



**California
Football Officials
Association**

**Three Man Mechanics
for High School Football**

THREE MAN CREW OFFICIATING

In a 3-man crew, there is no umpire. The LJ has the option of playing On or Off the line, just as he would do in a 4 or 5 man crew. He will have sideline responsibility opposite the Head linesman throughout the game. The referee no longer will be responsible for the sideline on runs to that side. The LJ is the “guardian of his sideline” on all plays, therefore he has to be initially wide to stay on the outside of all receivers to keep them boxed in. From this wide position he can keep a good check on the line play and of ineligible pass receivers downfield. The referee can aid in watching the holding. The LJ is not afforded the luxury of the middle of the field coverage. On running plays away from him and pass plays and scrimmage kicks, the LJ literally does a lot of running. He must be mobile to do the job correctly.

In keeping the play boxed-in, 4-man Crew mechanics are the same as a diamond in nature, whereas the “boxed-in” formation for a 3-man crew forms a triangle. This is illustrated above.

Three-Man Crew officiating will follow the same pattern duties and responsibilities for 4-Man Crews with these exceptions listed here:

BEFORE THE GAME

LINE JUDGE

- LJ instructs the game clock operator.
- Introduces the captain of the team who is on the sideline opposite the HL to the referee.

KICKOFF POSITIONING

REFEREE

- Referee is in center of the field on 10-yard line.
- Covers receiver either way and boxes in the runner between himself and either the Linesman or the LJ, depending on whose side the run is on.

HEADLINES

- Take positioning on the sideline of the field prior to the kickoff.
- LJ is on the free kick line of the kicking team, on the same side as the press box.
- HL stands on the 50 and motions five (or more) receiving team players up in front of the 45 and cautions them not to touch the 50. He then goes to the 50 on the sideline opposite the Line Judge.
- Both officials count to see if they have eleven players on their respective teams.
- Raise arms above head when on the sidelines and be ready to observe play.
- You should watch for short free kicks, touching of short free kicks, point of touching, etc.

FIELD GOALS ATTEMPTS AND TRYBS

REFEREE

- Take a position in the offensive backfield opposite the chains.
- Before the snap, observe any illegal movement of ball.
- After the snap, shift your observation to the holder and kicker.
- Know whether the holder's knee was down when he received the snap.
- Call any roughing of the holder or kicker. **NOTE:** HL will have the responsibility if the referee chooses to rule on the kick. See LJ item #2 below.

HEADLINES

- You are watching the entire line for encroachment.
- If the kick is blocked you alone are responsible for determining if the kick crossed the neutral zone.
- If a fake field goal, move quickly at the goal line and the whole plane is your responsibility from sideline to sideline. **NOTE:** LJ will be responsible for his side of the field if referee is ruling on the kick. See LJ item #2 below.
- If a pass you are solely responsible for any ineligible linemen down field and for determining if the pass crossed the neutral zone.

LINE JUDGE

- Take a position 6 feet or less beyond the end line.
- You alone will rule on the success or failure of the kick. **NOTE:** The referee has the option of ruling on the success or failure of the kick. If the referee chooses this option the LJ will stay on the line. The HL will be responsible for roughing the kicker and holder.
- In case of a broken play or a fake field goal attempt, the Linesman is the guardian of his sideline.
- The CFOA executive instructional committee believe that whenever you have only 3 officials, that having 2 men under the cross bar, leaves you only 1 official on the field to officiate 22 players. Therefore a sacrifice has to be made and that is having just one official under the cross bar. When it is not a kick, we do the best we can with lots of hustle.

GOAL LINE PLAYS (On or Inside the 5 Yard Line)

LINE JUDGE

- Take a position before snap on the scrimmage line opposite the Head linesman
- and be no closer than your near hash mark.
- Mark runner's progress from your position on the line.
- If a pass develops stay wide and cover the pass.
- Give the touchdown signal if you see a TD scored.
- You may change to goal line mechanics outside the five-yard line by moving onto the line before the snap if you think the situation warrants it. A good example would be if it was 4th and 1, and a team comes out of the huddle in a running situation.

SCRIMMAGE PLAY POSITIONING

REFEREE

- On all scrimmage kicks, *always take a position deeper than the offensive backfield on the side opposite the Head Linesman, and facing the Head Linesman*. On the running plays, the LJ and HL are the “guardians of their sidelines”.
- Play wider and deeper to cover greater area.
- Be inside and deeper than any flanker on your side.
- *Assist in calling holding on the Linesman*
- Assist the Head Linesman in counting the offense.
- Spot ball at inbounds spot on running plays into sidezone of LJ and opposite Linesman.
- Be the “replay man” in passing the ball in from the linesman to the LJ at the inbounds spot on plays that went into the Linesman’s sidezone. Hustle!
- Cover the ball during timeouts.

LINE JUDGE

- Take a basic position either 10 to 15 yards deep in the defensive backfield *and on the same side of the field as the Referee opposite the HL*.
- *You are responsible for the sideline on all plays.*
- *The Referee is no longer responsible for the sideline on runs opposite the HL. The LJ is responsible.*
- On forward pass plays the Referee sticks with the passer, *you have your sideline on all pass plays*.
- On completed forward passes the LJ becomes the Referee in covering the receiver and killing the play.
- Time the 25-second count, time-outs, and intermission between quarters.
- Count the defensive team for eleven players.
- Cover the defensive team for all time-outs.
- Be responsible for any movement by any flanker outside the Referee’s position as he will be inside.
- Cover man-in-motion going toward linesman if in ON mechanics. If in OFF mechanics the HL will have this responsibility.
- Cover sideline on running plays away from linesman, stay outside of runner and cover him all the way.
- Spot ball at inbounds spot on running play into Linesman sidezone.
- Relay the ball to the Referee at inbounds spot on running plays into your sidezone. The LJ is responsible for sideline coverage opposite the HL on all running plays and passes.

HEADLINES

- Cover the man in motion to the opposite side of the field.
- Cover the runner when he enters your sidezone.
- Never go out on the field more than your near inbounds hash mark.
- Since referee and LJ play wider and deeper, Linesman is in best position to mark forward progress spot as runner advances.
- Count the offensive team for eleven players.
- Cover the offensive team during time-outs.
- Personally mark the spot on the sidelines when a new first down occurs.
- Take charge of the chain crew and “clip your snap on the chains at a yard line before reversing the chains at the end of the 1st or 3rd quarters.
- Watch the flanker on the Referee’s side and all backs and linemen for illegal motion before the snap.

SCRIMMAGE KICKS

REFEREE

- Take a position opposite the Head Linesman 4 – 5 yards to the side of the kicker and one or two yards in front of him.
- Observe the tight group of backs for any illegal movement before or at the snap.
- Warn the potential kicker if he is on or outside the end line prior to the snap.
- At the snap, watch blocking and illegal action by players behind the snap. Observe action of (and against) the kicker. If no foul occurs, observe players while proceeding slowing downfield.
- Line up the Linesman and Line Judge on any kick going out of bounds on a sideline between the goal lines.

HEADLINES

- Take your regular position on the line of scrimmage and officiate as if a scrimmage play.
- Hold in your area until the ball crosses the neutral zone.
- You are responsible for knowing whether the kick crossed the line of scrimmage or not.
- Watch the blocking of the near up offensive back with the on-rushing defensive lineman.
- After the kick crosses the line, watch the play in front of the kick receiver. Be alert for any clips and blocking below the waist.
- You are guardian of your sideline.
- Be ready to cover around the runner if he comes your way.
- Watch for short kicks, fair catch signals, and actions of man who signaled for a fair catch but didn't catch the ball.
- Be ready to take the Referee's signal for the spot where a kick out of bounds crossed a sideline. One arm above his head means advance towards him, whereas one arm straight out pointing at you means to back up. A chopping motion of the arm means to hold that spot. Move slowly

LINE JUDGE

- You are really the equivalent of a LJ in a 4-Man Crew in 3-Man mechanics on scrimmage kicks.
- Take a position on the opposite side of the field from the linesman and at least 20 to 25 yards off the line of scrimmage.
- Your position should be at least 5 yards wide of a potential receiver and 2 to 3 yards in front of him where you can observe him throughout the kick.
- Warn him before the kick to clearly indicate a fair catch signal by waving one arm from side to side above his head.
- Rule on validity of fair catch signal. You are responsible for following the ball if receiver fails to catch the kick.
- Be in a position to rule on hand-offs.
- Cover the runner until he goes into another official's zone.
- You are guardian of your sideline and have end line responsibility as well.
- Be alert to mark the sideline spot (with the Referee's help) on a kick that goes out of bounds on your sideline.