for snapping the ball before the ready for play, the referee should warn them that if it happens a second time, it will carry a penalty of 5-yards. Since the foul occurred in the last minute of a half, it is subject to the 10-second runoff rule (10.7). If team A has a timeout remaining, they can use a it to avoid the 10-second subtraction from the game clock.

### **Rule 4.2.1 Snap**

- I. The ball is snapped to A1. The ball hits A1's hands, then A1 bobbles the ball into the air, and it falls to the ground.

**APPROVED RULING:** Because A1 never secured possession of the ball, it is a muffed snap that has touched the ground. The play is dead, the down counts, and the ball will be placed at the previous spot for the next play (4.2.1.e.i)

- II. The ball is snapped to A1. The ball either hits A1's hands or goes over A1's head and lands either in the end zone or beyond the end line.

**APPROVED RULING:** Because A1 never secured possession of the ball, it is a muffed snap that has touched the ground. The play is dead, the down counts, and the ball will be placed at the previous spot for the next play (4.2.1.f)

- III. A5 catches the ball at B's 15-yard line, and advances to B's 3-yard line, where they fumble the ball forward, and the ball first touches the ground in the end zone or touches the sideline beyond the goal line.

**APPROVED RULING:** The ball is returned to the spot where A5 lost possession, the down counts. All forward fumbles are returned to the spot where the runner lost possession (4.3.3 & 7.4.4)

### **Rule 4.2.1 Dead Ball and End of the Down**

- I. Rusher B2 deflags quarterback A1 at the exact same time as a legal forward pass is released from A1's hand. The pass is completed for a 5-yard gain to A2.

**APPROVED RULING:** There is no sack. A tie on the flag pull/ball release goes to the offense.

- II. The ball is thrown to receiver A4. The ball hits A4's hands, and bounces into the air. After the ball is touched, B3 deflags A4. A4 then completes the catch one second later.

**APPROVED RULING:** As soon as A4 completes the catch, the ball becomes dead and the down has ended.

- III. Long, legal forward pass from A1 to A5. A5 catches the ball and is running downfield with just B7 to beat to the goal line. B7 attempts to deflag, making contact with the flag belt, but the flags stayed on, and the clip stays attached. About 15 yards later, the receiver is all by themselves, jogging into the end zone, when their flags fall off. The line judge was closest to the attempted deflagging and confirms that the belt did not break after the attempted deflagging, and they came off by themselves downfield.

**APPROVED RULING:** Touchdown. A5 crossed the goal line untouched after their flags fell off. Generally, after an attempted deflagging, if the flags fall off after three steps, officials should let the play continue and not whistle it dead. After the receiver is touched or crosses the goal line, officials should confer to confirm what they each saw before declaring a ruling.

- IV. During a play, runner A2's shirt becomes untucked during the play. A few yards downfield after it becomes untucked, B2 attempts to grab the flag/belt.

**APPROVED RULING:** Rule 4.2.1.e does allow the crew to declare the ball dead if "the runner's jersey and becomes untucked and prevents deflagging." This rule should only be applied if in the judgment of the COVERING OFFICIAL a CLEAR ATTEMPT to deflag was unsuccessful due to obstruction from the untucked shirt. No other factors should enter into this judgment (i.e. perceived ability of the players in question, etc.).

- V. Quarterback A1 tells the referee that they intend to take a knee to run the clock. When A1 receives the snap, they just stand there for a few seconds waiting on the defense to begin to rush in.

**APPROVED RULING:** The referee should kill the play immediately after the snap is received and secured by A1, if they do not immediately move to take the knee. If A1 had not told the referee that they intended to take a knee, the referee should let the play continue until A1 is either deflagged or A1's knee touches the ground.

## **Rule 5.1.2 Loss of Down Foul**

- I. 4<sup>th</sup> & 6 from A's 30-yard line. Quarterback A1 takes the snap, and passes forward to snapper A7, who runs for 9 yards, then flag guards while B3 attempts to pull A7's flag.

**APPROVED RULING:** Rule 5.1.2 says that following any play "and after considering any live ball fouls, except unsportsmanlike fouls", you then **measure for a first down**. Because A7's flag guarding foul is moved back 5-yards from the 39 to the 34, that leaves team A two yards short of the line to gain. Because flag guarding is a loss of down foul, team A does not have the right to replay the down. **Team B is awarded the ball, 1<sup>st</sup> & 10, at team A's 34-yard line (5.1.2.c)**

## **Rule 6.1 Kickoffs and Punts**

- I. 4<sup>th</sup> & 10, Team A does not declare a protected punt. The ball is kicked as the team R rusher jumps into the air and blocks the punt. The ball first touches the ground 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage.

**APPROVED RULING:** The ball is placed at the spot where it first touched the ground, and it belongs to team R (4.2.1.e.ii & 6.1.12)

- II. 4<sup>th</sup> & 10, Team A does not declare a protected punt. The ball is kicked as the team R rusher jumps into the air and blocks the punt, which is then caught by K3 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage.

**APPROVED RULING:** Since Team K can never gain possession of a punt, the ball belongs to team R at the spot of first touching by any K player (6.1.10)

- III. 4<sup>th</sup> & 10, Team K punts the ball. The ball touches the ground at R's 20-yard line, and bounces toward R's end zone. K4 bats the loose ball at R's 5-yard line in an unsuccessful attempt to keep the ball from rolling into R's end zone. The ball rolls into the end zone and becomes dead there.

**APPROVED RULING:** Team R shall have the option of taking the ball at the spot of first touching by team K or taking the result of the play. Since Team K first touched the ball at R's 5-yard line, and the result of the play was a touchback because the force of K's punt is what put the ball into the end zone, team R would most likely choose to take the touchback, giving them the ball at the 15-yard line, 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 (6.1.10)

- IV. 4<sup>th</sup> & 10, Team K punts the ball. The ball touches the ground at R's 20-yard line, and bounces back toward the original line of scrimmage. K4 bats the loose ball at R's 25-yard line toward R's end zone in an attempt to pin team R deeper. The batted ball goes out of bounds at R's 10-yard line.

**APPROVED RULING:** Team R shall have the option of taking the ball at the spot of first touching by team K or taking the result of the play. Since Team K first touched the ball at R's 25-yard line, and the result of the play was a dead ball at R's 10-yard line, team R would most likely choose to take the spot of the first touching by K at R's 25-yard line, 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 (6.1.10)

- V. 4<sup>th</sup> & 10, Team K punts the ball. The ball touches the ground at R's 20-yard line, and bounces toward R's end zone. K4 bats the loose ball at R's 5-yard line in an attempt to keep the ball from rolling into R's end zone. R1 picks up the ball at R's 2-yard line, retreats into the end zone to avoid K5's flag pull. While in the end zone, R1 is deflagged by K6, resulting in a safety.

**APPROVED RULING:** The result of the play is a safety because R1 carried the ball into the end zone and was deflagged there. Team R shall have the option of taking the ball at the spot of first touching by team K or taking the result of the play. Since Team K first touched the ball at R's 5-yard line, and the result of the play was a safety, team R would certainly choose to take the spot of the first touching by K at R's 5-yard line, 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 (6.1.10)

- VI. 4<sup>th</sup> & 5, Team K punts the ball. Untouched by R, the ball touches the ground in R's end zone, then bounces back into the field of play and touches the ground at R's 2-yard line. R1 avoids touching the ball, and the ball rolls to a stop at R's 4-yard line.

**APPROVED RULING:** The fact that the ball touched the ground in the end zone has no impact on the play because the ball was untouched by R prior to the ball touching in the end zone. Team R shall have the ball 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 at R's 4-yard line (8.4.3 only stipulates that the ball is dead and is a touchback when a touched/muffed kick touches the ground in the end zone)

- VII. 4<sup>th</sup> & 5, Team K punts the ball. Untouched by R, the ball touches the ground in R's end zone, then bounces back into the field of play and touches the ground at R's 2-yard line, where R1 scoops it up, retreats into the end zone and takes a knee.

**APPROVED RULING:** Safety for K. The force that put the ball into the end zone was R1 carrying the ball across the goal line because the kick ended once R1 secured possession of the ball. (8.4.1 & 8.4.2.a)

- VIII. 4<sup>th</sup> & 9 for Team A. Players in the offensive huddle are debating whether to declare a protected punt or run a standard scrimmage play. The play clock is down to 10 seconds when they announce to the referee that they want to declare a protected punt. The referee announces that Team A has decided to declare a protected punt. As teams are swapping personnel and lining up for a protected kick, the 30-second play clock expires.

**APPROVED RULING:** The referee should use their best judgment in regard to stopping the game clock if necessary. In a game with 7 minutes remaining in a half, it is acceptable to let the game clock continue to run for a few extra seconds after the expiration of the play clock. But in a 6-point game with 4 minutes left on the game clock in a half, the referee should signal an officials' timeout to the back judge, who should stop the clock. The clock would next start on the kick.

- IX. 4<sup>th</sup> & 9 for Team A. Players in the offensive huddle are debating whether to declare a protected punt or run a standard scrimmage play. The play clock is down to 3 seconds when they announce to the referee that they want to declare a protected punt.

**APPROVED RULING:** The referee should tell team A that they need to use a timeout immediately or take a delay of game penalty before they will be allowed to execute a protected punt play. There is not enough time for the team to line up for a protected punt with 3 seconds remaining on the play clock. In this scenario, when the play clock runs down to approximately 10 seconds, the referee should inform team A in the huddle that they need to "get going", especially if they are going to declare a punt.

### Rule 6.2.1 Muffed Kickoff Lands in End Zone

- I. R1 muffs a kick high over their head while standing at R's 2-yard line. The ball lands in the end zone.

**APPROVED RULING:** Touchback. Any kick that is muffed in flight that touches the ground while the kicked ball is on or behind R's goal line becomes dead and is a touchback. This cannot be a safety because the force that put the ball into R's end zone was K's kick. The muff does not apply a new force to this kicked ball. (6.2.1)

### Rule 7.1.4.c Illegal Shift that Converts to a False Start

The definition of a shift has remained unchanged for many years. A shift occurs when two or more Team A players change their position or stance after the ball is ready for play before the snap. The shift ends when all players stop and remain motionless for one full second.

This definition allows us to distinguish two kinds of illegal shift. One kind is when the offensive team is in the midst of a shift when the ball is made ready for play and never comes to a one-second stop before the snap. The other is when the shift starts after the ball is ready for play – that is, sometime after the ball is ready for play Team A satisfies the one-second rule and then executes a shift that is still continuing at the snap.

**Starting in 2024, it is a false start if the offensive team is shifting when the ball is made ready for play and has not stopped for a full second before the ball is snapped.** This is the first of the two types of illegal shift given above. As with other kinds of false starts, the officials should shut the play down, in this case as soon as the ball is snapped. Note that this action is not a foul until the snap, since the offensive team may at any time before the snap come to a full stop for a second.

Here are some examples:

- I. At the time the ball is made ready for play receivers A3 and A4 are moving. A3 then comes to a stop and A4 continues in motion as the ball is snapped.

**APPROVED RULING:** Dead ball. False start. Team A players were not all stopped for a full second before the snap at any time after the ball was made ready for play. Officials should stop the action, and Team A is penalized five yards for a dead-ball foul. This is an illegal shift that converts to a false start and is eligible for a 10-second subtraction from the game clock if this foul occurs while the clock is running and after the two-minute warning has occurred.

- II. Team A is in a no-huddle offense and is moving to the line when the ball is made ready for play. Although some players settle into their positions and stop, at least one player never stops and is still moving when the ball is snapped.

**APPROVED RULING:** Dead ball. False start. Since Team A never satisfied the one-second rule before the snap, officials should stop the action, and Team A is penalized five yards for a dead-ball foul. This is an illegal shift that converts to a false start and is eligible for a 10-second subtraction from the game clock if this foul occurs while the clock is running and after the two-minute warning has occurred.



- III. After the ball is made ready for play, all seven Team A players come to a complete stop for a full second. Then receiver A5 goes laterally in motion. While A5 is in motion, receiver A2 takes two steps backwards and resets. A5 is still moving when the ball is snapped.

**APPROVED RULING:** Live ball illegal shift. The play should continue. When the ball is dead, the officials stop the clock to administer the penalty. This is an illegal shift that DOES NOT convert to a false start and is NOT eligible for a 10-second subtraction from the game clock in any scenario.

### **Rule 7.3      Illegal Use of Second Scrimmage Running Play**

- I. Run is closed and quarterback A1 scrambles 3 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, where they are deflagged.

**APPROVED RULING:** Foul for illegal procedure for using a second scrimmage running play during a possession. The penalty is 5-yards from the previous spot and loss of down.

- II. Run is closed and quarterback A1 scrambles 3 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, then retreats 3 yards behind the original line of scrimmage, where they are deflagged.

**APPROVED RULING:** Foul for illegal procedure for using a second scrimmage running play during a possession. The penalty is 5-yards from the previous spot and loss of down.

- II. Run is closed and quarterback A1 scrambles 3 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, then retreats 9 yards behind the original line of scrimmage, where they are deflagged.

**APPROVED RULING:** Foul for illegal procedure for using a second scrimmage running play during a possession. Because the A1 was deflagged more than 5-yards behind the previous spot, the ball is spotted where the runner was deflagged and the down counts.

### **Rule 7.3      Scrimmage Running Play Availability After a Double Change of Possession**

- I. 3<sup>rd</sup> down & 5. Team A's run is used/closed. Quarterback A5 throws a legal forward pass that is intercepted by B1. After the interception and during the return, B1 throws a backwards pass to B2. The backwards pass is intercepted in the air by A8. A8 is deflagged by B9.

**APPROVED RULING:** Because there has been a change of possession during the down, team A will now begin a new possession with the ball 1<sup>st</sup> & 10, and the scrimmage running play is available to them for use during the next possession.

### **Rule 7.5      Forward Pass**

- I. A forward pass in flight touches a tall patch of grass on the field before the ball is possessed by receiver A5.

**APPROVED RULING:** The forward pass is incomplete. The grass is the ground.

### **Rule 7.5.2 Illegal Forward Pass**

- I. Quarterback A1 pitches the ball forward with their arm and ball clearly beyond the line of scrimmage before the ball is released. A1's feet are behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is released.

**APPROVED RULING:** The forward pass is legal, and the ball remains live. Team A's pass is legal as long as both feet of the passer are on their side of the line of scrimmage when the ball is released (7.5.1)

### **Rule 7.5.7 Pass Interference**

- I. B3, defending against a legal forward pass beyond the neutral zone, has their back to the ball and is waving their arms in the face of A8, but does not make contact.

**APPROVED RULING:** No foul. There is no foul for defensive pass interference if there is no contact.

### **Rule 8.2.2 Touchdown**

- I. 1<sup>st</sup> and goal from team B's 7-yard line. Team A trails by 5 points. A3 catches a quick forward pitch and runs into the endzone for a touchdown. At the snap, B11 was offside. Team A captain wants to replay the down because they fear team B has enough time left on the clock to drive down the field and score.

**APPROVED RULING:** Touchdown. By rule, all 5-yard penalties during a touchdown-scoring play are automatically declined.

### **Rule 8.3 Try-For-Point**

- I. Team A completes a successful one-point try following a touchdown. During the successful try, B2 is guilty of defensive pass interference.

**APPROVED RULING:** The 10-yard penalty must be carried over to the start of the next possession by team B. Team A cannot choose to replay the try for two points from the 5-yard line. They cannot choose to take the penalty, take a timeout, redeclare their 1- or 2-point try, and then go for 2-points. Once the snap occurs on a try or any dead ball foul occurs before a snap, team A's decision is locked in.

- II. After a touchdown, Team A lines up to go for a one point try. B6 on the line commits an encroachment foul by reaching over the line and touching A2. Quarterback A1 asks if they can change is decision and go for a 2-point try.

**APPROVED RULING:** Team A cannot change their decision at this point. After the ready for play is blown, if a foul occurs by either team, the choice on the try is "locked in".

- III. After a touchdown, quarterback A1 tells the referee that they would like to go for a one point try. The referee announces to the crew and team B, “One point try!” Captain A3 says, “No! We want to go for two!”

**APPROVED RULING:** Team A must use a timeout to change their decision to go for a 2-point try (rule 8.3.5). If Team A is out of timeouts, they cannot change their decision.

- IV. After a touchdown, quarterback A1 tells the referee that they would like to go for a one point try. Quickly, before the referee announces their decision, and before the referee begins to set the pucks, captain A3 says, “No! We want to go for two!”

**APPROVED RULING:** Team A does not need to use a timeout to change their decision, and the field should be set for a 2-point try. The team’s decision was not announced, and the referee had not begun to set the pucks. No advantage was gained by Team A.

### **Rule 9.2.7 Flag Guarding**

- I. Runner A3 fakes taking a knee with defender B4 in position to deflag. In the process, A3’s knee drops down to about six inches from the ground. After B4 misses the flag pull, A3 rises and runs 10 more yards before being deflagged by B5.

**APPROVED RULING:** Flag guarding. 5-yard penalty from the spot of the foul, and loss of down. A runner cannot lower their head more than halfway between their shoulders and waist from a standing position. The defense should be able to have a reasonable expectation of where the flags will be on a runner when they attempt to deflag.

### **Rule 10.2 Double and Multiple Fouls**

- I. During a successful try for point after a touchdown, rusher B7 is flagged for unnecessary roughness (bull rush), and blocker A6 is flagged for an unsportsmanlike conduct foul for screaming expletives at the rusher repeatedly during the play.

**APPROVED RULING:** Live ball fouls do not combine with unsportsmanlike conduct fouls to create a double foul. (10.2.1)

B7’s personal foul for unnecessary roughness will carry over to the start of the next possession, since it is a foul that carries a penalty of 10 yards by team B during a successful try. (8.3.7.b)

A6’s unsportsmanlike conduct foul is enforced from the succeeding spot (like it was a dead ball foul), even though the foul happened while the ball was live. (10.3.5.a)

B7’s personal foul is enforced first (because it occurred first) – half the distance to the goal from the 15-yard line (to the 7.5-yard line), and then A6’s unsportsmanlike conduct foul is enforced 10 yards from that spot, resulting in the drive starting 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 from the 17.5-yard line.

### Rule 10.4.3 Administering Penalties

- I. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 10 for team A from A's 10-yard line. A1 receives the snap and runs for 3-yard gain, when B5 illegally bats the ball out of A1's hand, and it falls to the ground.

**APPROVED RULING:** B5 is flagged for illegal batting. This foul carries two options for penalty enforcement:

- a) The foul occurred during a running play, so the 10-yard penalty is enforced from the end of the run. The ball will be placed on A's 23-yard line, and team A is awarded a new series, 1<sup>st</sup> & 10. Because the spot of enforcement was beyond the line of scrimmage, the run is now closed. (see 2.10.3)
- b) Team A may choose to have the foul enforced from the previous spot and retain their scrimmage running play for possible use later during the possession. The ball will be placed on A's 20-yard line, and team A is awarded a new series, 1<sup>st</sup> & 10. Because the spot of enforcement was not beyond the line of scrimmage, the run remains open. (see 10.4.3.d)

### Rule 10.5 Fouls by Team A During Kicks

- I. Team K is lined up for a kickoff to start the second half. All team K players begin running forward before the kick. K3 crosses team K's restraining line before the ball is kicked and is 4-yards downfield before the ball is kicked.

**APPROVED RULING:** Team K has committed a live ball offsides foul. Team R shall have the option to have the 5-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot and the ball re-kicked, or from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to team R.

### Rule 10.7 10-Second Subtraction from Game Clock

- I. With 30 seconds remaining in the first half, blocker A7 holds rusher B2 while quarterback A1 is still holding the ball and in the pocket.

**APPROVED RULING:** A7 has committed a holding foul, and if accepted, team A will be penalized 5-yards from the previous spot. There is no 10-second runoff from the game clock because the only live ball fouls that incur a runoff are: an incomplete illegal forward pass, a backward pass thrown out of bounds to stop the clock, and any other foul committed with the intent of stopping the clock.

- II. Team A snaps the ball with 2:04 left in the half. With 1:56 remaining on the clock, quarterback A1 throws an illegal forward pass that is complete to A3, who is immediately deflagged. There is 1:54 showing on the clock after the down.

**APPROVED RULING:** There is no 10-second runoff from the game clock because the foul happened before the two-minute warning had occurred.

## **Rule 10.8      Unfair Clock Tactics**

- I. Team A is trailing with 1:30 left in the first half. Blocker A6 holds rusher B1 prior to the pass. QB A1 passes to A7, who is deflagged in bounds, short of the line-to-gain.

**APPROVED RULING: Team B shall have the option to have the clock started on the snap because the only reason the clock was stopped was to complete the foul on team A.**

- II. Team A is leading with 1:30 left in the first half. Blocker A6 holds rusher B1 prior to the pass. QB A1 passes to A7, who is deflagged in bounds, beyond the line-to-gain.

**APPROVED RULING: The clock will start on the ready for play signal after the 5-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot. Team A gained a first down on the play, and that caused the clock to be stopped (3.3.6.a), therefore there is no option to start the clock on the snap.**

- III. Team A is trailing with 1:30 left in the first half. Rusher B1 charges into blocker A6 prior to the pass without making an attempt to go around the blocker and without stopping prior to making contact. QB A1 passes to A7, who is deflagged in bounds, short of the line-to-gain.

**APPROVED RULING: Team A shall have the option to have the clock started on the snap because the only reason the clock was stopped was to complete the foul on team B.**

---

## NGFFL OFFICIAL MECHANICS MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to provide officials with an understanding of efficient and effective mechanics to properly administer the game. These should be relied on by all officials, both experienced and new.

In the course of this manual, the following position titles are used:

2-Person Crew	Referee (R) and Back Judge (B)
3-Person Crew	Referee (R), Down Judge (D), and Back Judge (B)
4 Person Crew	Referee (R), Down Judge (D), Line Judge (L) and Back Judge (B)

### TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Part I	<a href="#">General Principles and Duties</a>
Part II	<a href="#">Puck (Down Marker) Management</a>
Part III	<a href="#">2-Person Crew Mechanics</a>
Part IV	<a href="#">3- &amp; 4-Person Crew Mechanics</a>
Part V	<a href="#">General Areas Of Responsibility For “Ordinary” Scrimmage Play</a>
Part VI	<a href="#">Official Signals &amp; If In Doubt</a>

---

## CHANGES FOR 2024-2025

Each change or altered segment is identified in the rules by a shaded background.

**NONE**

## PART I GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND DUTIES

### SECTION 1: OFFICIATING UNIFORM

- ALL Look sharp and feel sharp! Officials who wear great looking uniforms send a positive message to players and coaches. Take pride in yourself and your profession.
- ALL The officiating uniform is:
- A. Black and white vertically striped, long or short-sleeved knit shirt with 2" vertical stripes, black knit cuff, and Byron collar.
  - B. Black athletic pants or shorts.
  - C. Baseball cap  
NOTE: The standard headgear is an all-white cap for the Referee and a black cap with white piping for all other officials. Adherence to this standard is optional but if any cap is worn it should convey a professional appearance.
  - D. Additional essential equipment includes a whistle, penalty marker, bean bag, flipping coin, game card, pencil, and a down indicator. The penalty marker shall be a light gold flag (15" X 15") with a middle pouch weighted with a soft material—sand, beans, etc. NOTE: Penalty flags should be carried in such a manner that the majority of the flag is not visible (i.e. in a pocket or tucked into the waistline.)

### SECTION 2: RULES KNOWLEDGE

- ALL Maintain a thorough knowledge of the rules of the game and this should be supplemented by the ability to interpret them correctly. These qualities are acquired through devotion of much time and study. All rules should be enforced fairly and consistently.

### SECTION 3: COMMUNICATION

- ALL Teamwork is important among officials. Continuous communication between all officials during the game is essential for effective game administration. Open and professional communication between officials and players is also an essential element to a fair and balanced game.

### SECTION 4: PROFESSIONALISM

- ALL Refrain from discussing the playing style or players of a particular team with members of another team. During the game, remain calm and administer the game in a professional manner. Make efforts to not take the comments of players, coaches, or spectators in a personal manner but enforce the rules and maintain order in the game when necessary. In no circumstances should an official attempt to "get even" with coaches or players who verbally disagree with that official's calls.

### SECTION 5: HUSTLE

- ALL Keep the game moving smoothly from start to finish. Hustle, but do not hurry. The timing and rhythm between plays should be consistent for both teams and in all game situations.

## SECTION 6: JUDGEMENT

- ALL Although decisions must be instantaneous, let your mind digest what your eyes have seen. Be sure of what you saw and give a ruling with minimal delay. Once you have made a call, signal the ruling in a clear and confident manner.
- ALL Do not look for fouls on every play but be in a position to recognize fouls when they occur. Always be sure that you have seen all of the action which you believe to be a foul and not just part of it. If you only think it might be a foul, then it is not. You must know that it is, in fact, a foul.
- ALL It is not necessary to call every infraction that you see, but only those that need to be called. Examples of calls that can be let go include a subtle shift or minor formation issue early in the game, a flag guard that is simultaneous with a flag pull, or a pull of the runner's jersey which does not actually impede their progress. Safety and sportsmanship fouls, as well as those which create an advantage or disadvantage for a team, must always be called.

## SECTION 7: PRE-GAME DUTIES

- ALL Officials should meet together before each game. It is recommended that a period of at least 10 minutes prior to game time be allocated for this purpose, when possible.
- ALL Coordinate watches, review rule changes or discussions, and check officiating equipment: whistles, flipping coin, bean bags, game cards, penalty flags, ball markers, pencils, and down indicators. Check the playing field and player equipment thoroughly.
- R & B If time allows, meet with the captains/coaches from each team. Answer any questions they may have, and confirm any trick or unique plays you should be aware of.
- R Discuss the following with the captains/coaches:
  - A. Sportsmanship
  - B. Arrange for the down box operator (teams should switch this duty at halftime)
  - C. Ask if the captains/coaches have any specific questions
- D Identify which team will operate the down box in the first half and ensure the team members understand proper and safe operation. Specifically, discuss:
  - A. The down box should be placed at least one yard from the field and not directly on the sideline.
  - B. The down box should be laid down when the action of a play is moving toward the sideline.
  - C. The down box should not be moved until directed to do so by the Down Judge.

## SECTION 8: COIN TOSS

- R Meet both captains on the field and allow them to introduce themselves to each other. Assign one team as "Heads" and the other team as "Tails" for the toss.
  - A. Ask the winning captain for choice of kick/receive or end of field.
  - B. Obtain the remaining choice from the opposing captain.
  - C. Announce which team will be receiving on which end of the field.
- ALL Meet and record the winner of the toss and options they have selected. Hustle to your free kick position. Ensure that the sidelines are clear.



## SECTION 9: DUTIES DURING THE GAME

- ALL Each official must have a thorough knowledge of the duties of their position and be fully informed concerning the duties of the other officials. Be prepared to assume other positions whenever circumstances require it. Each official must:
  - A. Know the down and distance prior to each snap.
  - B. Be ready to assist any official who is temporarily out of position.
  - C. Observe incorrect rulings by other officials and attempt prevention and correction whenever possible.
  - D. Know the prescribed signals and when and how they should be used. Be alert to happenings away from the ball when the play has left your immediate area.
- B Back Judge shall be the primary timekeeper unless the crew decides otherwise prior to the game. If such a change is made, it should be clear to the entire crew who is the primary timekeeper and this information should also be relayed to the captains at the coin toss.
- ALL Officials who are not the primary timekeeper shall also keep a backup clock in case of error. Ideally all officials will keep a clock but at the very least there should be one backup timekeeper in addition to the primary timekeeper.

## SECTION 10: DOWN BOX & FIELD MARKER OPERATION

- R The down box is placed on the R's side of the field in a 2-person crew.
- D The down box is placed on the D's side of the field in a 3- or 4-person crew.
  - NOTE: The teams should alternate responsibility for down box operation per half. If the teams are on opposite sidelines, the position of the officials will alternate per half as well. For example, the D will operate on Team X's sideline for the first half and then operate on Team Y's sideline for the second half when the teams change responsibility for down box operation. The other officials will change their positions accordingly.
- ALL The field markers (line of scrimmage, rush, line-to-gain beanbag) will be set at each first down. The line-to-gain beanbag marker will not be moved until a new series is awarded by the referee. The down box and the Line of Scrimmage and Rush markers will move with each play but should not be moved until it has been verified that no foul occurred during the previous play.
- ALL Know the down and distance on each down. Verify the down with your fellow officials. Be cognizant of fouls which occur during the down and how they will affect the down and distance.
- R Verify that the down box indicates the correct down prior to declaring the ball ready for play.
- D Instruct the down box operator to anticipate the play. If there is any chance of the play coming near their sideline, they should lay (but not drop) the down box on the ground. Remember that the safety of players and officials is paramount. Locate the down box a minimum of 1 yard off the sideline.
- R After each play, during the dead ball period, R should review the positioning of the field markers to insure that the markers were not inadvertently moved during the previous play.

## SECTION 11: GAME PACING AND TEMPO

- R To encourage an appropriately-paced contest, make the ball ready for play as soon as all Team A players have returned to their scrimmage line and all officials are in proper position.

- R If there are discussions or questions from players, do not allow these questions to delay the ready for play unless it could affect the next play (such as penalty enforcement, down/distance, etc.)
- R If the offense is in a huddle, there is no need to be all the way in your pre-snap position when marking the ball ready, provided you are near enough that you can obtain this position well before the snap. Do not have your back to the ball once ready for play is blown.

## SECTION 12: WHISTLE MECHANICS

- ALL Keep the whistle in your hand until the ball becomes dead by rule. Let the action end the play. Do not be in a hurry to sound your whistle. Generally, do not sound your whistle if the ball becomes dead in another official's coverage area.

## SECTION 13: SIGNALS

- ALL All signals should be given promptly and distinctly. "Crew communication" signals should be clear enough for them to see but not given in a manner which attracts undue attention.
- R Give penalty signals while standing still and in clear view of all participants. Signals should be clear, crisp, and not overemphasized, emotional, or exaggerated. Study the Code of Official Football Signals in the back of this manual.

## SECTION 14: FORWARD PROGRESS

- ALL The official responsible for the marking the forward progress spot should maintain a position which keeps all action within view during the play. The covering official should use their downfield foot to mark the dead ball spot.
- R Hustle to the approximate dead ball spot with the ball markers. Align one puck/bag on the downfield foot of the covering official. After placing the first puck/bag on the ground, take five one-yard steps forward and place the second puck/bag on the ground.
- R/D/L In the case of a sack or significant loss of yardage, R should mark the dead ball spot. D or L should hustle to pick up the ball markers and relay them to R.

Usually, the wing officials will rule on a runner's forward progress. Once you have determined that the runner's forward progress has stopped, take the following steps:

1. Square off the spot and move towards the center of the field as far as the importance of the spot.
2. Always hold the spot of forward progress especially when it's close to a first down.
3. Be definitive with your spot. If you come in at an angle or shuffle around near the spot, this will send signals that you are not sure of the spot.
4. Wing officials should make a concerted effort to spot the ball in unison. If the ball is in the Line Judge's side zone, and they clearly have the spot, the Down Judge should adjust to match their spot to match that of the Line Judge. It severely undermines the credibility of the crew if the wing officials do not agree on a forward progress spot. If a disagreement occurs, one of the wing officials must yield to the other in order to keep crew integrity intact. Verbal disputes should never occur.

## SECTION 15: FIRST DOWNS

- ALL If you are certain the play results in a first down, verbally indicate that you have a first down. Stop the clock during the last 2 minutes of the either half. Notify the crew as to the status of the clock for plays close to the sideline. During the last 2 minutes, if the runner is deflagged inbounds near the sideline, give the start clock signal (S2) before stopping the clock to indicate that the clock is only stopped for first down and will begin on the ready for play.
- ALL If the ball becomes dead close to the line to gain and is too close to immediately determine if line to gain is reached, covering official shall notify R by verbally indicating "it's close" and, if the R requests, placing the ball on the dead ball spot. R will make the final determination if the line to gain has been reached or call for a measurement.
- ALL If the ball is near the line to gain but obviously short, covering official shall sell the call by moving in and announcing the next down.
- ALL If the offense loses yardage by play or penalty and has more than 10 yards to make the first down (double stakes), communicate this to other officials by using a cross-armed "X" signal and stating "double stakes."








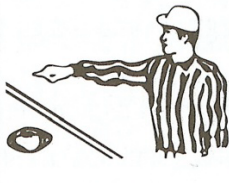


## SECTION 16: INCOMPLETE PASS MECHANICS

- ALL Only the covering official(s) shall signal incomplete pass. This should generally be no more than two officials but may often be one. Come to a stop and stand upright before signaling. Give the signal at shoulder level and in a slow, deliberate manner. On an obvious incompleteness, give a simple signal and short blast of the whistle. If it is a close play, a stronger signal may be needed and should be repeated 2-3 times along with a loud whistle and verbal indication.

## SECTION 17: PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- ALL When you see a foul during a play, drop or toss your flag at the spot of the foul. Note it does not need to be at the exact spot that the foul occurred but should be on the same yard line. Avoid throwing the flag to areas occupied by players.
- ALL When the ball is dead, the calling official should give several short, rapid blasts of the whistle to alert officials, players, and the down box indicator that a foul has occurred. Signal timeout during the last 2 minutes of either half. Continue the short whistle blasts until you have the attention of the other officials to ensure the clock is stopped accordingly and the field markers are not moved.
- ALL The official calling the foul reports to the R using the four W's:
  - A. What: Type of foul. Dead ball or live ball. Describe the foul.
  - B. Who: Give the number and team of the player who fouled.
  - C. When: Status of the ball – loose, in possession, or after a change of team possession.
  - D. Where: The spot where the run ends or the spot of the foul.
- ALL Do not place a hand on or point to the offending player. The official calling the foul should stand by and double check the options discussed by the R. Discuss any discrepancies or questions with R before they present the offended captain with penalty options.
- ALL Assist each other in holding the dead ball spot and the spot of the foul. When possible, cover the penalty flags for each other.
- D Make sure the down box and field markers are not moved. Instruct the down box operator ahead of time not to move the down box if they see a flag or hear the short whistle blasts indicative of a foul.

- R If a decision is needed from the offending team, present the options to the captain. If the decision is obvious there is no need to consult the captain. Announce the foul and give appropriate signals. Ensure the correct yardage is assessed and confirm the number of the next down with the crew.
- L/B When feasible and practical, assist in efficient penalty enforcement by walking off the penalty while R announces the foul. Confirm the number of the next down with the crew.
- D Walk off the penalty yardage independent of the R/L/B and confirm the distance marked off by R, L, or B. Confirm the number of the next down with the crew and move the line-to-gain beanbag marker if a first down is gained or awarded.
- B Verify clock status (in last 2 mins of each half) with R.
- ALL Penalty administration is done as a crew and not only by the R. If you have questions or are unclear of the enforcement, discuss this with R before the yardage is assessed. Correct any mistakes immediately.
- R If a player is disqualified (either temporarily or for the duration of the game), notify the captain or coach and ensure the player leaves the game.
- ALL The calling official should address any questions from the captain or offending player regarding a foul. The explanation should not take too long and should not turn into an argument.

CALLING FOULS				
1. Stop clock for foul	2. Give preliminary signal	3. Indicate offending team	4. Give offended Captain options	5. Referee-Enforce Penalty
				
6. Repeat penalty signal	7. Indicate offending team	8. Indicate down	9. When ball is ready give "ready for play" or ...	10. Wind clock
				

## SECTION 18: TEAM TIMEOUTS

- ALL Any official may recognize the team timeout and stop the clock. Know the team jersey color and player's number or head coach who called the timeout. Repeat timeout signal 2-3 times (S3). Then inform R.
- R Indicate a charged timeout by pointing to the requesting team, both arms extending, giving three chucks. Verbally, notify both team captains and/or coaches that a timeout has been charged.
- ALL Record timeouts. Verbalize and/or signal with each other during each timeout as to the number remaining for each team. R should advise each captain the number of timeouts remaining.

- R Sound whistle with 2-3 short blasts to notify teams when 45 seconds have elapsed. Move towards the ball and mark it ready for play when the timeout has expired.

#### SECTION 19: OFFICIAL'S TIMEOUTS

- ALL Signal timeout and sound your whistle. Indicate to the R the reason for the timeout.
- R Signal timeout and tap your chest with your hands. Declare the ball ready for play as soon as the reason for the timeout has been resolved.
- ALL If the game is disrupted for any reason, record down, distance, position of the ball, score, and time remaining in game.
- ALL Know the status of the clock – whether to start on the snap or the ready. Communicate this information to the R. Snap your fingers to indicate “the clock will start on the snap”. Use a winding motion of your index finger to signal “start the clock” when marking the ball ready for play.

#### SECTION 20: INJURY TIMEOUTS

- ALL Do not stop the clock immediately if in doubt about the nature of an injury. Ask the player if they can continue; wait for a response, then assess the situation. Be deliberate rather than in a hurry.
- ALL Use the same procedure as during an official timeout. Permit as much time as necessary. The safety of the injured player is important. R signals timeout and taps their chest to signal official's timeout (S3).

#### SECTION 21: LAST 2 MINUTES OF EACH HALF

- R Give the 2-minute warning to both captains. Other officials should communicate to the sidelines.
- ALL Throughout the last two minutes, officials should vocally communicate the status of the clock including the time remaining, status of the clock (“running” or “stopped”) and, if stopped, when it will begin (“on the snap” or “on the whistle”). Signals are important, but vocalization also keeps the players informed.
- ALL Use the timeout signal on out-of-bounds plays, penalties, timeouts, and first downs. Do not use the timeout signal for scores. Be mindful that the clock will always stop after any fourth down play.
- B Announce loudly the remaining time in the half and whether the clock is running or stopped after each play in the last two minutes of each half.
- ALL When the ball becomes dead inbounds near the sideline, give the start clock signal (S2) using only two turns of your arm. This signal is a sideline mechanic only and must be used when the runner has been deflagged/tagged inbounds near the sideline.
- ALL When the runner advances beyond the line-to-gain for a first down and is then deflagged/tagged inbounds near the sideline, give the start clock signal (S2), using only two turns of your arm, then stop the clock for the first down. Prior to marking the ball ready for play, the R should confirm with the covering official who will indicate whether the ball became dead inbounds by winding your index finger, or out-of-bounds by snapping your fingers.

#### SECTION 22: HURRY-UP OFFENSE

- R Only slightly increase the tempo when the offensive team is in “hurry-up”. Hustle, but do not hurry. If the offensive team is ready to snap, do not mark the ball ready for play until you have hustled to your pre-snap position. Backpedal and jog quickly, keeping your eyes on the players and the ball. Check with the other officials to make sure they are ready as you move back. Emphatically inform the center and QB to wait for your whistle. Maintain your poise.

### SECTION 23: BETWEEN HALVES

- B When the clock expires for the first half, start your watch immediately and time the halftime.  
ALL Confirm with each other the score as well as the second half options.  
D Instruct the team that handled the down box in the first half to take them to the opposing team’s sideline at the beginning of halftime. Remind the team that did not handle the down box in the first half that they will be responsible for it in the second half.

### SECTION 24: HELPFUL HINTS

- ALL Record all timeouts called including the head coach or player’s number and the team. Be responsible for legality of substitutes.  
ALL Be courteous, but firm and fair, when dealing with players and non-players.  
ALL The number of fingers indicate the down, while a closed fist indicated fourth down.  
ALL Leave the field as a crew rather than individually.

## PART II PUCK (FIELD MARKER) MANAGEMENT

The field markers are:

- Line of Scrimmage (LOS), placed at the Line of Scrimmage and moved on any scrimmage play that gains or loses yardage.
- Rusher Restraining Line (RUSH), placed at the edge of the expanded neutral zone, five yards downfield from the LOS. The RUSH is moved any time the LOS is moved.
- Line to Gain Beanbag (LTG), placed ten yards from the LOS at the start of a new series and is not moved until R awards a new series. The LTG marker is not necessary for Try-for-Points after a score or in a “Goal to Go” situation.

There should be distinction amongst the three markers - either color or form (bean bag, shallow cone, hockey puck) or both. At minimum, the LTG must be distinct from LOS and RUSH.

At the beginning of each game, R should carry three field markers (one of each type) and other officials (B, D, L) should carry one (generally the same form and color as the LOS). This allows the an official to set a new LOS marker at the dead ball spot whilst R moves the previous markers forward.

After the kickoff, R will place the field markers at the end of the run.

Field markers will only be moved if the line of scrimmage is moved (either by a play that gains/losses yardage or penalty). Note: Markers are not moved for a muffed snap that touches the ground before it is possessed.

For plays that lose yardage:

- R will hold the spot of the end of the run.
- When practical, B or L should retrieve the original field markers and bring them to R in order to reset the field. If both B and L are deep downfield, R should mark the spot with a bean bag and then retrieve the field markers to reset the field.

For plays that gain short yardage (less than 5 yards)

- D (*and L in a 4-person crew*) will square off to the spot.
- In a 3-person crew, R will collect the field markers, pick up D’s dead ball spot, and then reset the field. D should use spotting mechanics to make it clear and obvious to R where the dead ball spot is located.
- *In a 4-person crew, the opposite wing official (from the covering official with the dead ball spot) should pick up this spot in the center of the field and be prepared to set the field. R will collect the original field markers and will set one at the new line of scrimmage held by D/L and will provide the other markers to D/L to reset the field. R should hold the snap until D/L has returned to their set position after resetting the field.*

For plays that gain medium yardage (5-10 yards)

- D (*and L in a 4-person crew*) will square off to the spot.
- In a 3-person crew, the D or B will square off and come to the center of the field and wait for the field markers from R. R should hold the snap until D/B has returned to their set position

after re-setting the field. In general, B should reset the field in cases in which a new series is awarded.

- In a 4-person crew, the wing official opposite from the covering official with the dead ball spot should pick up this spot in the center of the field and be prepared to set the field. R will collect and give the field markers to D/L to re-set the field. R should hold the snap until D/L has returned to their set position after resetting the field.

For plays that gain significant yardage (10+ yards)

- If B has the spot, B will hold the spot of the end of the run.
- If L/D has the spot, B should come to the center of the field and wait for the field markers.
- R will collect and give the field markers to B to reset the field.

When a score occurs, the field must be set for a 1- or 2-point try. R will communicate with the captain of the scoring team to determine the election. In all cases, B should find the center of the goal line.

- If a 1-point try is elected, R will set the line of scrimmage marker and toss the rush marker to the B who is positioned correctly.
- If a 2-point try is elected, B will come to the 5-yard line to receive the rush marker, and R will set the line of scrimmage marker on the 10-yard line.

After the try for point, the B should collect the field markers and set them for the next possession.

When a foul occurs, the field markers must be moved. In general, the B and L should assist in the resetting of the field while R announces the penalty. D should verify that the markers are positioned correctly and set the down box for the down. Note: R should communicate the foul to either B/L and confirm the correct enforcement.

Following a change in possession (i.e. interception), whenever possible, B should try to collect the field markers once it is clear that the play is over and that there was no foul on the play. B will then bring them to the new spot, where R will be holding the spot. B should then re-set the field for the next play.

On a declared punt, R should retrieve the football from Team K and place it at the LOS. R should then make sure four Team R players are between the LOS and RUSH markers. Once this criterion is met, R can pick up the remaining field markers. Team K will snap the football from its placement on the ground by R.



## PART III 2-PERSON CREW MECHANICS

### SECTION 1 – SCRIMMAGE PLAYS

#### Article 1: Pre-snap Responsibilities

##### Referee:

- Set the ball markers in the (approximate) middle of the field. Move the down indicator on your hand to the next finger and announce the next down. Confirm that the down box operator has moved (if necessary) and is displaying the correct down. Ensure all players have returned or almost returned to their huddle and you are at or near the sideline. Sound your whistle sharply to mark the ball ready for play then start your watch for the 30 second count. If the offense is in “hurry up”/no-huddle, do not give the ready for play until you are in position on the sideline.
- Ensure your sideline is clear. Coaches, substitutes, and all other sideline personnel should be a minimum of two yards back from the sideline.
- Note: Even when a team is using a hurry-up offense, officials should maintain a consistent tempo throughout the game. Inform your QB and center not to snap the ball until your whistle is sounded. Get to your sideline position quickly and be there before blowing the ready for play whistle. Maintain your poise and control and move quickly, but do not hurry.
- If Team A has not broken the huddle with 15 seconds remaining on the play clock, verbally announce that there are 15 seconds to snap.
- In all cases, verbally announce when 10 seconds and 5 seconds remain on the play clock. If the ball has not been snapped with 3 seconds remaining, count down 3-2-1 so the QB can hear you.
- Basic responsibilities include counting Team A players to ensure no more than 7, watching for dead ball fouls, delay of game, legality of the defensive signals, and illegal shift/motion. Be mindful of which penalties cause the ball to remain dead (false start, encroachment, delay of game, illegal snap, substitution) and those which are live-ball fouls (offside, illegal motion, illegal shift.) You are responsible for monitoring any player in motion.
- Signal to the back judge with a “thumbs up” to confirm exactly 7 A players on the field.
- Note which players are or are not eligible rushers based on their position at the snap.
- Preventive Officiating Recommendations:
  1. Use your body position, particularly your feet, to demonstrate to both Team A and Team B players where the neutral zone is. Verbally indicate to the players if they need to move.
  2. During dead ball periods, be mindful of players’ equipment. Remind players if required equipment is missing or notify them if their equipment becomes illegal or unusable, including untucked shirts and flag belts out of position.

##### Back Judge:

- Assist R in lining up the ball markers at the dead-ball spot if the previous play gained 10 or more yards. Move the down indicator on your hand to the next finger. Indicate the next down with your arm (closed fist for fourth down) and verbally announce the next down to both the R and players. Move to your initial position and be there before Team A breaks the huddle. Continue to communicate with R to clarify any information (down/distance, game clock, quarterback run used/unused).
- Basic responsibilities include counting Team B players to ensure no more than 7 and assisting R with illegal shifts, illegal formations, and false starts near your sideline. Be

mindful of which penalties cause the ball to remain dead (false start, substitution) and those which are live-ball fouls (illegal shift, etc.)

- Signal to the referee with a “thumbs up” to confirm exactly 7 B players on the field.
- Preventive Officiating Recommendations:
  1. Remind defensive players to avoid illegal contact.
  2. During dead ball periods, be mindful of players’ equipment. Remind players if required equipment is missing or notify them if their equipment becomes illegal or unusable, including untucked shirts and flag belts out of position.

## Article 2: Pre-snap positions

### Referee:

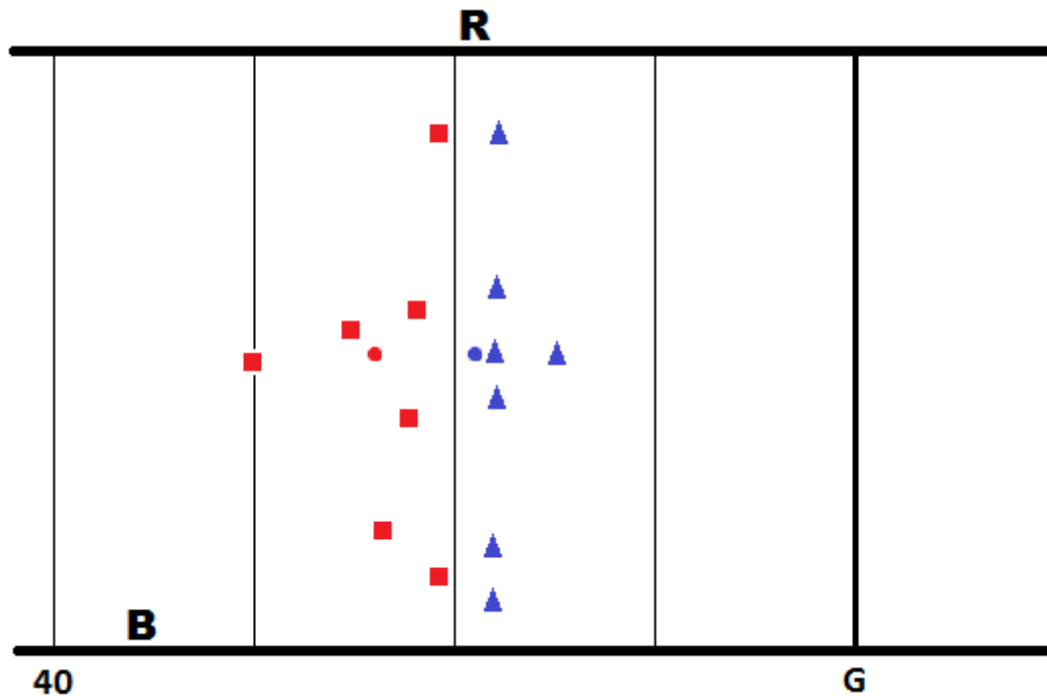
- Take a position in the neutral zone, on the same side of the field as the down box, and on or outside the sideline. If a receiver lines up near the sideline, take two steps backward and out-of-bounds. Be in a position to see the ball and monitor all players on or near the line of scrimmage.

### Back Judge:

- Take a position on the side opposite the R. The position will be approximately 15-20 yards beyond the line of scrimmage or behind the deepest defensive back – whichever is further from the line of scrimmage, and on or near the sideline. Avoid a position which will interfere with the defensive backs. If a receiver lines up near the sideline, your initial position should be out of bounds. Be in position to monitor initial action at the line of scrimmage on your side of the field as well as all action in the defensive secondary.
  - If the ball is snapped between the 10 and 5-yard lines, take your position on the sideline and 2-3 yards deep in the end zone.
  - If the ball is snapped between the 10 and 20, take your position at the junction of the sideline and goal line.
  - In either case, be prepared to move to the end line or goal line as the play dictates. If receivers go deep into the end zone, move to cover the end line. If receivers run short routes, move to the goal line.
  - You still have responsibility for the sideline on your side.

### ALL:

- Basic positions may vary depending upon play situations, team formations, field, and weather conditions. Always “box in” the play. Avoid positions which may cause scrambling to avoid interference with players. STAY WIDE! Remember, it is always easier to move in than back pedal.



### Article 3: During the Play

#### Referee:

- R's mental checklist: Snap, Ball, Rush, QB, Pass.
- Watch to ensure the snap is legal and follow the ball to ensure snap does not strike the ground either before or after touching a player. If so, sound whistle sharply.
- Observe defensive players as they rush the passer and move toward the blockers. Adjust your position to see through the play and call illegal contact.

If QB drops back to pass:

- Move 2 to 3 yards toward the offensive backfield. Remember to stay wide and keep your shoulders parallel to the sideline. Observe action by pass rusher(s) and blocker(s) as well as potential receivers behind, at, or just across the LOS. You have a lot of action to watch here so try to keep it all in view while focusing on the most crucial action. Remember you are primarily responsible for pass rush and blocking. If a receiver is lined up very close to your sideline, try to be able to see if that receiver steps out of bounds but don't let that compromise your coverage of blocking and rushing.
- If there are potential receivers behind LOS, be in position to rule whether a pass is forward or backward. If the pass is backward, "punch back" with your arm toward Team A's end line and verbalize "back" to sell the call. If it is close but indeed forward, "punch forward" with your arm toward Team B's end line. Remember, if in doubt, the pass is forward.

If QB scrambles or runs:

- Keep eyes on pass rush and blocking until such time the rusher has cleared the blocker, then focus on action between pass rush and quarterback. Watch for illegal contact/holding and flag guarding. Be careful of the agile runner who changes directions quickly.
- If the QB runs toward your sideline, move up-field (toward Team A's end line) to a position behind the QB and trail, watching action by/on the runner and the runner's feet in relation to the sideline.

- If the QB runs away from you, move back to the LOS and hold until the runner has crossed or a pass is thrown. Observe action by/on the runner.
- If a forward pass is thrown following the scramble and such pass is near the LOS, hustle to the spot where the ball was released. Check the spot of the pass with the ball marker. If the passers foot was clearly past the scrimmage line, drop your flag at the spot of the pass. If in doubt, the pass is legal.
- If the QB advances beyond the LOS, trail the play and mark forward progress with your downfield foot when the runner is deflagged.

Following a pass:

- Protect the quarterback. Once the pass is released, yell “ball’s away”. This will tell the rushers to stop pursuing and help avoid potentially roughing the passer. If any Team B player is rushing the passer, your eyes shall remain with the passer until it is clear the Team B player has ceased the rush. Note: Your first instinct will be to follow the ball. You must resist this instinct and watch the action around the passer. Even though this is a game of controlled contact, the rusher/passers situation is one of the most likely to result in illegal contact.
- Once the QB is no longer threatened, turn your eyes downfield to assist in covering the catch. Be ready to mark the spot of forward progress on a gain of less than 10-15 yards.
- Hustle and stay parallel to the sideline until you reach the yard line where the ball becomes dead. Then “square off” and move toward the ball 2 or 3 steps. Keep all players in front of your view. Sell a close call by hustling to the dead ball yard line. REMIND TEAM A PLAYERS TO TAKE THE BALL BACK TO THEIR HUDDLE.

Back Judge:

- The B’s mental checklist is: Players, Zone, and Ball.
- When the ball is snapped, your first couple steps are always backward. Your initial focus is action by the receivers on your side, then widen your view to observe any illegal contact involving receivers beyond the LOS. Use your peripheral vision to watch all the receivers coming off the line of scrimmage line.
- If a screen pass or run develops, watching blocking action ahead of runner and stay ahead of the play.
- On downfield routes, be sure to stay ahead of the deepest receiver while still keeping an all-field view until the ball is thrown.
- Once the ball is thrown, observe action by/on the intended receiver.
- Be prepared to mark forward progress on gains of over 10-15 yards or cover the runner to the goal line.
- Keep an “outside looking in” angle. This is the “boxing-in” principle. Do not get caught on the inside. If the runner moves toward the R’s side, do not commit too quickly. Throwbacks and cutbacks are very common. Let the flow of the play dictate your movement.
- Always be prepared to make an in-bounds/out-of-bounds call on your sideline if necessary.
- Be mindful that the play may still develop into a pass until the runner has crossed the line of scrimmage.
- Even on short gains, you may need to come back to the spot to assist R by holding the spot as R obtains and sets the ball markers for the next play, especially if play ended on R’s sideline.

ALL:

- Rule on all forward passes thrown in or near your area. Pay close attention to button hooks, traps, and muffs. If in doubt on a pass being complete or incomplete, concede the call to the official facing the receiver. If you think it is a catch, move toward the forward progress spot when the ball becomes dead and look for help.

- On questionable passes toward the middle of the field, communicate quickly and effectively with your partner official. If you are the covering official and you are unsure the pass was complete, look at your partner for possible help. If you are not the covering official and you had a good angle to be sure the pass was complete, make eye contact with the covering official and nod your head affirmatively. Avoid using the “catch” signal unless you are 100% sure or have confirmed with your partner.
- If either official is certain that the ball struck the ground or the pass was otherwise incomplete, sound your whistle sharply and signal an incomplete pass. Move quickly toward the play and sell the call. Concisely and affirmatively declare why the pass was incomplete (i.e. – “Never controlled the ball!” or “Trapped against the ground!”)
- If there is uncertainty regarding pass completion, the official who was facing the front of the receiver will be responsible for the call.
- Passes thrown toward the sideline can be challenging. At the snap, be aware of receivers who move toward the sideline. If the passer releases the ball toward your sideline, adjust your position relative to the receiver and the sideline. Adjust your position so you are at least 5 yards away from the receiver, standing still, and straddling the sideline. Most calls are missed because the official is either too close to the receiver or does not have a clear view of the sideline. Watch the feet first and then the ball. Pause for a brief moment to “let your mind digest what your eyes have seen,” then make the call.
- Remember, you have responsibility for the Team A player who goes out-of-bounds on your sideline and returns to participate. Throw your bean bag or hat.
- Take responsibility for your sideline – end line to end line. Be ready to move quickly downfield on a long pass.
- When a runner steps out-of-bounds, move to the spot and hold it. If players are still out-of-bounds, face out-of-bounds and keep your eyes on the players until all action has stopped and they have returned inbounds. Any fouls which occur out-of-bounds while the ball is dead must be penalized. Signal timeout immediately during the last 2 minutes of either half. Repeat the signal 3 times. Look professional by giving good, sharp signals.

## SECTION 2 - GOAL LINE PLAYS (INCLUDING TRY)

### Article 1: Pre-snap Positions

#### Referee:

- Take your position on the line of scrimmage at its junction with the sideline. If the ball is snapped from on or inside the 5-yard line, be prepared to move to the goal line instantly at the snap while still covering your backfield responsibilities.
- Pre-snap responsibilities are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.

#### Back Judge:

- If the ball is snapped on or inside the 5-yard line, take your position at the junction of the end line and sideline. You have responsibility for the entire end line as well as the sideline on your side.
- If the ball is snapped between the 10 and 5-yard lines, take your position on the sideline and 2-3 yards deep in the end zone.
- In either case, be prepared to move to the end line or goal line as the play dictates. If receivers go deep into the end zone, move to cover the end line. If receivers run short routes, move to the goal line.
- You still have responsibility for the sideline on your side.

- Pre-snap responsibilities are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.

## Article 2: During the play

### Referee:

- At the snap, move downfield while focusing your attention to action in the backfield. If snapped from on or inside the 5-yard line, move to the goal line immediately. If snapped from outside the 5-yard line, move toward the goal line but not so far that you can no longer see action in the backfield. After the runner has crossed the line of scrimmage or the pass has been thrown, hustle toward the goal line. You must still be attentive to rusher/passers action in the backfield.
- If a runner is carrying the ball toward the goal line, you should be at the goal line ahead of the runner. Take a stationary position straddling the goal line and be mindful of the runner's feet in relation to the sideline.
- If a pass is thrown to the end zone, you should be at the goal line and in position to rule on completion of the catch as well as possession in the end zone. The back judge may have to move off the goal line in this scenario so be sure you have a clear view of the entire goal line.
- After a score, give the official touchdown signal to the sideline. Explain the PAT options to the offensive captain. Note the time of the score on your game card.
- Note: When Team A is near its own end zone (on or inside its 5-yard line) move to the goal line after the snap. This will put you in a great position to rule on a possible safety. Stay on the goal line and let the play develop. Do not over-commit and risk getting trapped. Let the play come to you. Remember, wider is better.

### Back Judge:

- At the snap, watch the routes of the receivers. If receivers run routes deep into the end zone, move toward the end line to cover this action. If no receivers run deep routes into the end zone, come up to the goal line.
- If you are on/near the end line and the pass is thrown short or run from the backfield to your side, hustle to goal line to box in the play. Work with R to confirm call if you are both on the goal line.
- If you are on/near the end line and the pass is thrown deep into the end zone, take a stationary position on the end line but facing the field of play.
- If you are on/near the goal line and the pass is thrown short or run from the backfield, take a stationary position straddling the goal line and be prepared to make the call. Be mindful of R's position and the fact that they may need assistance on a goal line call if not able to get in position.

### ALL:

- Indicate a score using a sharp touchdown signal and a solid blast of the whistle.
- Make a call ONLY when you see possession by the offense in the opponent's end zone. You must see the football! Do not signal just because another official signals.
- If another official is in position opposite you, confirm nonverbally with a nod or shake of the head before either of you signal. If you have something different, come in to talk and quickly make a ruling.
- If play is to the opposite side of the field, hustle across the field for a better view but be either on the goal line (R/B) or end line (B) as you move. Be sure to stay well outside any players that may potentially be involved in the play.
- If you are in a stationary position on the goal line and the runner is moving toward the sideline, be sure be at least 2-3 yards off the sideline while still straddling the goal line. This

will give you the best view of whether the runner breaks the plane of the goal line or steps out of bounds. This will also protect you from collisions with players.

### SECTION 3 - PUNTS

#### Article 1: Pre-Snap Responsibilities

##### Referee:

- Prior to all fourth down plays, ask Team A captain if they elect to make a declared punt. If no answer, indicate you need a prompt response or there will not be protection. If a punt is declared, announce this to all players and ensure B hears you as well. If no punt is declared, announce only that it is fourth down or that no punt is declared. (Do not say “they’re going for it” as Team A may still make an unannounced punt.) The decision can only be changed if there is a team timeout or a penalty. If this occurs, ask Team A captain for their decision again.
- If a protected punt is declared, remind both teams that there is still a minimum number of players required in the expanded neutral zone, there is no movement until the ball is kicked, and Team A must snap the ball. Do not allow the ball to be snapped until everyone has met the punt requirements.
- Count Team A players, monitor the neutral zone, expanded neutral zone, and the other responsibilities as a normal scrimmage play.

##### Back Judge:

- Listen for R’s announcement regarding Team A’s choice of play. Repeat this choice to Team B to ensure they are aware. If Team A announces protected punt and there is no Team B player lined up deep to receive the punt, ensure Team B captain is aware that Team A intends to punt.
- Count Team B players and have bean bag in hand. Be in your pre-snap position before the offense breaks the huddle.

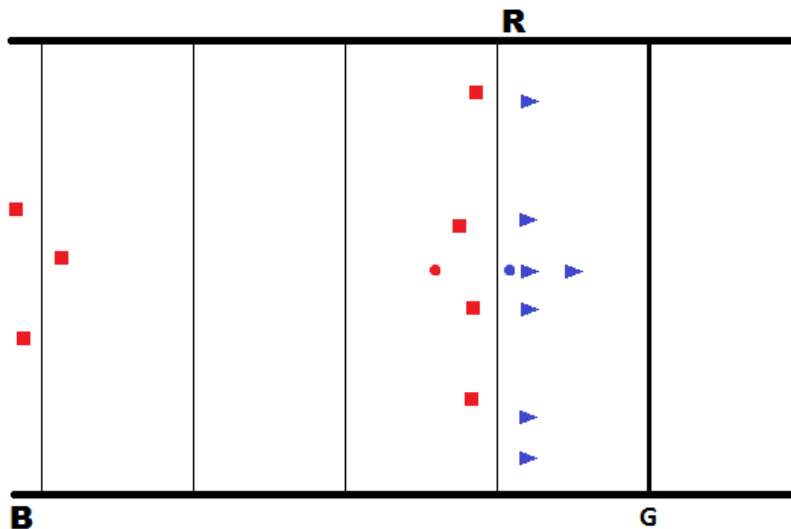
#### Article 2: Pre-Snap Positions

##### Referee:

- Take a position on the sideline and over the neutral zone. You will remain in this position until after the ball is kicked.

##### Back Judge:

- Take a position parallel to the deepest receivers and at least 8 to 10 yards wide. Do not get caught inside. Be sure you can move back to monitor the sideline if necessary.



### Article 3: During the Play

#### Referee:

- Ensure the punter makes a clean kick.
- Monitor the neutral zone to ensure that nobody enters until after the ball has crossed the neutral zone.
- If the kicker misses the ball, sound whistle sharply and move to mark the dead ball spot (where the ball touched the ground).
- During the return, monitor the blocks around and ahead of the runner. The runner is not your primary responsibility unless they break free down your side of the field. For long returns, you are responsible for the goal line.
- For punts out-of-bounds to your sideline, you are responsible for the dead-ball spot. If the ball goes out-of-bounds through the air, use your best approximation of where the ball crossed the sideline.
- Move to the dead ball spot and set the ball markers. Allow B to release toward their pre-snap position for the next scrimmage play.

#### Back Judge:

- Watch for a kick that crosses the neutral zone.
- As Team K players move downfield, watch for illegal contact but keep your focus on the Team R players in the area of the kick.
- You are responsible for the Team R goal line and end line. If the ball is snapped on Team R's side of midfield, be in a position to monitor the goal line if necessary.
- For punts out-of-bounds to your sideline, you are responsible for the dead-ball spot. If the ball goes out-of-bounds through the air, use your best approximation of where the ball crossed the sideline.
- Watch the receiver to ensure the kick is caught cleanly. If receiver muffs the ball which then contacts the ground, sound your whistle immediately to indicate a dead ball.
- Drop your bean bag at the end of the kick, where it is caught cleanly or recovered after being grounded.



- Once the punt is caught, move with the play and remember to stay wide, preferably along the sideline. You are responsible for the runner and the dead-ball spot.

ALL:

- Be alert for kick catch interference, fumbles, muffs, and backward passes. If the runner moves into your area, move toward a position to rule on backward passes. Stay parallel with the runner.

## SECTION 4 - KICKOFFS

### Article 1: Pre-Kick Responsibilities

Referee:

- Ensure both teams are ready for play. Confirm to players the direction they will be playing for the half.
- Hustle to your pre-kick position.
- Count Team R players to ensure no more than 7. Do not allow game to begin if Team R has more than 7 players on the field.
- Signal to the back judge with a “thumbs up” to confirm exactly 7 A players on the field.
- Check Team R players to ensure they are legally and properly equipped. Do not allow game to begin if a Team R player has an equipment issue.
- Confirm with B that Team K is ready by raising your hand above your head. Give a long, loud blast of the whistle and hand signal to indicate ready for play.

Back Judge:

- Assist R in ensuring both teams are ready for play. Assist Team K and Team R in getting lined up properly on their respective restraining lines. Instruct kicker to wait for R’s whistle before kicking.
- Backpedal to your pre-kick position.
- Count Team K players to ensure no more than 7. Do not allow game to begin if Team K has more than 7 players on the field.
- Signal to the referee with a “thumbs up” to confirm exactly 7 A players on the field.
- Check Team K players to ensure they are legally and properly equipped. Do not allow game to begin if a Team K player has an equipment issue.
- Raise your hand to notify R that both you and Team K are ready.

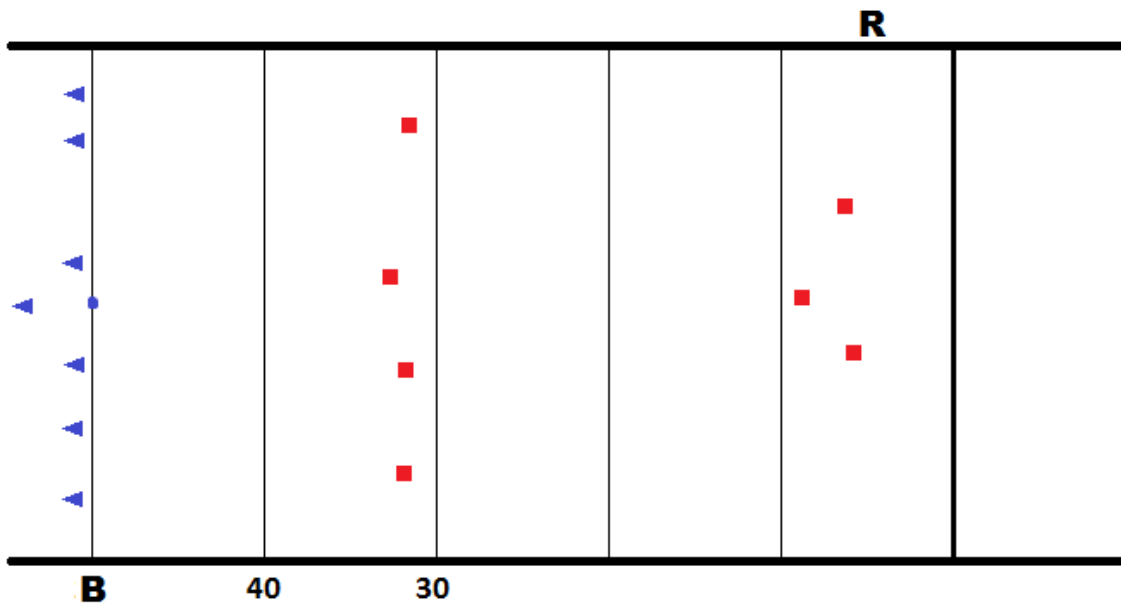
### Article 2: Pre-Kick Positions

Referee:

- Take a position parallel to the deepest receivers and on or near the sideline where the down box will be operated. Do not get caught inside. Be sure you can move back to monitor the sideline and/or the goal line if necessary.

Back Judge:

- Take a position on Team K’s kick line (usually the 30, unless changed by penalty) and on the sideline opposite from where the down box will be operated. Be in position to monitor both teams’ restraining lines to see any encroachment that may occur.



### Article 3: After the Kick

#### Referee:

- As Team K players move downfield, watch for illegal contact but keep your focus on the Team R players in the area of the kick.
- For kicks out-of-bounds to your sideline, you are responsible for the dead-ball spot. If the ball goes out-of-bounds through the air, use your best approximation of where the ball crossed the sideline. Drop your flag at the out-of-bounds spot, if kick is untouched by R in the field of play.
- Watch the receiver to ensure the kick is caught cleanly. If receiver muffs the ball which then falls to the ground, sound your whistle immediately to indicate a dead ball.
- Once the kick is caught, move with the play and remember to stay wide, preferably along the sideline. You are responsible for the runner and the dead-ball spot.

#### Back Judge:

- Monitor action between Team K and Team R players as they move downfield, watching for illegal blocks or contact.
- During the return, monitor the blocks around and ahead of the runner. The runner is not your primary responsibility unless they break free down the field.
- For kickoffs out-of-bounds to your sideline, you are responsible for the dead-ball spot. If the ball goes out-of-bounds through the air, use your best approximation of where the ball crossed the sideline. Drop your flag at the out-of-bounds spot, if the kick is untouched by R in the field of play.

## PART IV

### 3- & 4-PERSON CREW MECHANICS

Note: There is little difference in the mechanics of 3- and 4-person crews. In a crew of 4, the Down Judge will handle the down box and the Line Judge will work opposite while the Back Judge works in the middle of the field. This section is mainly written for 3-person crews and the differences for 4-person crews are indicated by italicized and underlined text.

#### SECTION 1 - PASSING AND RUNNING PLAYS

##### Article 1: Pre-Snap Responsibilities

###### Referee:

- Set the ball markers in the (approximate) middle of the field. Move the down indicator on your hand to the next finger and announce the next down. Visually confirm the down box is correct. Ensure all players have returned or almost returned to their huddle. Sound your whistle sharply, mark the ball ready for play and start your stopwatch for the 30 second count.
- Note: Even when a team is using a hurry-up offense, officials should maintain a consistent tempo throughout the game. Inform your QB and center not to snap the ball until your whistle is sounded. Backpedal to your pre-snap position quickly and be there before marking the ball ready for play. Maintain your poise and control and move quickly, but do not hurry.
- If Team A has not broken the huddle with 15 seconds remaining on the play clock, verbally announce that there are 15 seconds to snap.
- In all cases, verbally announce when 10 seconds and 5 seconds remain on the play clock. If the ball has not been snapped with 3 seconds remaining, count down 3-2-1 so the QB can hear you.
- Basic responsibilities include counting Team A players to ensure no more than 7, watching for dead ball fouls, delay of game, legality of the defensive signals, and illegal shift/motion. Be mindful of which penalties cause the ball to remain dead (false start, encroachment, delay of game, illegal snap, substitution) and those which are live-ball fouls (illegal motion, illegal shift, etc.)
- Note which players are or are not eligible rushers based on their position at the snap, especially those on the side of the field opposite the L.
- Preventive Officiating Recommendations:
  1. Remind the QB that all players must be set for one second before the snap.
  2. If a team is shifting, verbally remind them to “get set.”
  3. During dead ball periods, be mindful of players’ equipment. Remind players if required equipment is missing or notify them if their equipment becomes illegal or unusable, including untucked shirts and flag belts out of position.

###### Down Judge:

- Assist the R in lining up the ball markers by holding the dead-ball spot. Use your downfield foot forward to indicate the dead ball spot and signal with your arm when they have reached the correct spot. Move the down indicator on your hand to the next finger and verbally announce the next down. Once R has set the ball markers, move to your initial position and ensure the down box is correctly placed and displaying the correct down. Continue to communicate with crew as necessary to clarify any information (down/distance, game clock, quarterback run).

- Basic responsibilities include watching for dead ball fouls, legality of the defensive signals, position of potential rushers, and illegal shift/motion. Be mindful of which penalties cause the ball to remain dead (false start, encroachment, delay of game, illegal snap, substitution) and those which are live-ball fouls (offside, illegal motion, illegal shift, etc.) You are responsible for monitoring any player in motion.
- Preventive Officiating Recommendations:
  1. Use your body position, particularly your feet, to demonstrate to both Team A and Team B players where the neutral zone is. Verbally indicate to the players if they need to move. Take control of the scrimmage lines. Remember, it is sometimes difficult for the players to line up correctly on a field with limited line markings.
  2. Do not be too technical regarding formation positions. Use common sense for the players benefit but ensure that no advantage is gained.
  3. During dead ball periods, be mindful of players' equipment. Remind players if required equipment is missing or notify them if their equipment becomes illegal or unusable, including untucked shirts and flag belts out of position.

Line Judge:

- *Pre-snap responsibilities are same as Down Judge*

Back Judge:

- If you have the downfield spot, hold it until the spot is picked up by the D or L. This is especially important on plays that gain 20 or more yards. Use your downfield foot forward to indicate the dead ball spot. It is helpful for game pace if you have extra pucks and have them set by the time the R and teams have moved to the succeeding spot.
- Move the down indicator on your hand to the next finger and confirm the next down with the crew. Once you no longer need to hold spot, move to your initial position and be there when Team A breaks the huddle. Continue to communicate with crew to clarify any information (down/distance, game clock, quarterback run.)
- Basic responsibilities include counting Team B players to ensure no more than 7 and assisting with determining eligible rushers (in a crew of 3.) Be mindful of which penalties cause the ball to remain dead (illegal substitution) and those which are live-ball fouls.
- Preventive Officiating Recommendations:
  1. Remind defensive players to avoid illegal contact.
  2. During dead ball periods, be mindful of players' equipment. Remind players if required equipment is missing or notify them if their equipment becomes illegal or unusable, including untucked shirts and flag belts out of position.

Article 2A: Pre-Snap Positions (3-person crew)

Referee:

- Take a position on the side opposite the D and the same side as the B. Initial position should be 7-10 yards behind LOS and at least 5 yards outside the deepest offensive back. Be in a position to monitor the snap, backs, and line players, except the wide-out receivers.

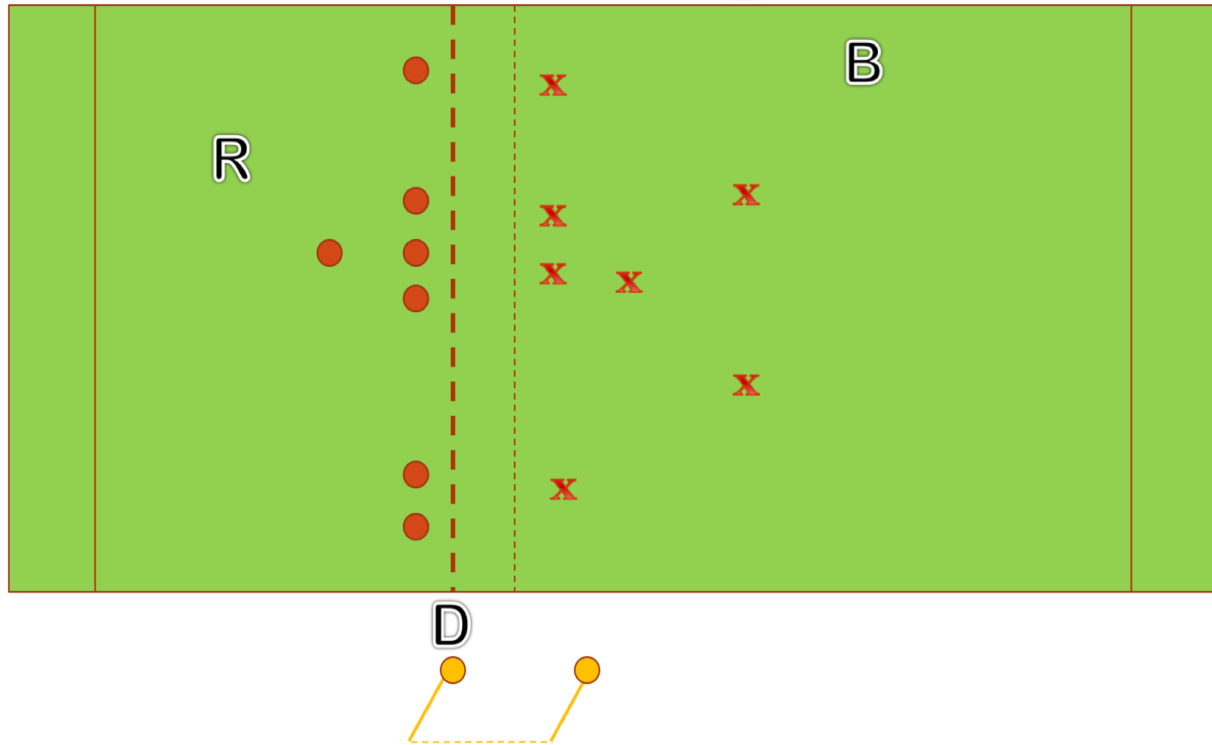
Down Judge:

- Take a position in the neutral zone and on the sideline. If a receiver lines up near the sideline, take two steps backward and out-of-bounds. Be in a position to see the ball and monitor all players on or near the scrimmage lines.

Back Judge:

- Take a position on the side opposite the D. The position will be approximately 15-20 yards beyond the line of scrimmage or behind the deepest defensive back – whichever is further from the line of scrimmage, and on or near the sideline. Avoid a position which will interfere with the defensive backs. If a receiver lines up near the sideline, your initial position should

be out of bounds. Be in position to monitor initial action at the line of scrimmage on your side of the field as well as all action in the defensive secondary.



Note: Basic positions may vary depending upon play situations, team formations, field, and weather conditions. Always “box in” the play. Avoid positions which may cause scrambling to avoid interference with players. STAY WIDE! Remember, it is always easier to move in than back pedal.

Article 2B: Pre-Snap Positions (4-person crew)

Referee:

- Take a position on the passing arm side of the quarterback. Initial position should be 7-10 yards behind LOS and at least 5 yards outside the deepest offensive back. Be in a position to monitor the snap, backs, and line players, except the wide-out receivers.

Down Judge:

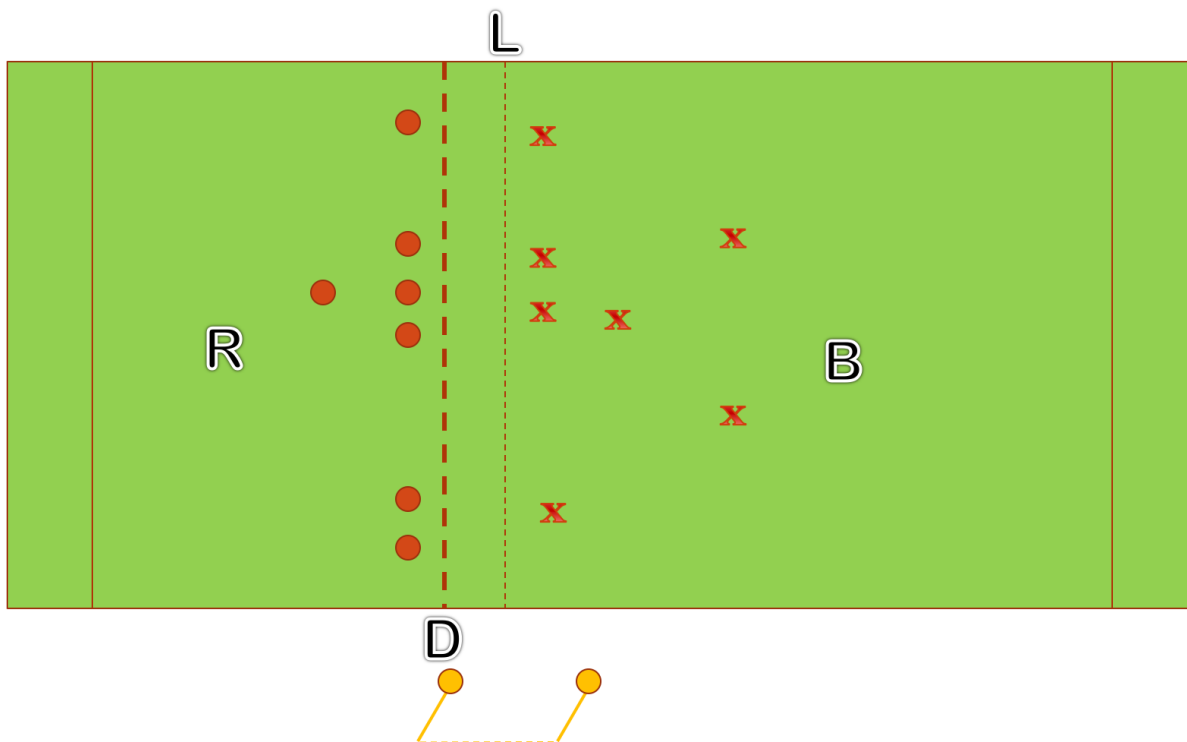
- Take a position in the neutral zone and on the sideline. If a receiver lines up near the sideline, take two steps backward and out-of-bounds. Be in a position to see the ball and monitor all players on or near the scrimmage lines.

Line Judge:

- Start on the line of scrimmage and on the sideline. After offensive team lines up and you have verified they are correctly positioned, drift downfield to approximately the five-yard rush marker. If a receiver lines up near the sideline, take two steps backward and out of bounds. Be in a position to see the ball and monitor all players on or near the scrimmage lines.
- On fourth down and less than five yards to go, be on the line to gain at the snap.

Back Judge:

- Take a position in the middle of the field. The position will be approximately 20 yards beyond the line of scrimmage or behind the deepest defensive back – whichever is further from the line of scrimmage. Avoid a position which will interfere with the defensive backs. Be in position to monitor all action in the defensive secondary.



Note: Basic positions may vary depending upon play situations, team formations, field, and weather conditions. Always “box in” the play. Avoid positions which may cause scrambling to avoid interference with players. STAY WIDE! Remember, it is always easier to move in than back pedal.

## Article 3: During the Play

Referee:

- The R’s mental checklist is: Snap, Ball, QB, Rush, and Pass.
- Watch for the snap striking the ground either before or after touching a player. If so, sound whistle sharply.
- Observe defensive players as they rush the passer and move toward the blockers. Adjust your position to see through the play and call illegal contact.
- Read your “keys” after the snap. Do the receivers move downfield and run pass patterns? Do the line players start screen blocking and the backs begin running? A majority of the plays are passes. Many runs develop off the pass.

## If you read run:

- If the runner moves toward either sideline, follow them while maintaining an “inside looking out” angle. Be careful of the agile runner who changes directions quickly. Stay wide and do not follow the runner too tightly. Always be aware of the throw-back.
- Mark forward progress with your downfield foot when the runner is deflagged behind the line of scrimmage.

- If the runner moves up the middle, continue to officiate. Observe action in the offensive backfield and screen blocks around the runner. Drift downfield, trailing the play and keeping all players in front of you. Always try to get the big picture.
- Be in a position to rule whether a pass thrown behind the neutral zone is forward or backward. When a pass is thrown backward, immediately extend your arm with a closed fist at a 90° angle toward the passing team's end line (S17) and yell "back". Remember that a sideways pass is a backward pass. When in doubt, the pass was backward.
- Mark forward progress with your downfield foot when the runner is deflagged behind the scrimmage line. Observe fouls around the runner after they crosses the neutral zone. You are responsible for the pitch person.
- If the QB backpedals more than 2 to 3 yards, take a step backward for every step they take. Protect the QB. Remember, the QB is your primary responsibility.

If you read pass:

- Take 2 to 3 steps toward the offensive backfield. Remember to stay wide and keep your shoulders parallel to the sideline. Remain in position to see the quarterback, offensive backfield, and defensive rushers.
- Be in position to determine whether a pass is thrown behind the Team A scrimmage line is forward or backward. If the pass is backward, extend your arm with a close fist at a 90° angle toward the passing team's end line (S17), yell "back" and "sell" the call. If intended to be thrown backward, but the pass goes forward, extend your arm with an open hand forward and yell "forward" (S45). Remember, if in doubt, the pass is backward.
- Protect the quarterback. Once the pass is released, yell "ball's away". This will help the defense avoid roughing the passer. If any Team B player is rushing the passer, your eyes shall remain with the passer until it is clear the Team B player has ceased the rush. Note: Your first instinct will be to follow the ball. You must resist this instinct and watch the action around the passer. Even though this is a game of no contact, the rusher/passers situation is one of the most likely to result in accidental contact.
- When the passer moves toward the Team A scrimmage line (first ball marker), follow them but stay wide. If a forward pass is thrown near the scrimmage line, hustle to the spot where the ball was released. Check the spot of the pass with the ball marker. If the passer's feet were past the scrimmage line, drop your flag at the spot of the pass. If in doubt, the pass is legal.
- Once the pass is thrown, and you have cleared the action between rusher and passer, move slowly downfield, trailing the action of the play. Monitor potential illegal contact while the ball is in the air and during the subsequent run. Do not leave any players behind you unless they are very obviously out of the play.

Down Judge:

- The D's mental checklist is: Snap, Players, Zone, and Ball.
- Observe defensive players as they rush the passer and move toward the screen blockers.
- Read your "keys" after the snap. Do the receivers move downfield and run pass patterns? Do the line players start screen blocking and the backs begin running? A majority of the plays are passes. Many runs develop off the pass.

If you read run:

- Hold at the neutral zone and observe the screen blockers and defenders ahead of and around the runner.
- Once the runner has crossed the neutral zone, strive to be in a position which parallels the runner, especially for the first 8 to 10 yards downfield. By staying wide and running parallel with the runner, your position will be excellent to rule on the legality of a backward pass. When a pass is thrown backward, immediately extend your arm with a closed fist at a 90°

angle toward the passing team's end line (S17) and yell "back". If thrown forward beyond Team A's scrimmage line (first ball marker) or after a change of possession, drop your flag on the corresponding yard line where the pass was thrown. Remember that a sideways pass is a backward pass. When in doubt, the pass was backward.

- If the runner moves near your sideline, move to a trailing position to monitor the runner's feet in relation to the sideline. Stay a couple yards back to avoid interfering with the runner or the action of the play.
- Observe any contact on the runner or flag guarding.

If you read pass:

- Slide downfield 3 to 5 yards initially. Keep your shoulders parallel to the sideline. Shuffle your feet similar to a defensive basketball player, keeping in mind not to cross your feet. This will allow you to move in either direction quickly.
- Observe the initial charge of the line players for a foul by either team. Then watch for any illegal contact by the receivers and defensive backs primarily on your side of the field.
- Monitor both the downfield players and the line players on your side of the field. Be mindful of contact, blocking, and rushing.
- Read the QB's eyes to determine the direction of the pass. Once the ball is thrown, move quickly to the most advantageous position to see between the receiver and the defender. Adjust your position for the best angle. This will place you in a proper position to rule on a foul by either player. Stay wide. Be in a position to cover any pass near the sideline.
- A large percentage of the passes are designed for short or intermediate yardage. Therefore, you are responsible for forward progress to approximately 8 to 10 yards beyond the neutral zone. Constantly be aware of the zone line-to-gain and the goal line.
- Make eye contact with the Back Judge on questionable passes on the sideline. Both of you should have the same call on complete and incomplete passes. For example, the official looking at the receiver's back will rule on whether their feet were in bounds and the official looking at the front of the receiver will rule on whether a catch was good or not.
- Hustle and stay parallel to the sideline until you reach the yard line where the ball becomes dead. Then "square off" and move toward the ball 2 or 3 steps. Keep all players in front of your view. Thrust your downfield foot forward to mark the foremost point of the ball. Sell the close call by hustling to the dead ball yard line. REMIND TEAM A PLAYERS TO TAKE THE BALL BACK TO THEIR HUDDLE.
- Constantly be aware of the zone line-to-gain and the goal line. Sell the close call by hustling to the dead ball spot.

Line Judge:

- SAME AS DOWN JUDGE

Back Judge:

- The B's mental checklist is: Snap, Players, Zone, and Ball.
- When the ball is snapped, your first couple steps are always backward. Observe any illegal contact by players in and beyond the neutral zone. Use your peripheral vision to watch all the receivers coming off the line of scrimmage line. Read your "keys" for pass versus run.

If you read run:

- Watch the screen blocking ahead of and around the runner. If the runner or receiver moves toward your sideline, move down the sideline a few steps toward the runner but keep plenty of space between you and the runner in case the runner breaks downfield. Have a clear view of the sideline to watch for the runner stepping out of bounds.
- Keep an "outside looking in" angle. This is the "boxing-in" principle. Do not get caught on the inside. If the runner moves toward the R's side, do not commit too quickly. Throwbacks and cutbacks are very common. Let the flow of the play dictate your movement.



- Always be prepared to make an in-bounds/out-of-bounds call on your sideline if necessary.
- Be mindful that the play may still develop into a pass until the runner has crossed the line of scrimmage.

If you read pass:

- Continue to move backward as the receivers establish their patterns. Keep the entire field of receivers in your line of side, paying particular attention to those receivers being closely defended.
- Let the play come to you. Do not allow any receivers behind you. The goal line and end line are your responsibility.
- Take a quick look at the passer's eyes. In most cases, they will show you where the pass is going. Once the pass is thrown, focus on the receivers and defenders in the area of the pass. Your objective is moving to a position to obtain an angle which allows you to see between the receiver and the defender as the ball arrives.
- Make eye contact with the D or L on questionable passes on the sideline. Both of you should have the same call on complete and incomplete passes. For example, the official looking at the receiver's back will rule on whether their feet were in bounds and the official looking at the front of the receiver will rule on whether a catch was good or not.

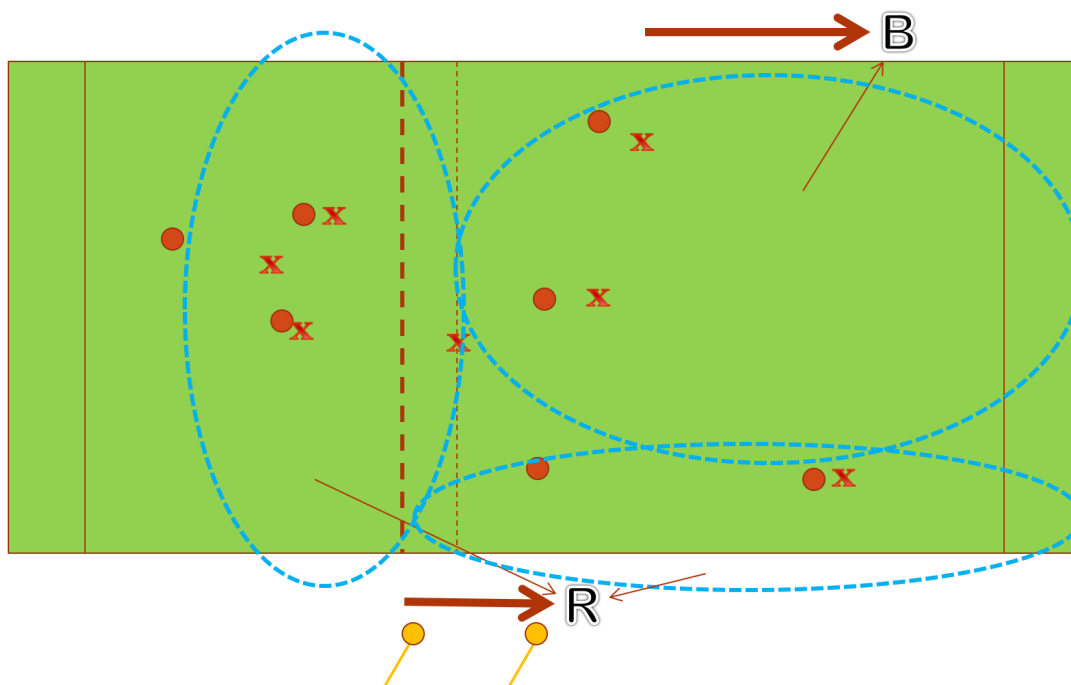
ALL:

- Rule on all forward passes thrown in or near your area. Pay close attention to button hooks, traps, and muffs. If in doubt on a pass being complete or incomplete, concede the call to the official facing the receiver. If you think it is a catch, move toward the forward progress spot when the ball becomes dead and look for help.
- On questionable passes toward the middle of the field, communicate quickly effectively with your partner officials. If you are the covering official and you are unsure the pass was complete, look at your partners for possible help. If you are not the covering official and you had a good angle to be sure the pass was complete, make eye contact with the covering official and nod your head affirmatively. Do not give the catch signal.
- If any official is certain that the ball struck the ground or the pass was otherwise incomplete, sound your whistle sharply and signal an incomplete pass. Move quickly toward the play and sell the call. Concisely and affirmatively declare why the pass was incomplete (i.e. - "They never possessed the ball!" or "They trapped it against the ground!")
- If there is uncertainty regarding pass completion, the official who was facing the front of the receiver will be responsible for the call.
- Passes thrown toward the sideline can be challenging. At the snap, be aware of receivers who move toward the sideline. If the passer releases the ball toward your sideline, adjust your position relative to the receiver and the sideline. Adjust your position so you are at least 5 yards away from the receiver, standing still, and straddling the sideline. Most calls are missed because the official is either too close to the receiver or does not have a clear view of the sideline. Watch the feet first and then the ball. Pause for a brief moment to "let your mind digest what your eyes have seen," then make the call.
- L and B have responsibility for the Team A player who goes out-of-bounds and returns to participate. Throw your bean bag or hat and say the player's number. Take responsibility for your sideline – end line to end line. Be ready to move quickly downfield on a long pass.
- After the ball is dead, be in a position to cover late blocks, roughness, and other fouls.
- When a runner steps out-of-bounds, move to the spot and hold it. Face out-of-bounds and keep your eyes on the players until all action has stopped and they have returned inbounds. Be deliberate and take your time for 3 to 4 seconds. Any fouls which occur out-of-bounds while the ball is dead it must be penalized. Signal timeout immediately during the last 2

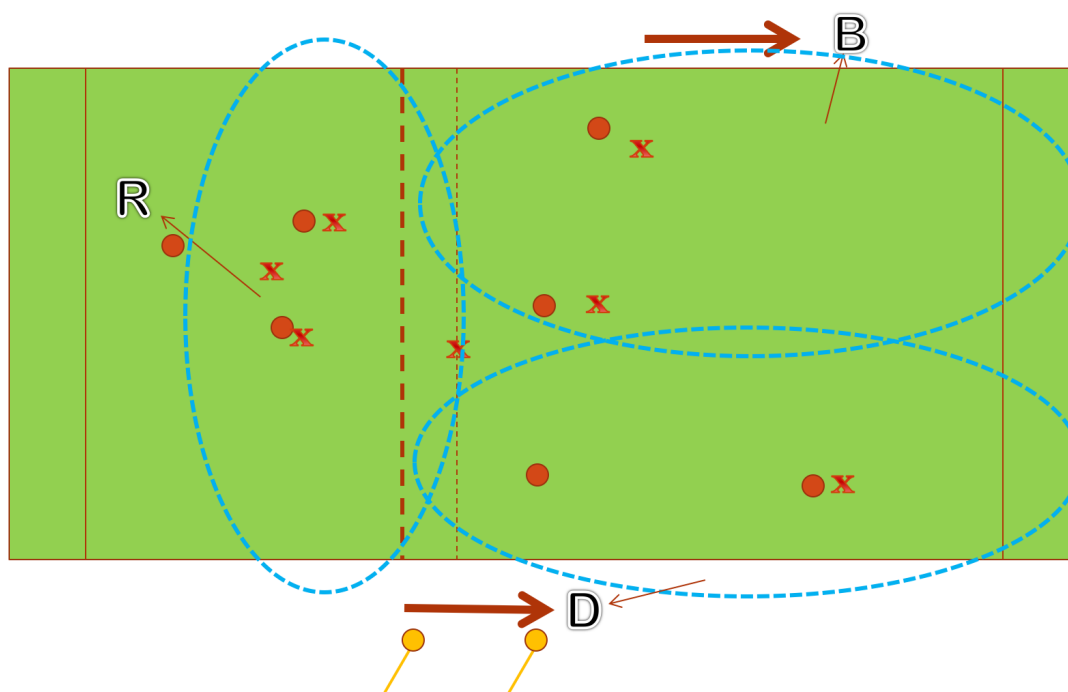
minutes of either half. Repeat the signal 3 times. Look professional by giving good, sharp signals.

## PART V GENERAL AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR “ORDINARY” SCRIMMAGE PLAY

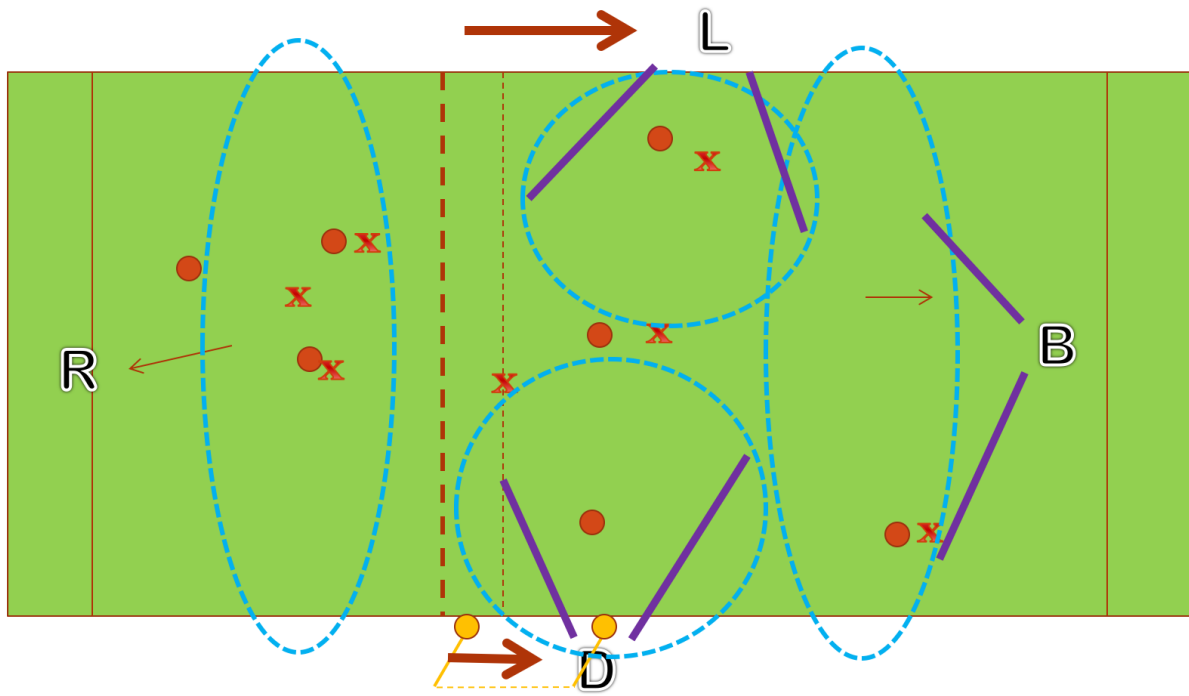
2-person crew:



3-person crew:



4-person crew:



## SECTION 2 - GOAL LINE PLAYS (INCLUDING PAT ATTEMPTS)

### Article 1A: Pre-snap Positions (3-person crew)

#### Referee:

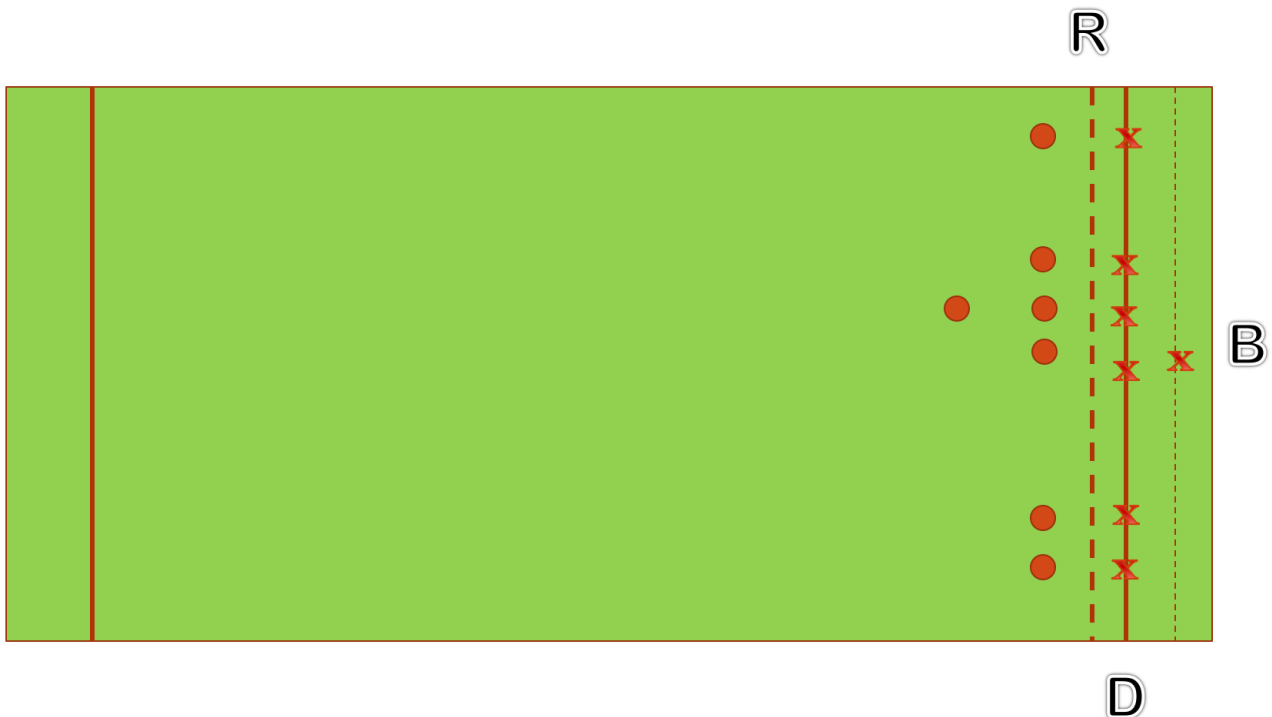
- If the ball is snapped on or inside the 5-yard line, take a position on the line of scrimmage at its junction with the sideline (opposite L). Pre-snap responsibilities in this case include setting the line as the L would do in a regular scrimmage play. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.
- If the ball is snapped from outside the 5-yard line, take the same position as that of a regular scrimmage play. Pre-snap responsibilities in this case are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.

#### Down Judge:

- If the ball is snapped on or inside the 5-yard line, take a position on the goal line at its junction with your sideline. Be 1-2 yards off the sideline and be prepared to step back if necessary. Pre-snap responsibilities in this case are the same as on other scrimmage plays with the exception of the line duties which are transferred to the R.
- If the ball is snapped outside the 5-yard line, take the same position as that of a regular scrimmage play. Be prepared to move toward the goal line at the snap. Pre-snap responsibilities in this case are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.

#### Back Judge:

- If the ball is snapped on or inside the 5-yard line, stand on the end line, near the middle of the field. You have responsibility for the entire end line. Watch the wide receivers as they break the huddle. Move slightly toward the strong side of the formation.
- If the ball is snapped outside the 5-yard line, take your position at the junction of the goal line and the sideline on your side. Be prepared to move to the end line if a passing play dictates. You still have responsibility for both the end line and the sideline on your side.
- Pre-snap responsibilities are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.



### Article 1B: Pre-snap Positions (4-person crew)

#### Referee:

- Take the same position as that of a regular scrimmage play. Pre-snap responsibilities in this case are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.

#### Down Judge:

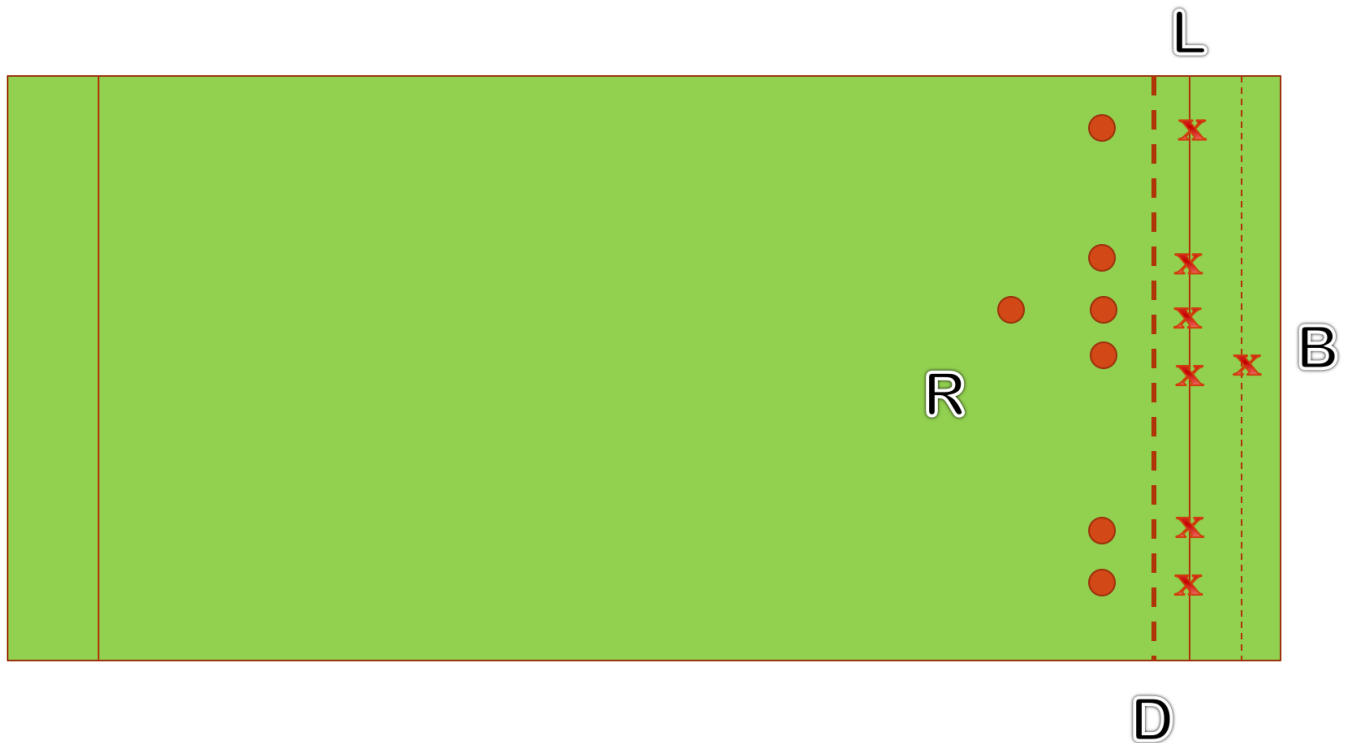
- If the ball is snapped outside the 5-yard line, take the same position as that of a regular scrimmage play. Be prepared to move toward the goal line at the snap. Pre-snap responsibilities in this case are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.

#### Line Judge:

- Take the same position as that of a regular scrimmage play. Be prepared to move toward the goal line at the snap. Pre-snap responsibilities in this case are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.

#### Back Judge:

- If the ball is snapped on or inside the 10-yard line, stand on the end line, near the middle of the field. You have responsibility for the entire end line. Watch the wide receivers as they break the huddle. Move slightly toward the strong side of the formation.
- If the ball is snapped outside the 10-yard line, stand on the goal line, near the middle of the field. Be prepared to move to the end line if a passing play dictates.
- Pre-snap responsibilities are same as on other scrimmage plays. Be in your pre-snap position as the offense breaks the huddle.



### Article 2. During the Play

#### Referee:

If snapped on or inside 5-yard line (3-person crew):

- At the snap, move downfield while focusing your attention to action in the backfield. After the runner has crossed the line of scrimmage or the pass has been thrown, hustle toward the goal line. You must still be attentive to rusher/passer action in the backfield.

- If a runner is carrying the ball toward the goal line, you should be at the goal line ahead of the runner. Take a stationary position straddling the goal line and be mindful of the runner's feet in relation to the sideline.
- If a pass is thrown in the end zone, you should be in position to rule on completion of the catch as well as possession in the end zone. You are responsible for your sideline.
- After a score, give the official touchdown signal to the sideline. Explain the PAT options to the offensive captain. Note the time of the score on your game card.
- In a 4-person crew, R mechanics are the same as a regular scrimmage play

If snapped outside the 5-yard line:

- R mechanics are the same as a regular scrimmage play with the exception that R should be prepared to cover the sideline if necessary.

Down Judge:

If snapped on or inside 5-yard line:

- At the snap, watch the direction of the receivers, especially those on your side of the field. Note if a receiver moves toward your sideline.
- If a runner is carrying a ball toward the goal line, take a stationary position straddling the goal line and be prepared to make the call. Be mindful of action around the runner as well as the sideline.

If snapped outside 5-yard line:

- Move toward the goal line instantly at the snap. Move backwards to mark the dead ball spot if short of the goal line. Watch all action as in a regular scrimmage play

Line Judge:

If snapped on or inside 5-yard line:

- Move to the goal line instantly at the snap. Officiate from that position and move backwards to mark the dead ball spot if short of the goal line. Watch the direction of the receivers, especially those on your side of the field. Note if a receiver moves toward your sideline.

If snapped outside 5-yard line:

- Move toward the goal line instantly at the snap. Move backwards to mark the dead ball spot if short of the goal line. Watch all action as in a regular scrimmage play

Back Judge:

If snapped on or inside the 5-yard line:

- At the snap, watch the direction of the receivers. Note any receivers which may be near the end line.
- You are primarily responsible for monitoring the receivers and defensive backs.

If snapped outside the 5-yard line:

- If a runner is carrying a ball toward the goal line, take a stationary position straddling the goal line and be prepared to make the call. Be mindful of L's position and the fact that they may need assistance on a goal line call near their sideline if they is not able to get in position.
- If a pass is thrown to the end zone, be mindful of the intended receiver's position within the end zone. If the intended receiver is less than 3 yards deep in the end zone, maintain your position on the goal line. If the intended receiver is deeper than 3 yards in the end zone or moving toward the end line, hustle to the end line before the ball arrives.

If snapped outside the 10-yard line:

- In a 4-person crew, remain on the goal line in the middle of the field. Move back with receivers that enter the end zone but be prepared to move back to the goal line if the pass is thrown to a receiver in the field of play or a running play develops.

ALL:

- Indicate a score using a sharp touchdown signal and a solid blast of the whistle.
- Make a call ONLY when in a position to see possession by the offense in the opponent's end zone. You must see the football! Do not mirror another official's touchdown signal. Only signal if you were able to make the call on your own.
- If play is to the opposite side of the field, hustle across the field for a better view but be either on the goal line or end line (B) as you move. Be sure to stay well outside any players that may potentially be involved in the play.
- If you are in a stationary position on the goal line and the runner is moving toward the sideline, be sure to be at least 2-3 yards off the sideline while still straddling the goal line. This will give you the best view of whether the runner breaks the plane of the goal line or steps out of bounds. This will also protect you from collisions with players.

Article 3: Reverse Goal Line Mechanics

ALL:

- When the offensive team is near their own goal line, between the 8 and 15-yard line, the R will straddle the goal line and be wide. As the QB rolls to either sideline, stay on the goal line to rule on a possible safety.
- When the ball is snapped on or inside the Team A 5-yard line, the L will move toward the goal line at the snap, while the R will be near the end line prior to the snap. Once the goal line is no longer in play, the R and L will move downfield similar to the other players.

SECTION 3: PUNTS

Article 1: Pre-snap Responsibilities

Referee:

- Prior to all fourth down plays, ask Team A captain if they elect to punt. If they are unsure, indicate you need a prompt response. Announce Team A's decision to all players and ensure B hears you as well. The decision can only be changed if there is a team timeout or a penalty. If this occurs, ask Team A captain for their decision again.
- If Team A elects to punt, set the ball on the line of scrimmage and pick up the ball markers. No rush zone is necessary as Team B cannot rush. This will help you prepare for the next down which will likely be a decent distance downfield.
- Remind both teams that there is still a minimum number of players required on the line, there is no rushing by the defense, and Team A must kick the ball. Do not allow the ball to be snapped until everyone has met the punt requirements.
- Count Team A players, monitor the neutral zone and the other responsibilities as a normal scrimmage play.

Down Judge:

- Listen for R's announcement regarding Team A's choice of play. Repeat this choice to Team B to ensure they are aware.

Line Judge:

- SAME AS DOWN JUDGE

Back Judge:

- Listen for R's announcement regarding Team A's choice of play. Repeat this choice to Team B to ensure they are aware. If Team A announces punt and there is no Team B player lined up deep to receive the punt, ensure Team B captain is aware that Team A intends to punt.
- Count Team B players and monitor same responsibilities as a scrimmage play. Be in your pre-snap position before the offense breaks the huddle.



## Article 2: Pre-Snap Positions

### Referee:

- Same as scrimmage play. Be slightly deeper depending on the punter's position.

### Down Judge:

- Same as scrimmage play.

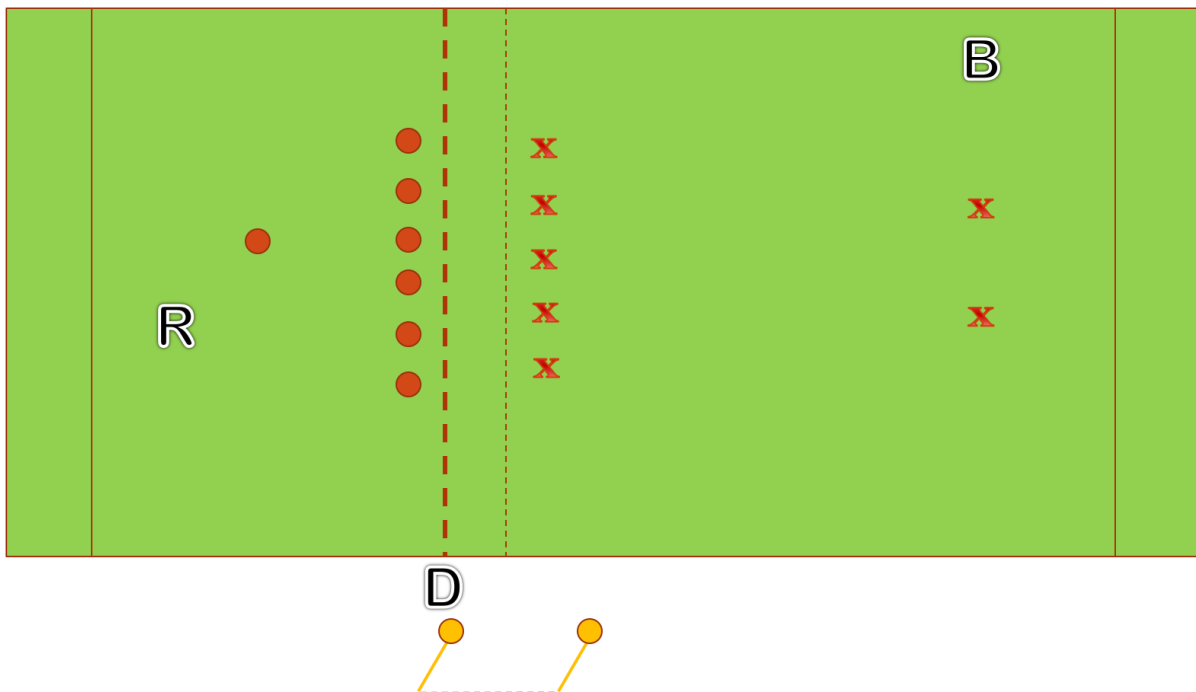
### Line Judge:

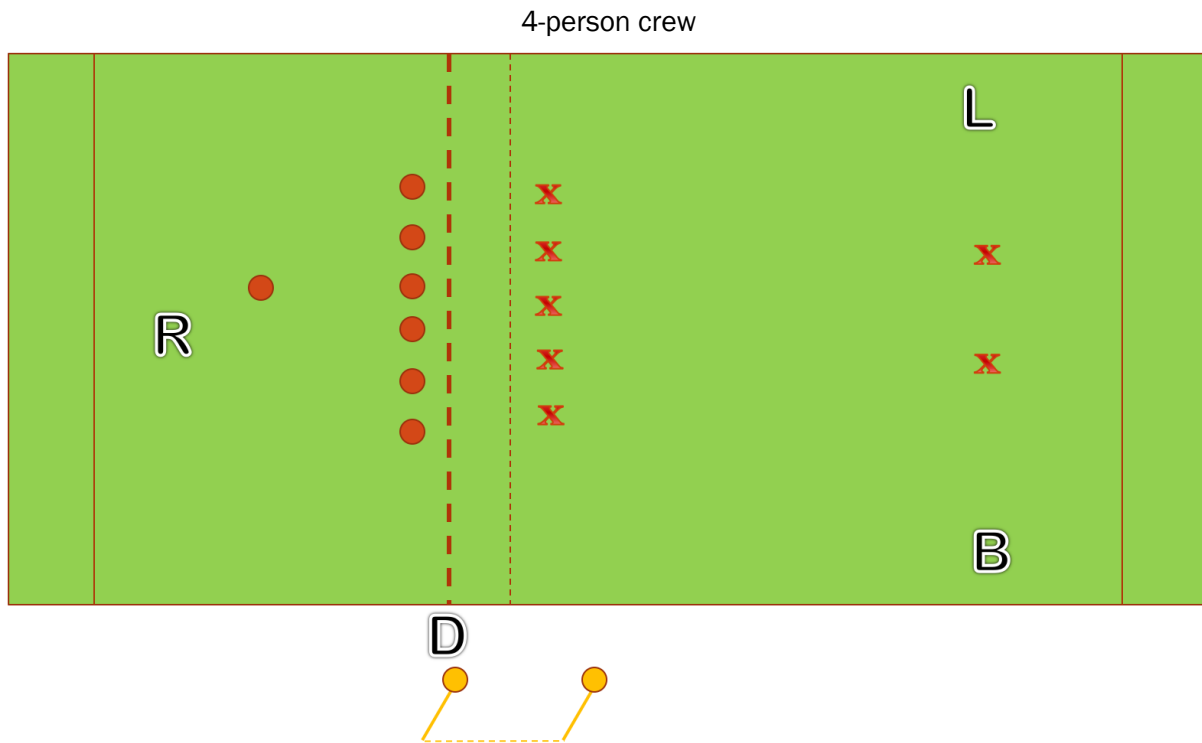
- *In a 4-person crew, the L should move downfield before the snap and take a position parallel to the deepest receivers and near the sideline opposite the back judge.*

### Back Judge:

- In a 3-person crew, take a position on the opposite side of the field from the Down Judge, downfield parallel to the deepest receivers, and at least 8 to 10 yards wide. Do not get caught inside. Be sure you can move back to monitor the sideline if necessary.
- *In a 4-person crew, take a position on the same side of the field as the Down Judge, downfield parallel to the deepest receivers, and at least 8 to 10 yards wide. Do not get caught inside. Be sure you can move back to monitor the sideline if necessary.*

3-person crew





### Article 3: During the Play

#### Referee:

- Ensure the punter makes a clean kick.
- During the return, monitor the blocks around and ahead of the runner. The runner is not your primary responsibility unless they break free down your side of the field.
- For kicks which go sharply out-of-bounds through the air, line up behind the punter to determine the trajectory of the ball. Raise your hand and “chop-in” the L or B where the ball’s trajectory meets the sideline.
- Move to the dead ball spot and set the ball markers. Allow the B to release toward their pre-snap position for the next scrimmage play.

#### Down Judge:

- Monitor the neutral zone to ensure that nobody enters until after the ball has crossed the neutral zone.
- Once the ball is kicked, move downfield to cover the receivers and blockers.
- For punts out-of-bounds to your sideline, you are responsible for the dead-ball spot. If the ball goes out-of-bounds through the air, work with R to determine the trajectory of the ball. R will “chop you in.”
- In a 4-person crew use the mechanics as indicated for Back Judge below.

#### Line Judge:

- SAME AS DOWN JUDGE in 3-person crew

#### Back Judge:

- As Team K players move downfield, watch for illegal contact but keep your focus on the Team R players in the area of the kick.
- You are responsible for the Team R goal line and end line. If the ball is snapped on your side of midfield, be in a position to monitor the goal line if necessary and know whether the kick breaks the plane.

- For punts out-of-bounds to your sideline, you are responsible for the dead-ball spot. If the ball goes out-of-bounds through the air, work with R to determine the trajectory of the ball. R will “chop you in.”
- Watch the receiver to ensure the kick is caught cleanly. If receiver muffs the ball which then falls to the ground, sound your whistle immediately to indicate a dead ball.
- Once the punt is caught, move with the play and remember to stay wide, preferably along the sideline. You are responsible for the runner and the dead-ball spot.

ALL:

- Be alert for kick catch interference, fumbles, muffs, and backward passes. If the runner moves into your area, move toward a position to rule on backward passes. Stay parallel with the runner.

## SECTION 4 – KICKOFFS

### Article 1: Pre-Kick Responsibilities

Referee:

- Ensure both teams are ready for play. Confirm to players the direction they will be playing for the half.
- Hustle to your pre-kick position.
- Count Team R players to ensure no more than 7. Do not allow game to begin if Team R has more than 7 players on the field.
- Check Team R deep receivers to ensure they are legally and properly equipped. Do not allow game to begin if a player has an equipment issue.
- Confirm with B and L that all players are ready. Give a long, loud blast of the whistle and hand signal to indicate ready for play.

Down Judge:

- Count Team K and Team R players to ensure no more than 7 on each team. Do not allow half to begin if either team has more than 7 players.
- Check Team R players on the line to ensure they are legally and properly equipped. Do not allow half to begin if a player has an equipment issue.
- Raise your hand to notify R that both you and Team R are ready.

Line Judge:

- Same as Down Judge.

Back Judge:

- Assist both teams in getting lined up properly on their restraining line. Instruct kicker to wait for R's whistle before kicking.
- Hustle to your pre-kick position.
- Count Team K players to ensure no more than 7. Do not allow game to begin if Team K has more than 7 players on the field.
- Check Team K players to ensure they are legally and properly equipped. Do not allow game to begin if a Team K player has an equipment issue.
- Raise your hand to notify R that both you and Team K are ready.

### Article 2: Pre-Kick Positions

Referee:

- Take a position on the goal line at the pylon on the same side as the B and opposite the D.
- In a 4-person crew, you will stand in the middle of the field on the goal line.

Down Judge:

- Take a position on the 10-yard line, on the opposite side of the field as the Back Judge and Referee. Be in position to retreat to the goal line, if necessary, to rule on ball going out-of-bounds vs. touchback.
- In a 4-person crew, take a position on Team R's 10-yard line, opposite the Line Judge, on the sideline. Be in position to retreat to the goal line, if necessary, to rule on ball going out-of-bounds vs. touchback.

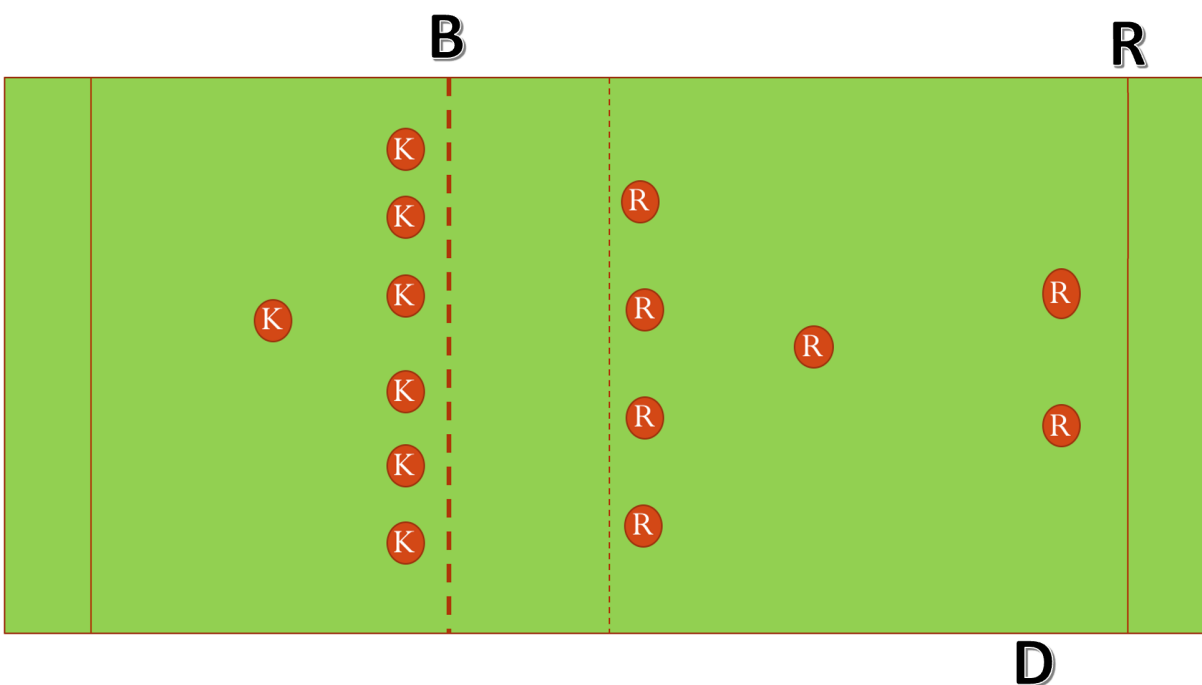
Line Judge:

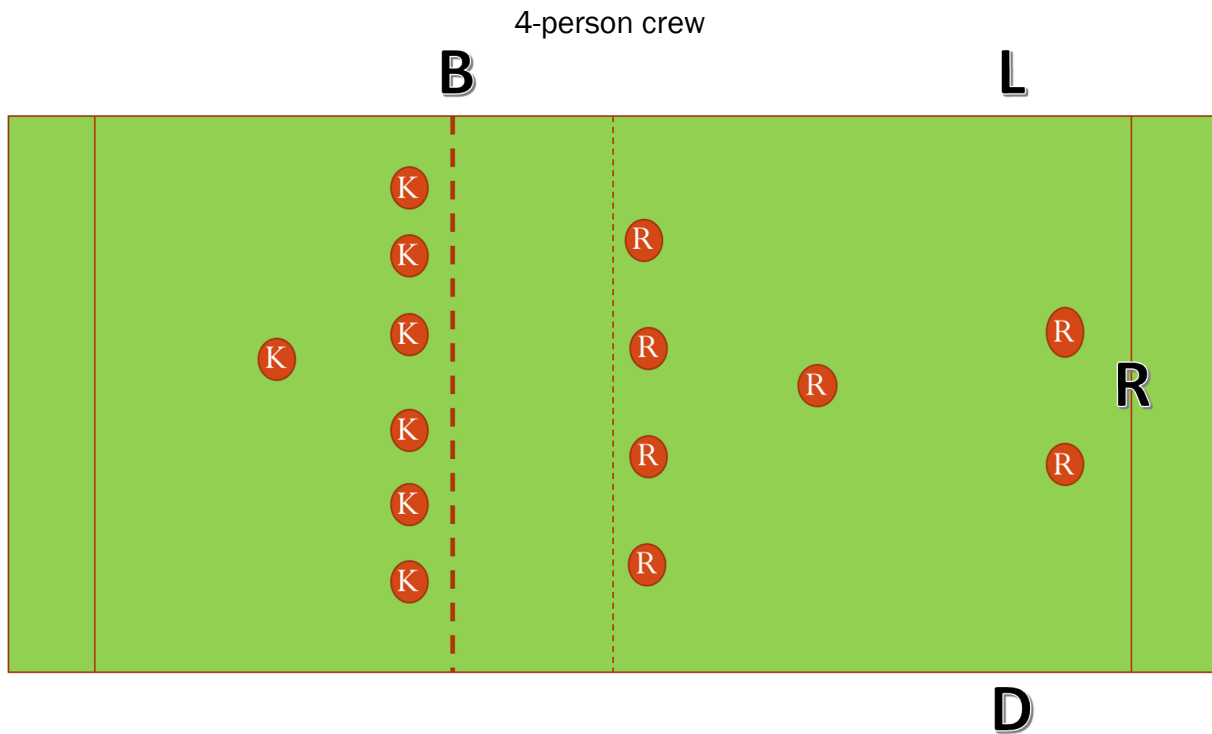
- Take a position on the 10-yard line, on the same side of the field as the back judge, and opposite the Down Judge. Be in position to retreat to the goal line, if necessary, to rule on ball going out-of-bounds vs. touchback.

Back Judge:

- Take a position on Team K's kick line (usually the 30, unless changed by penalty) and on your sideline. Be in position to monitor both restraining lines to see any encroachment that may occur.

3-person crew





### Article 3: After the Kick

#### Referee:

- As Team K players move downfield, watch for illegal contact but keep your focus on the Team R players in the area of the kick.
- Watch the receiver to ensure the kick is caught cleanly. If receiver muffs the ball which then falls to the ground, sound your whistle immediately to indicate a dead ball.
- Once the kick is caught, move with the play and remember to stay wide. Be mindful of plays moving toward the L's sideline if L is not yet in a favorable position. On shorter returns, you are responsible for the runner and the dead-ball spot. On longer returns, you will "pass off" the runner to the L and begin to watch action around the runner including blocks and any illegal contact.
- In a 4-person crew, you are responsible for action around the runner including blocks and any illegal contact.

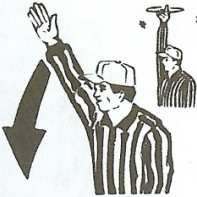










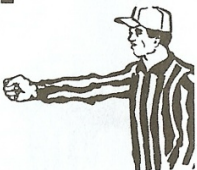
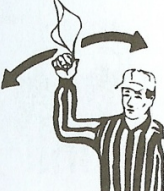



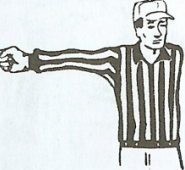



#### Down Judge & Line Judge:

- As Team K players move downfield, watch for illegal contact but keep your focus on the Team R players in the area of the kick.
- Watch the receiver to ensure the kick is caught cleanly. If receiver muffs the ball which then falls to the ground, sound your whistle immediately to indicate a dead ball.
- For kicks out-of-bounds to your sideline, you are responsible for the dead-ball spot. If the ball goes out-of-bounds through the air, use your best approximation of where the ball crossed the sideline. Drop your flag at the out-of-bounds spot.
- Once the kick is caught, move with the play and remember to stay wide. On shorter returns, you are responsible for the runner and the dead-ball spot in all cases. On longer returns, you are responsible for the runner and the dead-ball spot on your side of the field once the other wing official has picked up the runner on the opposite side.




















Back Judge:

- Monitor action between Team K and Team R players as they move downfield, watching for illegal blocks or contact.
- During the return, monitor the blocks around and ahead of the runner. Be mindful of the runner's position in relation to your sideline.

## PART VI – OFFICIAL FOOTBALL SIGNALS

<b>1</b>  Ball ready for play *Untimed down	<b>2</b>  Start clock	<b>3</b>  Time-out; Discretionary or injury time-out (follow by tapping hands on chest)	<b>4</b>  TV/Radio time-out
<b>5</b>  Touchdown Point(s) after touchdown	<b>6</b>  Safety	<b>7</b>  Dead ball foul; Touchback (move side to side)	<b>8</b>  First down
<b>9</b>  Loss of down	<b>10</b>  Incomplete forward pass; Penalty declined; No play, No score; Toss option delayed	<b>11</b>  Legal touching of forward pass or punt	<b>12</b>  Inadvertent whistle (face press box)
<b>13</b>  Disregard flag	<b>14</b>  End of period	<b>15</b>  Sideline warning	<b>16</b>  First touching
<b>17</b>  Backward Pass	<b>18</b>  Encroachment	<b>19</b>  Illegal advancement/formation/ procedure/snap; False start	<b>20</b>  Illegal shift - 2 hands; Illegal motion - 1 hand



<p><b>21</b></p>  <p>Delay of game</p>	<p><b>22</b></p>  <p>Illegal substitution</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>  <p>Failure to wear required equipment</p>	<p><b>24</b></p>  <p>Flag guarding</p>
<p><b>27</b></p>  <p>Unsportsmanlike conduct; Noncontact foul</p>	<p><b>28</b></p>  <p>Illegal participation</p>	<p><b>29</b></p>  <p>Sideline interference</p>	<p><b>31</b></p>  <p>Illegal batting/kicking (followed by pointing toward toe for kicking)</p>
<p><b>33</b></p>  <p>Forward pass interference; Kick catching interference</p>	<p><b>34</b></p>  <p>Roughing the passer</p>	<p><b>35</b></p>  <p>Illegal pass</p>	
<p><b>38</b></p>  <p>Personal foul</p>	<p><b>40</b></p>  <p>Open</p>	<p><b>41</b></p>  <p>Closed</p>	<p><b>42</b></p>  <p>Holding/obstructing</p>
<p><b>43</b></p>  <p>Declared punt</p>	<p><b>44</b></p>  <p>Help the runner</p>	<p><b>45</b></p>  <p>Forward pass</p>	<p><b>47</b></p>  <p>Player disqualification</p>



If In Doubt

The “If In Doubt”s have been developed to provide guidance on the desired course of action when an official may be unsure. Generally, these guidelines recommend not calling a foul in questionable situations, allow play to continue instead of blowing the play dead, and give the team the benefit of more favorable field position when it is difficult to determine where the ball is to be spotted. Please take some time to learn and understand how to apply each of the “If In Doubt”s in game situations when it becomes necessary.

- If in doubt, continue the game.
- If in doubt, consider the safety of all paramount to the game.
- If in doubt, it is a catch.
- If in doubt, it is not a foul.
- If in doubt, a snap close to the ground remains live.
- If in doubt, the flag belt has been pulled.
- If in doubt, the ball is released.
- If in doubt, the out-of-bounds punt is “short” of the zone line-to-gain.
- If in doubt, the Team A player is on his/her scrimmage line.
- If in doubt, the pass is backward.
- If in doubt, the passer is behind the Team A scrimmage line.
- If in doubt, the pass is legal.
- If in doubt, it is a touchback.
- If in doubt, the out-of-bounds punt near the goal line is a touchback.