



MECHANICS MANUAL

Flag Football

2026

CALIFORNIA FOOTBALL OFFICIALS' ASSOCIATION
OFFICIALS MECHANICS MANUAL

Purpose of Manual

This manual was developed after reviewing several other football mechanics prepared by various local, regional, state, and national Flag Football officiating associations. Compromises were made in several areas to generate a relatively simple system of mechanics that can provide the best field coverage for games worked by the CFOA high school officials.

The manual provides descriptions of officiating excellence, uniform requirements, general mechanics, and signals, as well as specific mechanics for crews of two, three, and four officials. Officials should concentrate on mastering the mechanics for a crew of three officials and then learn the differences and adjustments required to work with crews of two and four.

The National Federation of State High Schools Associations (NFHS) Football Rules Book is the official rule book for the CFOA.

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SECTION: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- I. **Knowledge of the Rules:**
 - a. Rule mastery will be achieved over time and must be supplemented by the ability to correctly learn and interpret rules and editorial changes. These abilities are acquired through dedication of time and study.
- II. **Physical Condition:**
 - a. Football officiating is a complex and exhausting endeavor that requires 100 percent efficiency of mind and body. An annual physical examination should be a personal requisite to ensure your health, thus allowing you to assess your ability to officiate.
- III. **Judgement:**
 - a. See the foul, process it, and determine if your marker needs to be thrown. A slow flag is not synonymous with a late flag. Be 100% certain a foul occurred. If you “think” you saw a foul, then you didn’t see it. A “no call” is more acceptable than a “bad or incorrect call.” To ensure improved instinctive reaction during play situations, continue to review the different game situations and play scenarios that may occur.
- IV. **Duties and Responsibilities:**
 - a. Each official must have a thorough knowledge of the duties of their position and the responsibilities of other officials’ positions. They must be prepared to assume any other positions whenever circumstances require the rearrangement of assignments. All officials will be well-versed in officiating all positions on the field for flag football games.
- V. **An Official Must:**
 - a. Be a great “dead-ball” official. Between downs, there is always something to do. While teams are responsible for returning the ball to the Referee, all officials should work to bring in a “new ball” or help return it.
 - b. Know the down, position related to the line to gain, and clock status before each snap.
 - c. Be ready to assist any official who is temporarily out of position or has an obstructed view of a play.
 - d. Observe erroneous procedures or rulings by other officials and attempt to prevent and correct them expeditiously and diplomatically whenever possible. Under no circumstances should an argument develop on the field between officials.
 - e. Know the correct signals and their proper use.
 - f. Secure a new ball when appropriate, after all action has ceased, and handle and pass the ball properly.

- g. Be alert to action away from the ball, even when play has left their immediate area.
- h. Call a timeout for any player who is obviously injured or disabled. Never rush the treatment of an injured player. Recognition of injured players is the concern of all game officials. The Game Clock can be started if a timeout is not necessary.

VI. **Signals:**

- a. All signals should be given promptly, distinctly, and conspicuously, as we use non-verbal communication tools to communicate information to our fellow officials.

VII. **Enforcement:**

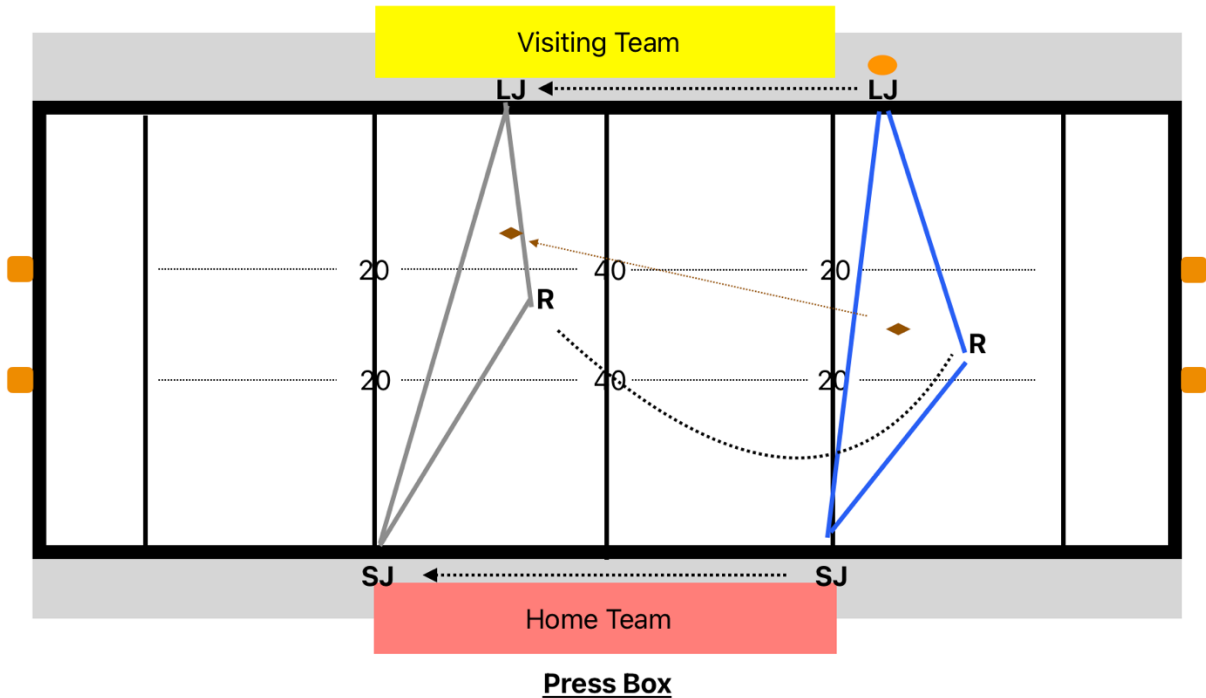
- a. All rules should be strictly and equally enforced. There shall be no deviation from the NFHS Football Rules.

VIII. **Hustle:**

- a. Keep the game moving smoothly from start to finish. Do not allow haste to interfere with duties or correctly enforce a foul. Be deliberate, don't rush.

IX. **Triangle In:**

- a. Smart officiating requires keeping the players "triangled in" and avoiding officials on the inside. Outside looking in is essential for sideline and end-line coverage. The goal is to have each play viewed from multiple angles. The referee must also avoid moving too close to the LJ sideline.
- b. The Referee's position in flag football often requires the greatest amount of movement on the field. The R must remain alert and prepared to assist with coverage of the Line of Scrimmage (LOS), Line to Gain (LTG), and sideline as play develops.
- c. In general, the Side Judge should remain ahead of the play and should never allow any player to advance deeper than their position on the field. Except in goal-line or short-yardage situations (5 yards or less to the Goal Line or LTG), the Line Judge and Referee will normally officiate from behind the play to maintain proper coverage angles and observe action developing in front of them.



Examples of how to keep players and “play” Triangled In. When one official moves, the other must move to maintain angles and coverage zones.

X. **Off-Ball Officiating:**

- a. Officials should not be ball watchers. The official nearest the action should take primary responsibility for the ball and be alert to action around the ball. The official who is the farthest away should take the broadest “Big Picture” view of the action, looking for unsportsmanlike acts and threats to player safety. The officials in between should work in “Rings.” The closer you are to the ball, the smaller your “Ring” is.

XI. **Cooperation:**

- a. Teamwork is essential among a crew of officials. If a ruling is puzzling, relay the explanation to the other officials. Continuous verbal and non-verbal communication between all officials during the game is essential for effective game administration. All officials must understand that we are a direct reflection of our crewmates. Work together to communicate with coaches, players, and administrators to ensure that the crew remains cohesive in all aspects of the game.
- b. Officials are team members, from their affiliated units to the crew on the field. Officials must remember this in their behaviors and words, on and off the field. We can disagree in private but present a united front in public.

XII. **Social Media:**

- a. **Officials should not post anything about games, teams, coaches, players, or other officials on social media.**
- b. Never issue direct or indirect newspaper interviews, statements, or stories concerning games in which you are an official.

XIII. **Conduct, Character, and Ethics**

- a. Officials shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all officiating obligations.
- b. Officials shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the profession's highest standards.
- c. Officials shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interactions with the student-athletes, coaches, school administrators, colleagues, and the public.
- d. Officials shall work with each other and their governing bodies constructively and cooperatively.
- e. Officials shall master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules and shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm, and controlled manner.
- f. Officials will always use language such as athlete, player, or coach when addressing participants.
- g. Officials should never do anything to draw undue attention to themselves or the crew.
- h. Officials will use supportive language when addressing fellow officials, athletes, coaches, administrators, and game operations personnel.
- i. Officials will never use a "senior" position to embarrass another official, player, coach, administrator, or game operations personnel.
- j. Officials shall bear a great responsibility for engendering public confidence in Flag Football.
- k. Officials will work to become leaders. If you adopt a philosophy of helping others reach their goals, you will reach yours, too.
- l. Officials will be passionate about integrity, honesty, and professionalism.
- m. Officials will be courageous. Doing what's right versus popular or safe takes strong will and conviction.
- n. Officials working together are a team. All officials will place aside personal feelings and allow the crew to work as a team. No official is above another when it comes to getting the call right.

SECTION: STANDARD UNIFORM

I. Traditional Uniform:

- a. All CFOA football officials must dress uniformly. All members of a crew must be similarly dressed. For all varsity games, the uniform worn by all officials shall include the following:
 - i. This shirt is mandatory for all CIF-SS football contests in the 2026 season. CFOA approved a new shirt during the 2024 offseason. Smitty and Honings produce the shirt, which can be purchased through their distributors. This shirt includes the CIF logo over the pocket, the American Flag on the left sleeve, and the CFOA logo on the right sleeve. The sleeves of the new shirts are black.

CIF-branded officials' shirts may NOT be worn in non-CIF contests. This includes any youth sports games.

- ii. PANTS - The pants shall be full-length black pants. The pants must include a 1¼ inch white strip on the seam of the leg, must not be cuffed, and must continue to the shoe without a break.
- iii. SOCKS – When wearing approved pants, officials will wear black socks.
- iv. SHOES AND BELT – Predominantly black shoes with black laces and appropriate soles or cleats. A black belt, a minimum of 1¼ inches and a maximum of 2 inches in width, shall be worn.
- v. CAP – Brooklyn style solid black cap with traditional narrow white piping (without emblem or numbers, other than small manufacturer’s logo) shall be worn by all but the Referee, who shall wear a Brooklyn style solid all-white cap (without emblem or numbers, other than small manufacturer’s logo). The cap shall be oriented with the bill facing forward and squarely covering the forehead of the official.
- vi. FOUL MARKER—All officials shall have at least one light gold foul marker, 15” x 15”, weighted in the center with pebbles, sand, or beans and worn *INCONSPICUOUSLY*.
- vii. DOWN INDICATOR—All officials should wear a down marker to assist the entire crew with tracking downs during play.
- viii. BEAN BAGS—All officials will be equipped with one or more **white, blue, or black** bean bags filled with pebbles, sand, or beans for marking spots.
- ix. JACKETS - Jackets are not considered part of the official uniform. EXCEPTION: Alternate Officials on the sideline before entering the game.
- x. UNDERSHIRTS – All undershirts that show should be black.
- xi. GLOVES – Gloves, when worn, shall be black.

II. **Summer Uniform:**

- a. A “summer uniform” is approved for scrimmages and sub-varsity, but all crew members must wear the same uniform. It is a traditional uniform with black shorts and either white or black crew or ankle socks.
- b. The summer uniform is acceptable when flag football officials are working multiple games in a single day. All crew members must be in the same uniform. Please note: **to give varsity contests the respect they deserve, wearing the summer uniform to varsity contests should be kept to a minimum, even when officials are working multiple games in a single day.**

SECTION: OFFICIATING PROCEDURES

Before the Contest

Referee – It is required that the Referee for each contest follow this list of procedures five to seven (5-7) days before the contest

- A. Email the school's Athletic Director or Coach
 - a. Confirm the correct date and time of the contest.
 - b. Confirm the field location for the game.
 - c. Verify parking for officials at each location and for any events (E.g., school pickup) you may need to be aware of to arrive on time.
 - d. Give the administration the crew's arrival time on campus and in the field of play.
 - e. Determine if a dressing room will be available and/or necessary for the crew.
 - f. Communicate who (R or FJ) will be responsible for the 25-second play clock.
 - g. Any other information you may need to address with the coach or administration before the day of the contest.
 - h. List the game-day procedures the school will need to have ready for your crew.
 - i. What time will the clock operator arrive?
 - ii. Will the sideline have a dedicated "ball person" to help put new balls into play and retrieve balls from incomplete passes?
 - iii. Remind the school that the Down Marker must be handled by an adult for all Varsity contests, and alert the school administration or coach when this person is expected to be on the field to meet with officials and receive instruction.
- B. Email the Crew
 - a. Confirm the correct date, time, and field location of the contest.
 - b. Communicate any information you have received from the school regarding the contest.
 - c. Verify parking for officials at each location and for any events (E.g., school pickup) you may need to be aware of to arrive on time.
 - d. Confirm with the crew the location and time of your pregame officials meeting. If a facility is not provided, it may be in the parking lot or on the field.
 - i. CIF-SS and CFOA standards require a pregame meeting with all game officials.
 - ii. All officials will be dressed appropriately in their uniforms before the pregame meeting.
 - iii. The pregame meeting will be long enough to cover the necessary elements of working as a cohesive crew for each contest. (I.e., mechanics and coverage areas, pregame responsibilities, information regarding the teams participating that day)
 - iv. It is recommended that the pregame conference be a minimum of 15-20 minutes.
 - e. Communicate the uniform that all crew members will be wearing.
 - f. Communicate who (R or SJ) will be responsible for the 25-second play clock.

All Officials will confirm receipt of all information from your Referee. When communication breakdowns happen, don't hesitate to contact the Referee to confirm the details you will need before arriving at the location of the contest.

SECTION: BEFORE ARRIVING AND ENTERING THE FIELD

ALL OFFICIALS:

All officiating crew members shall be on campus no later than 50 minutes before the scheduled Kick-Off Time to allow sufficient time to dress, prepare for the game, and participate in the Pre-Game Conference. The only acceptable excuse for being late for this Pre-Game Conference is in the case of an Emergency. Officials should be dressed and ready to begin their pregame discussion no less than 45 minutes before kickoff.

I. Line Judge

- a. In the absence of the Referee, you are responsible for ensuring that a pre-game officials conference is conducted.

II. Side Judge

- a. Make sure you have the correct time. Other officials will coordinate their watches with yours.

III. Referee

- a. Conduct a thorough Pre-Game Conference outlining individual and crew duties. The purpose of a Pre-Game Conference is to mentally prepare the crew. It is essential to unify the officials regarding procedures, rules, interpretations, philosophy, and penalty enforcement.
- b. The Play Clock will be a field clock, a wristwatch, a stopwatch, or a belt timer (ready ref) operated by the Referee or Side Judge. Assure you have an accurate timing device for the 25-second count.
 - i. The officials responsible for the play clock will be indicated to the administration and/or the Head Coach in the pregame emails and meeting.

IV. Side Judge and Line Judge

- a. Ensure game and play clock operators understand all clock operations and procedures, including watching the Referee's and other officials' signals. Review the timing differences between flag and tackle games and ensure the clock operator understands their responsibilities.

V. All Officials

- a. All crew members must be on the field 30 minutes before kickoff.
- b. At the end of the game, the crew must leave the field together and immediately return to their locker room or parking lot.

SECTION: PRE-GAME DUTIES ON THE FIELD

PROCEDURES

I. All Officials

- a. Arrive on the field as a crew 30 minutes (Rule 1.1.7) before kickoff. This standard is set in the NFHS rulebook and will be upheld by all CIF officials.
- b. Inspect the field for possible hazards and correct markings. Notify game management of hazards and incorrect field markings. Hazardous situations must be resolved to the referee's satisfaction before kickoff.
- c. Once you have completed your assigned responsibilities, prepare yourself visually during team warm-ups by watching players' warm-ups.
- d. Be sure to warm up and prepare your body for the physical demands of officiating the contest.
- e. Look for any illegal equipment and bring it to the coach's or player's attention so it can be corrected before the game.
- f. Inspect all game balls to ensure they are legal and properly inflated.
- g. All players and coaches will be reminded that players are responsible for ensuring their flags are in place as designated by the rules, their shirts are tucked in, and their flags and belts are not impeded. Any player violating this rule will be removed from the field for at least one (1) down, and a delay of game penalty may be imposed on the offending team. The play clock will not be adjusted to accommodate the removal of any player from the field for violating the equipment rule.
- h. Flags may be cut if the alteration does not fundamentally change a player's ability to pull a flag. For example, flags may be cut to meet size requirements if the flag's edges are not disrupted or frayed. Flags may not have tape on them. Belts may have tape to hold excess belt material, but it does not affect the flag attachment. Officials will use their best judgment to determine the legality of flags and belts in each contest.
 - i. Simply cutting a flag does not make it illegal.
 - ii. The officials of each contest will determine if the equipment being used is legal.
 - iii. Flag attachments may never be altered.
 - iv. Coaches must provide measuring devices when officials ask to determine the legality of equipment.
- i. Shirts and tucking of shirts –The rule book says (NFHS 1.5.1) that shirts must be tucked. Officials must enforce this.

II. Referee

- a. Meet each head coach separately. Do with another official. Optional: Meet the head coach with the entire crew. ***This may also be done before the crew's pregame meeting, 45 minutes before game time, before the crew officially takes the field.***
 - i. Rule 1.1.5
 - ii. Rule 1.1.6
 - iii. Rule 1.5.4

- b. Give the Head Coach the attention and focus required to discuss the game timeline (toss, kickoff, halftime).
- c. Obtain information on captains and verify that all players are properly equipped. Ask about unusual plays or formations. Discuss how you will handle penalty acceptance and enforcement. Obtain information about the on-site medical staff.
 - i. Rule 1.4.2
- d. Each coach must verbally confirm that all players are legally and properly equipped and may sign an equipment card confirming this.
- e. Obtain information regarding the start of the game – player introductions, national anthem, etc.- and adjust coin toss procedures as necessary. This information may also be obtained via email from the school administration or the coach prior to the contest date.
- f. Explain the sideline policy and introduce the official on each team’s sideline. Optional: Introduce the official on the sideline and have them discuss sideline policy, including whether the head coach is the only person who can accept or decline a penalty, restricted areas, and who will call timeouts.
- g. In CIF playoff contests, confirm that medical staff is present.
 - i. If the visiting team does not have medical staff present, ensure that the home team’s medical staff knows they are responsible for visiting team players.
- h. For non-league contests, both coaches must indicate to the Referee that they want overtime and that it will be played before the game starts. If coaches want overtime, we play overtime. If the contest is the first of a doubleheader, discuss alternatives to keep the second game kick-off on schedule. (In the confirmation email sent to school administrators and coaches, the Referee can address the desire for the non-varsity contest to be held first. *There will be no overtime for JV and Freshman contests.*

III. Line Judge

- a. Locate the person responsible for the down box. Proceed with them to the sideline opposite the press box.
- b. Review responsibilities with the person responsible for the down box. Remind them that they will continuously operate three feet back from the sideline.
- c. Check player equipment and bandaging to ensure compliance with the rules.
 - i. It is of utmost importance that flag belts are worn correctly and that the belts and flags are unobstructed.
 - ii. You are not required to line up the team for inspection, but you are required to visually inspect all equipment before the contest.
- d. Approve all game balls. (Rule 3.1 & 3.2, all footballs used in the contest will meet the rule specifications)
- e. Weather conditions may require a more coordinated effort between you and the sideline personnel to keep dry balls in play. Ball persons are to remain off the field except to retrieve the “old” ball on incomplete passes.
- f. Introduce yourself to your ball persons. This will be new for most sidelines. Using multiple balls and having a “ball person” will take a focused effort to educate the sideline.

- g. Provide the box personnel with a spare beanbag to mark a spot should they need to move as a play comes toward them at the sideline.
- h. Six minutes before kickoff, get the captains and the team (team opposite the press box side) from their locker room in time for the coin toss four minutes before kickoff.

IV. Side Judge

- a. Instruct the timer on how to start and stop the clock. At the end of a quarter, no audible device may be used until the play is dead.
- b. Check for a phone or radio connection to the press box to communicate with the timer. Review if game management has a contingency plan for having a timer or timing device. Review timeouts and be prepared to discuss media timeouts.
- c. Approve the game balls.
- d. Weather conditions may require a more coordinated effort by you and the sideline personnel to keep the game going with dry footballs. Ball persons are to remain off the field except to retrieve the “old” ball on incomplete passes.
- e. Introduce yourself to your ball persons. This will be new for most sidelines. Using multiple balls and having a “ball person” will take a focused effort to educate the sideline.
- f. Check player equipment and bandaging to ensure compliance with the rules.
 - i. It is of utmost importance that flag belts are worn correctly and that the belts and flags are unobstructed.
 - ii. You are not required to line up the team for inspection, but you are required to visually inspect all equipment before the contest.
- g. Six minutes before kickoff, get the captains and the team (team press box side) from their locker room in time for the coin toss three minutes before kickoff.

V. Side Judge and Line Judge

- a. Before the game, identify a “get back” coach to avoid sideline problems and warnings.
- b. Learn the names of the ball persons.
- c. Instruct ball personnel as to their responsibilities and positioning. Remind ball persons to remain off the field and supply a ball to the nearest official as requested. Replacing the ball after each play (except in foul weather) is unnecessary.

VI. Side Judge and Line Judge

- a. Have captains and teams out of their locker rooms in time for the coin toss, which should occur no later than four minutes before kick-off. Personally escort teams onto the field to keep them separated until they go to their sidelines. This procedure is to be repeated after halftime.

SECTION: COIN TOSS

The coin toss is a “show,” and a big deal for the players selected as captains. Please be precise and accurate when holding your coin toss. Consider covering coin toss procedures

in the crew's pregame meeting.

Officials on each sideline set the captains for each team at the 38-yard line. On the Press Box side of the field, the speaking captain will be at the front of the line. Opposite the press box, the speaking captain will be at the back of the line. The Referee is facing the press box in the middle of the field.

The Field and Line Judge will have a playing ball from their respective teams. Lead the team captains along the 38-yard line to the center of the field, then take a position opposite the Referee with their backs to the press box.

The captains proceed along the 38-yard lines, with the Referee in position to face the press box. When the group meets in the center of the field, the speaking captains (those who will speak for their teams) should be positioned closest to the referee.

The Referee should allow all captains to view both sides of the coin, identifying which side is heads and which is tails. The visiting captain is instructed to call heads or tails before the coin is flipped. The home captain is instructed to repeat the visiting captain's call: heads or tails. The Referee may catch the coin or have it hit the ground.

Once the winner is determined, the winner is offered their choice (of three): defer, receive, and choose a goal to defend or kick. If the option is to defer, the Referee immediately faces the press box, taps the shoulder of the deferring captain, and signals the declination. The remaining choices are then presented to the other captain, and the deferring captain makes the final selection. No signal is immediately given if the coin toss winner does not defer.

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

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

When the toss is completed, the other officials join the Referee in the center of the field and record the toss results. The officials holding the ball that will begin on offense will give it to the Referee, and all officials will move simultaneously to their starting positions on the field.

SECTION: GENERAL GAME DUTIES

SUBSTITUTIONS AND COUNTING PLAYERS

All Officials are responsible for the legality of substitutions. The Referee is responsible for the correct number of players on the offensive team, and the Field Judge and Line Judge are accountable for the correct number of players on the defensive teams.

I. All Officials

- a. With the arm extended, the closed fist signal is used when the team you are counting has seven players on the field. With hands at the waist, the open palm signal is used when the team you are counting has fewer than seven players on the field.
- b. All substitutes must be legally equipped to be a legal substitute.
- c. All players must be legally equipped at the time of the snap. Officials should not use a signal indicating that the correct number of players are on the field if not all players are legally equipped.

OTHER GENERAL GAME DUTIES – ALL OFFICIALS

Make a written record of all charged time-outs and UNS fouls. The position of the ball at the end of the first and third periods, including down and distance, is the responsibility of all officials. The Field Judge is responsible for recording elapsed time and ensuring the clock's status is correct.

Convey any message you have for other officials promptly. Avoid any position that suggests a huddle of officials unless necessary.

Be alert for players being out of bounds before a snap.

Watch for fouls, being sure to know:

- The spot where the run or scrimmage kick ended
- Spot of foul, position, or number of the offending player
- If the clock is stopped

Be ready for any play or unusual development. Always be prepared to rule on fumbles and illegal forward passes and know which team possessed a fumble or backward pass before it went out of bounds between the goal lines.

Be alert to rule on a dead ball behind a goal line. Indicate the ruling by a prompt signal.

Signal time-out (S3) when the rules provide for stopping the clock or when time-out is charged to a team or the Referee. Repeat the time-out signal of other officials.

Covering officials will use the dead-ball signal (S7) when the play ends, and there is no other reason to stop the clock.

A “winding” signal (S2) may be used when the ball becomes dead close to the sideline and the covering official rules that the ball remains inbounds. If Team A makes an obvious first down, the clock shall then be stopped (during stop-clock timing portions of the game).

Indicate, by touchdown signal (S5), when the ball is legally in possession of a player on or has penetrated the opponent's goal line. The referee checks for any foul that might affect the ruling; if there is none, relay the touchdown signal to the press box.

Leave no doubt in the minds of players or other officials about any ruling you make.

Be especially alert for acts of misconduct.

SECTION: GAME ADMINISTRATION – 3-Officials

QUARTER

I. Referee

- a. Be aware of the last minute of play. If the ball is not in play when the clock runs out, step in to prevent the snap.
- b. Announce the end of the quarter, record the down and distance, and release the Line Judge with the Down marker.
- c. Ensure the down, distance, position of the ball, and yard line are correct. Write this on your note card.
- d. Collect the ball, signal the end of the period (S14), and move it to the correct line and spot at the opposite end of the field.
- e. When officials are ready, and the Field Judge indicates the intermission is over, declare the ball ready for play with a short whistle and ready-for-play signal (S1).

II. Line Judge

- a. Record the down, distance, and position of the ball.
- b. Prepare the box to move to the new location on the Referee's signal.
- c. Place the box where it must be by giving the box personnel a spot with the heel of your foot.

III. Side Judge

- a. Record the down, distance, and position of the ball.
- b. Time the one-minute intermission and notify the Referee when 45 seconds have elapsed.
- c. Hold the LOS until R and LJ have completed their responsibilities, then jog to the new spot on the opposite end of the field.
- d. Stay between the teams and on the field of play to show presence as you move to the new spot.
- e. Confirm that the Referee and Line Judge have the ball and box in the correct location.

HALFTIME

- a. As soon as teams leave the field, the Referee looks at the timer and uses S-2 to start the half-time clock.

- b. All officials meet and review the first half.
- c. Flank officials will extend a 3-minute courtesy call to each team.
- d. The Field Judge or Line Judge will confer with the coach, who will make the second-half decision on which way to kick the ball. Please do this as they either leave the field or when you provide the 3-minute courtesy call.
- e. Inform fellow officials during the mandatory three-minute warm-up period or before the crew leaves for the appropriate positions.

CALLING FOULS

- a. Do not pick up the flag until a foul has been enforced. Move the flag only to ensure an accurate spot to enforce a foul.
- b. Make sure that the box is not moved until the penalty is enforced.
- c. Do not put your hands on or point at players when calling fouls.
- d. Give a preliminary signal for the foul called to the Referee and/or the offended sideline to speed up accepting, declining, and enforcing the penalty.
- e. If a player is disqualified, the official making the call will be accompanied by the Referee to the player's sideline to report the ejection and its reason to the coach.
- f. If the Referee is the official making the call, they will be accompanied by the sideline Official on the player's sideline.
- g. The official who called the foul relays the information to the Referee.
- h. Refer to the offending team by school/team name and offense or defense.
- i. Give the number of the offending player, note the ball's position, live ball/dead ball, loose ball, etc.
- j. The referee will give a preliminary signal to the press box and then explain options to the offended team.
- k. The Referee, with the assistance of the Side Judge or Line Judge, will determine acceptance or decline of the penalty and then signal the penalty to both sidelines.
- l. The official NOT marking off the penalty will hold the enforcement spot while the penalty is enforced. After the ball is placed on the ground, the official will independently mark off the penalty to ensure it is correct.
- m. The SJ or LJ should mark off (enforce) the penalty while the R gives the appropriate signals to each sideline.
- n. The clock will stop on all penalties, and they must be enforced quickly. The R will then use S-2 to start the clock and signal ready for play.
- o. All officials will jog to the spots on the field that need to be covered to enforce a penalty. Officials never walk when enforcing fouls. Exception – when walking off the penalty yardage to be accurate.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

- a. The Side Judge will be responsible for ensuring the game clock is correct
- b. The Line Judge will be responsible for ensuring the box/down marker is correct
- c. All officials should have a beanbag to mark a spot on the field when necessary. (i.e., R marking the LOS, SJ marking the spot on a forward fumble out of bounds, the LJ marking an enforcement spot when they need to leave it to attend to something else)

- d. Officials will jog whenever they move on the field of play. When enforcing the game's rules, a running clock requires quick movements from all officials.
- e. The R or the SJ will start the play clock on the signal (open hand over head) at the end of the previous play or the Referee's "ready for play" signal.
- f. All officials must be ready to use stop-clock and start-clock signals during the game. When running clock timing is in place, it is acceptable to stop and start the clock. If the clock operator has stopped the clock, the R will use S-2 to restart it.
- g. When the change to stop-clock timing takes effect, officials will give teams a brief 30-second timeout. This warning will occur at 2:00 or the next dead ball after 2:00, at the end of each half.
- h. All officials are responsible for safety fouls and flag-guarding penalties, regardless of where they occur on the field.
- i. It is vital to have a consistent pre-snap mental routine – down and distance, formations, likely plays, and identifying where and when you will move. Know before the snap so your brain power is ready for unusual plays and situations.

SCRIMMAGE PLAY MECHANICS – 3-Officials

PRE-SNAP MECHANICS

I. All officials

- a. The mechanics are such that when three officials are on the field, they should create a triangle around the players. This triangle shifts and moves as the players move. No two officials should be within 15-20 yards of each other during live ball play.
- b. Pre-snap communication between officials is necessary. Be sure to include this in the crew's pregame meeting.
- c. The end of each play will be signaled by raising an open hand over the head (S-7). The official responsible for calling the dead ball will do this. S-7 signals the play is over and the ball is dead. The whistle will also be used to indicate the play is over and the ball is dead.
- d. Pre-snap communication between officials is a must. All officials need to know who is responsible for covering a line to gain and who is responsible for covering the goal line.
 - i. When communicating your intent to move to a line, point with both hands to your torso, then point with one hand at the line you intend to cover after the snap.
 - ii. Repeat this as needed until you receive confirmation from your fellow officials that they have seen your intent. They will nod or point at you when they have seen your communication.

II. Referee

- a. Signal the upcoming down to SJ and LJ.

- b. Retrieve the ball from the runner or obtain a new ball from another official or ball person. Hustle is needed to assist in retrieving the ball and spotting it.
- c. Spot the ball at the forward-most location of the ball when the play ended. Use the hash marks to spot the ball when the play ends outside of the hash marks.
 - i. Most fields will not have permanent hash marks.
 - ii. Hash marks can and will be marked with pylons outside of the endzone at each end of the field.
 - iii. Hash marks will be 23' apart.
 - iv. Officials will use a numbering system like those used in tackle football to indicate the hash mark on which the ball is located. Use 1, 2, 3, or 1, 3, 5 to indicate the position of the ball. (This should be discussed in your pregame meeting.)
- d. Make visual contact with all officials to determine if they are ready.
- e. Be ready to "slow down" the QB and the Center until all officials are in position. No ready-for-play signal will be given until all officials are in position.
- f. Indicate "Ready for Play" with S-1 and/or a short whistle. The whistle is optional.
- g. Assume a position about 12 yards behind the neutral zone and toward the Side Judge's sideline (be ready to move to assist with calls at the LOS while the Field Judge moves downfield)
- h. Count Team A players and ensure all are legally equipped. Signal with a closed fist and arm extended.
- i. Identify formations and observe initial keys: snap, quarterback, running back, false start, QB hard count, and head bob.

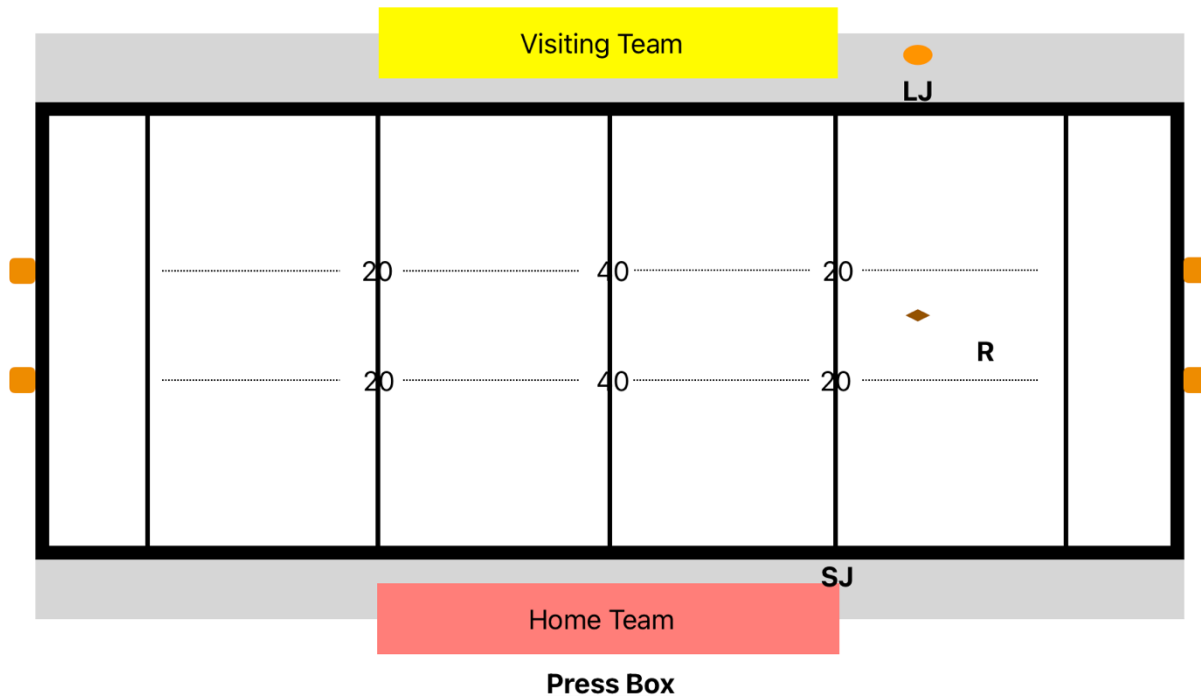
III. **Side Judge**

- a. Signal the coming down and confirm with the Referee and Line Judge.
- b. Be prepared to indicate the Team B line with your foot before moving downfield (if necessary).
- c. Communicate with the Referee – Status of the Game Clock when stopped clock timing is being used.
 - i. A mini wind signal at the waste indicates the clock should be running. I.e., after enforcing a penalty during stopped clock timing.
 - ii. The arms crossed, held below and in front of the waist to indicate that the clock should be stopped.
- d. Count Team B players (in the huddle, if possible), determine all are legally equipped, and signal with a closed fist and arm extended. (like S-12)
- e. Identify your initial keys.
 - i. Defensive players and offensive players on your side of the field.
 - ii. You are primarily responsible for pre-snap fouls on Team B. However, you will make a call if you see fouls on Team A.
- f. Be aware of the play clock if you are responsible for it. Indicate 10 seconds remaining by holding one hand over your head. Count down the final five seconds by pumping the hand up and down from 5 to 1 second.
- g. Move downfield 10-15 yards before the snap when gameplay requires it. No offensive player will ever move downfield past the SJ. When SJ moves downfield before the snap, LJ becomes solely responsible for all pre-snap fouls at or behind the Neutral Zone.

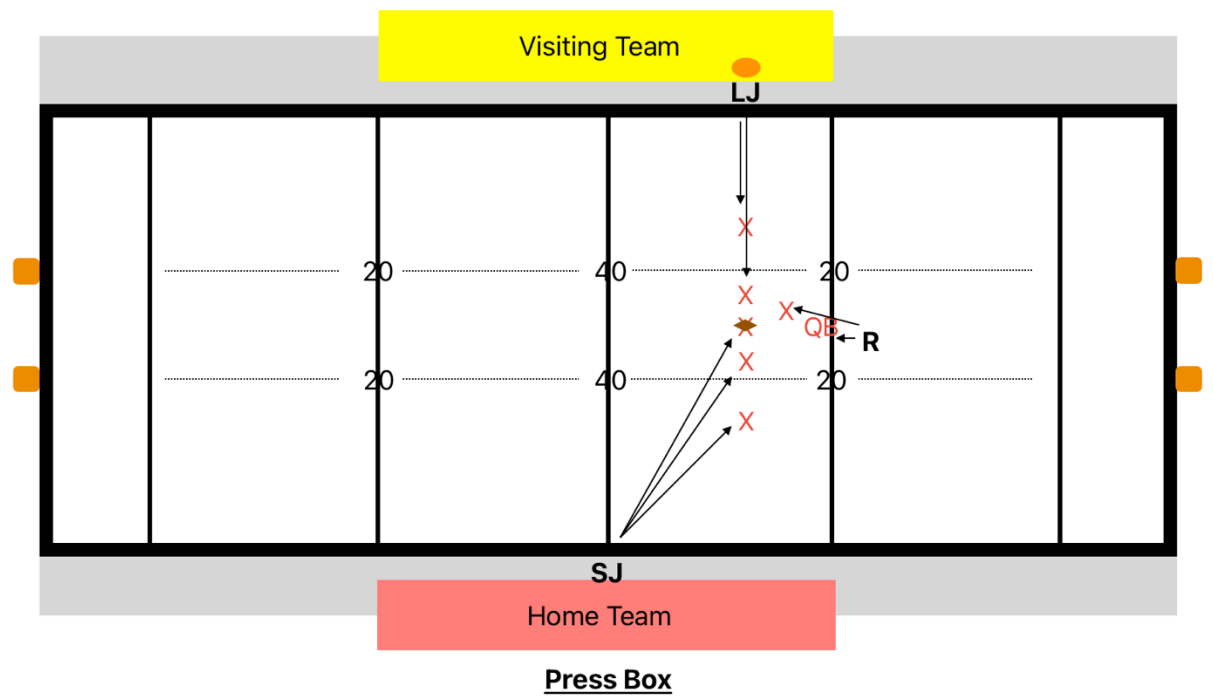
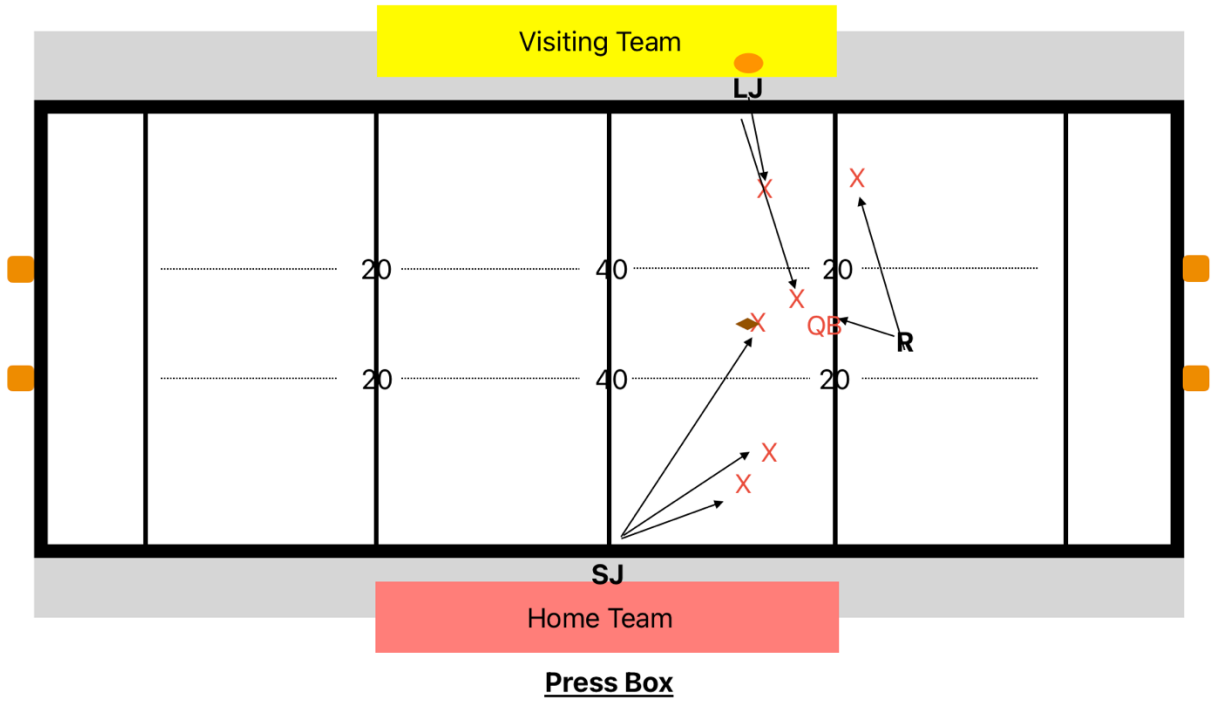
- h. The SJ will communicate to the R and the LJ that they are moving downfield by tapping the top of their head with their downfield hand and pointing downfield. Do not move until the LJ has confirmed they see your signal by a head nod or an open hand point of confirmation.
- i. Movement of the SJ (when and signals) should be discussed in the pregame meeting.

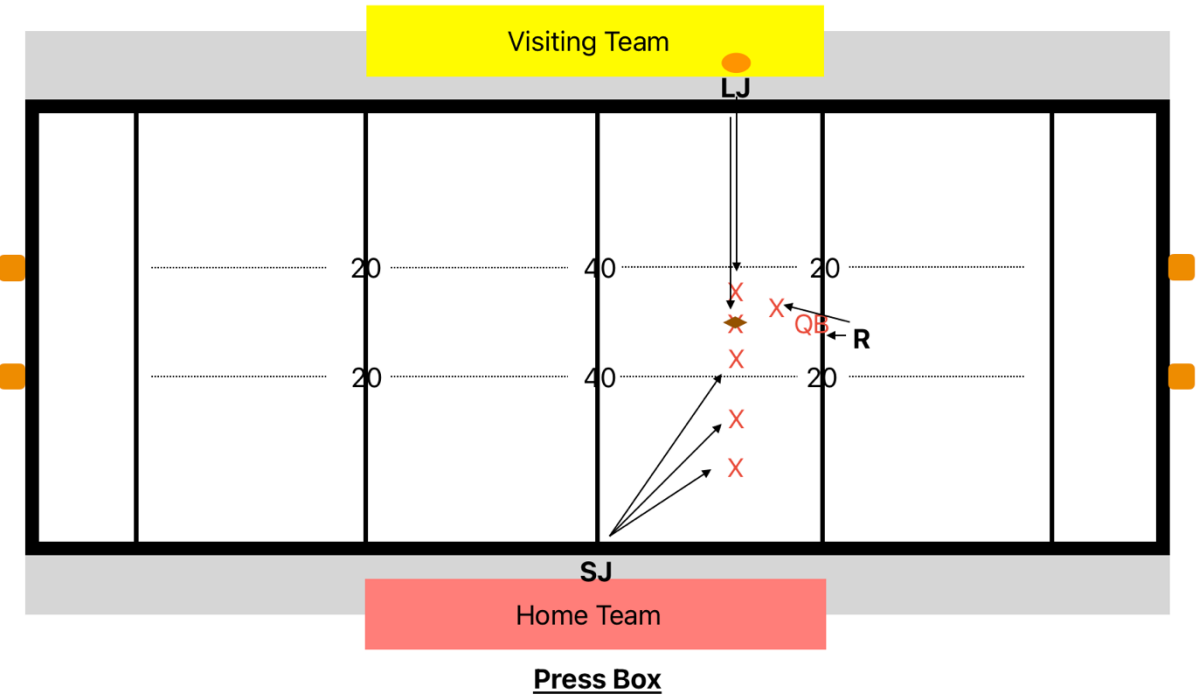
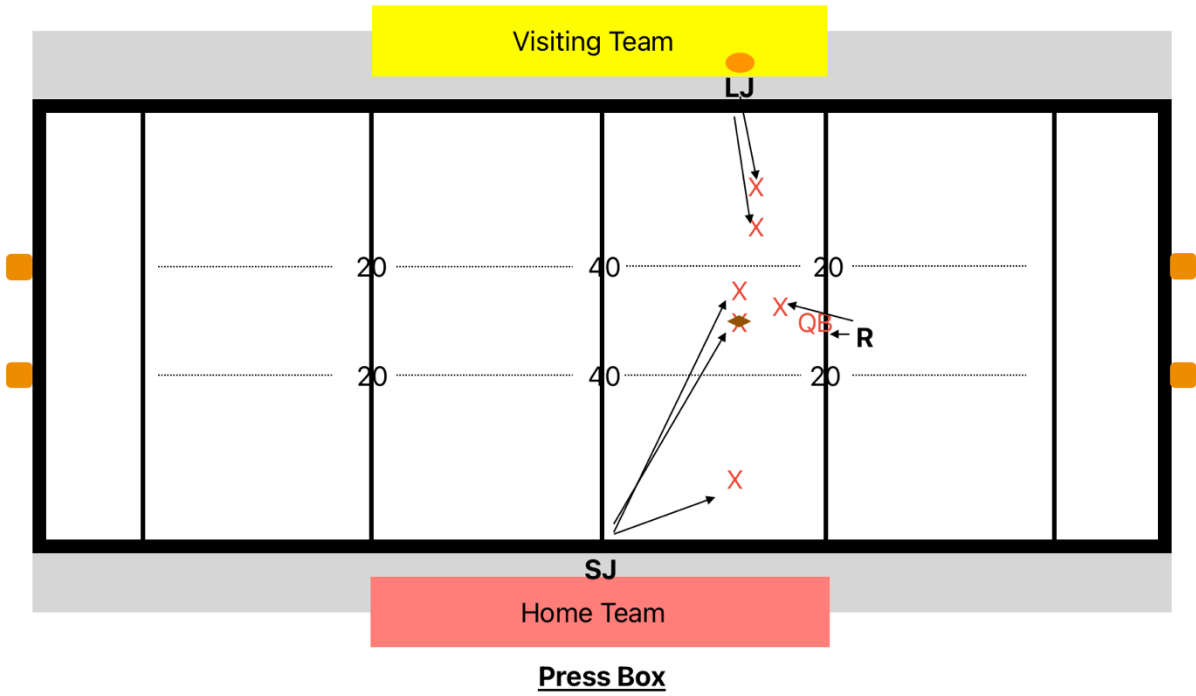
IV. Line Judge

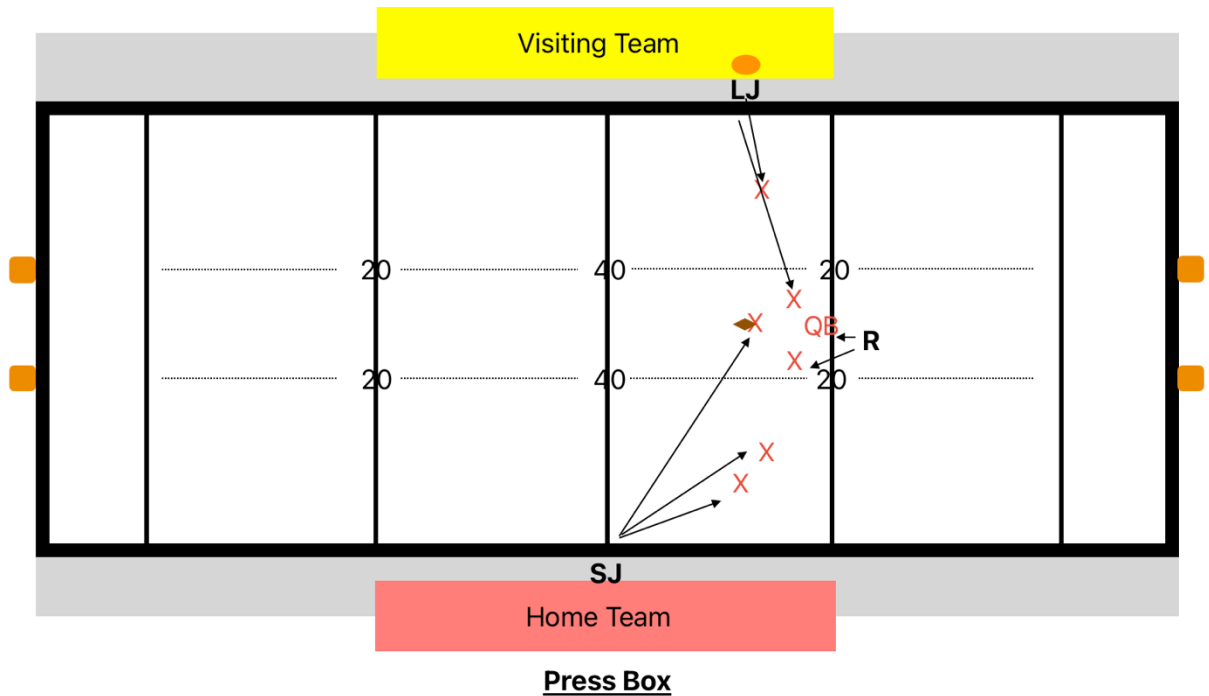
- a. Signal up coming down and confirm with Side Judge and Referee.
- b. Move the box as necessary for the correct down and distance.
- c. Assume a position on Team A's line of the neutral zone, outside the sideline opposite the Side Judge. Straddle the 1-yard neutral zone to indicate the restraining lines for both A and B.
- d. Count Team B players and Signal with a closed fist and arm extended. Assist the R with the count and legality of all Team A players.
- e. Be prepared to indicate the Team A line to the Team A wide receiver with your foot.
- f. Identify your initial keys.
 - i. Defensive players and offensive players on your side of the field.
 - ii. You are primarily responsible for pre-snap fouls on Team A and Team B.
- g. Motion – LJ is responsible for any motion players and the legality of that motion.
- h. The LJ will be ready to stand in the Neutral Zone to ensure they can see all offensive and defensive players on their respective lines.
- i. Confirm all pre-snap signals that the SJ gives.
- j. When the gameplay requires the SJ to move downfield 5-10 yards before the snap, the LJ becomes solely responsible for all pre-snap fouls at the Neutral Zone.



- The SJ must be ready to move to the LOS at all times to help with coverage or spot the ball. Do not plant your feet downfield and stay there.
- The R must be ready to move the press box side to the LOS when the LJ must give up the LOS to move with receivers downfield. The R will have to fight the urge to move with the play toward the LJ sideline and instead, move up to the LOS and stay toward the SJ sideline.
 - All officials must keep a distance from the play to maintain angles and see fouls.







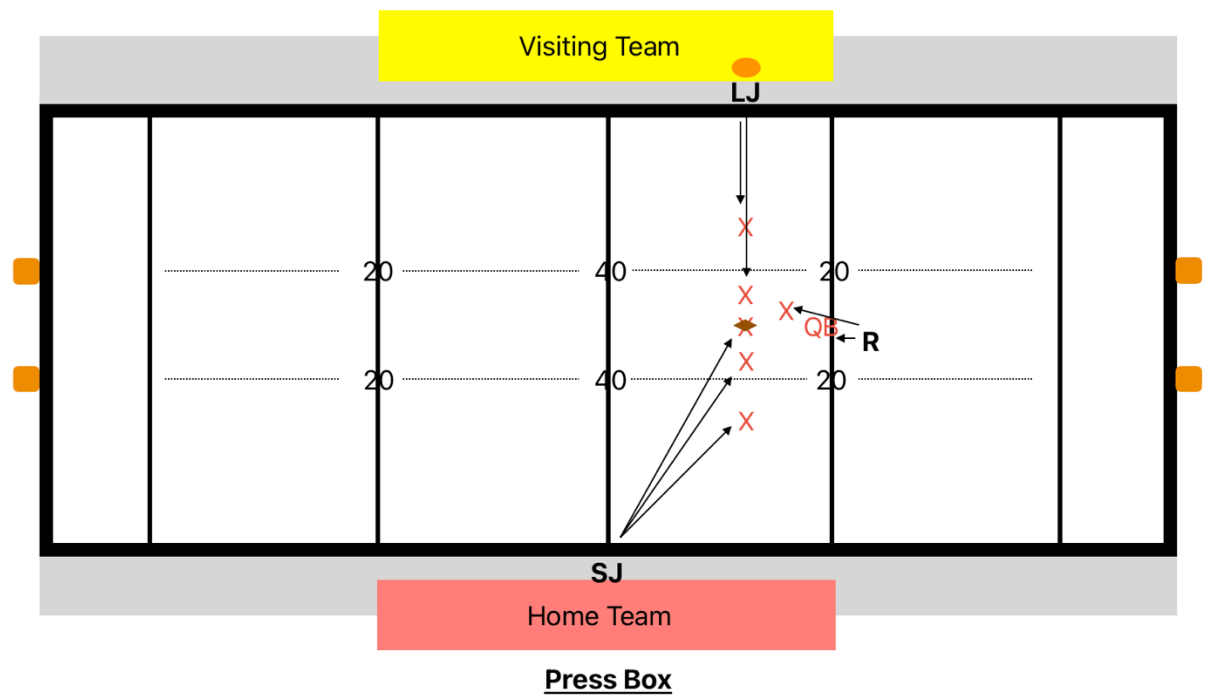
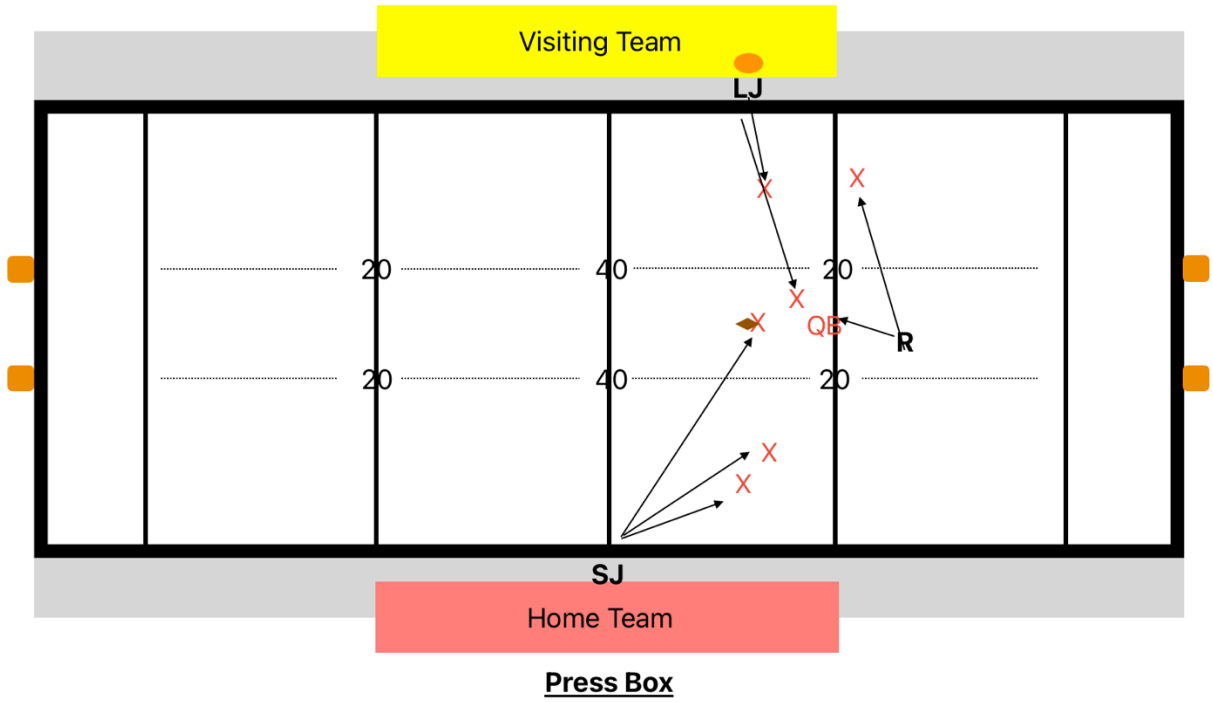
RESPONSIBILITIES AFTER THE SNAP

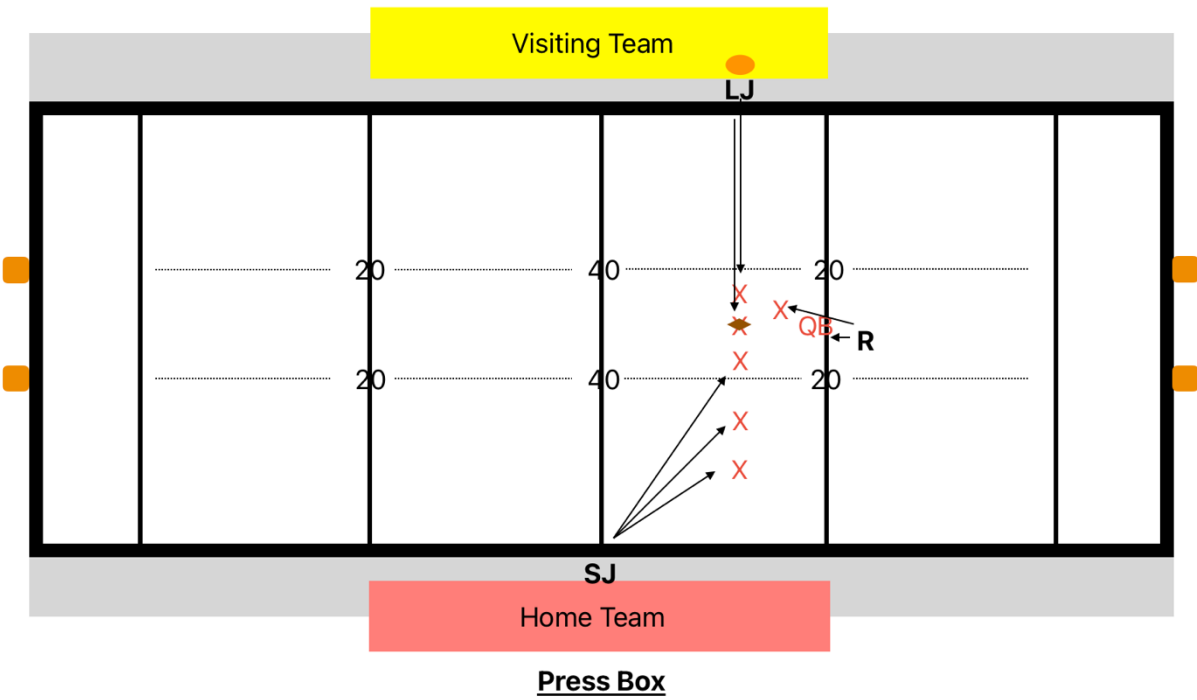
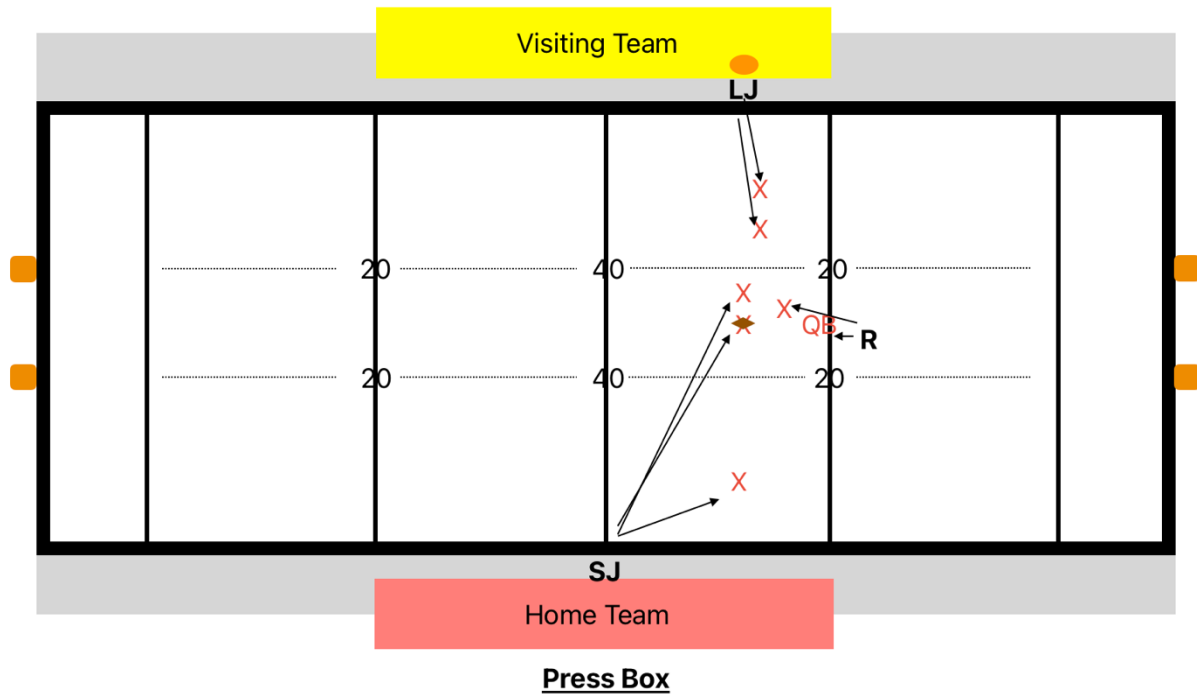
I. Referee

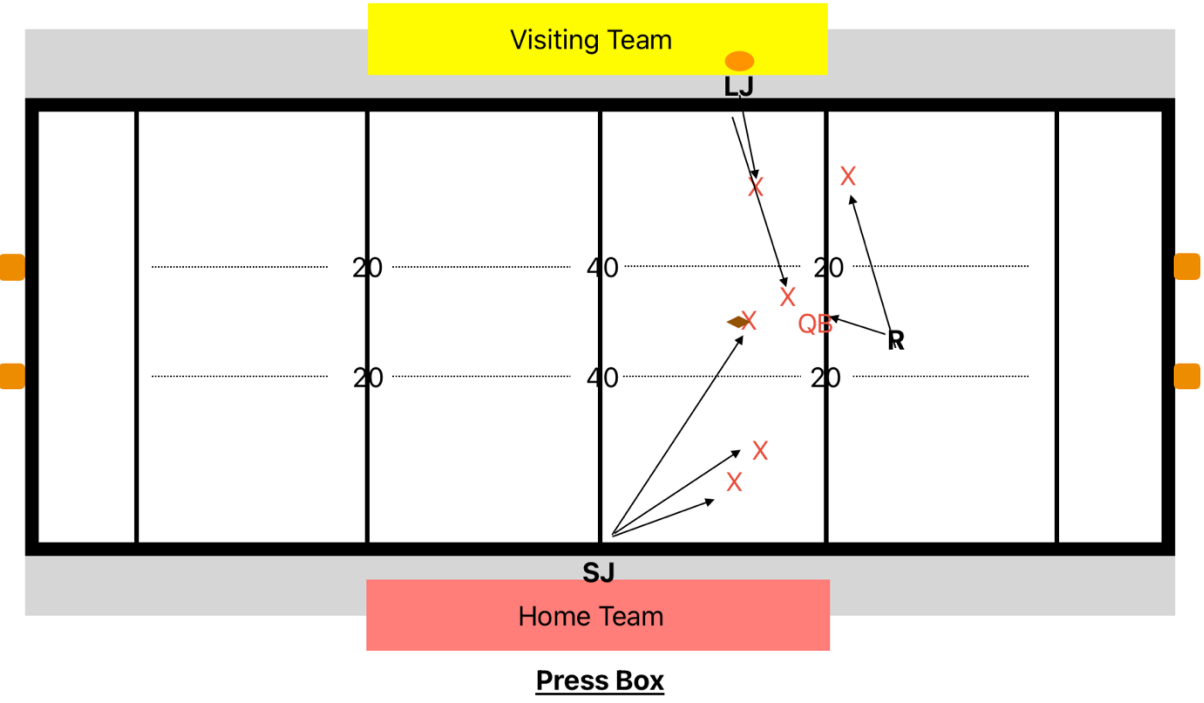
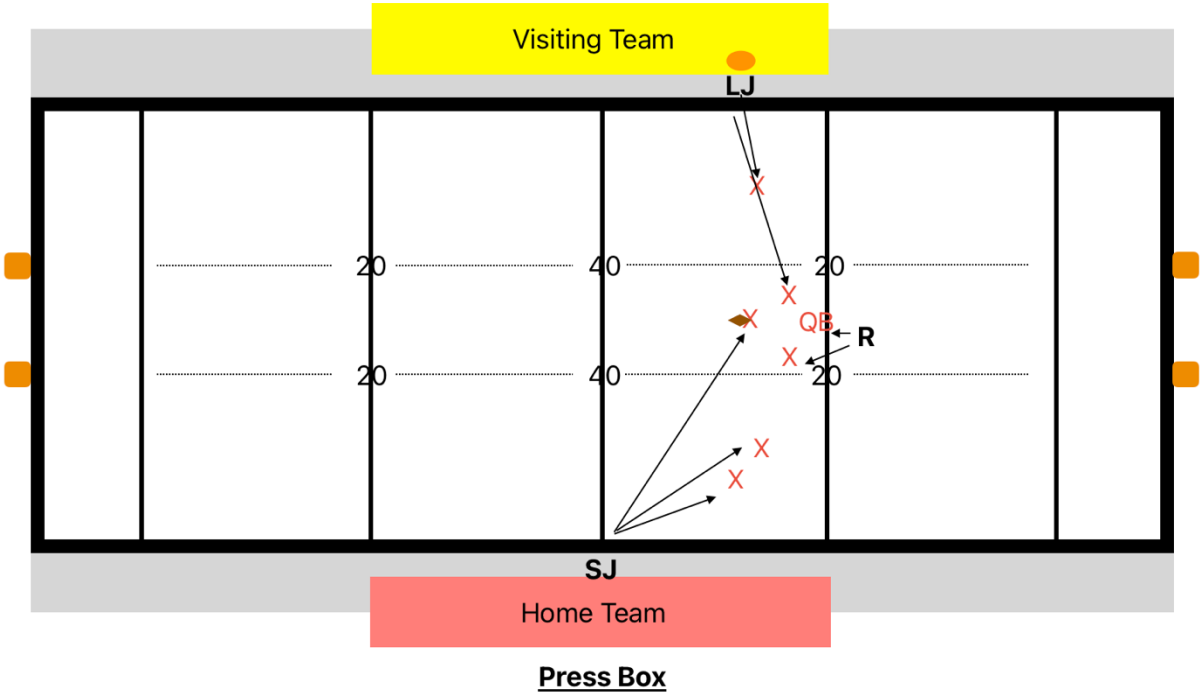
- a. After reading the quarterback, shift your focus to the Team A blockers and action around the QB.
- b. Know where the ball carrier is and observe play around them, looking for blocking and illegal contact.
- c. If the point of attack is toward the LJ, move toward the LOS and toward the press box, and begin to assist the LJ with calls at the LOS.
- d. If the point of attack is toward the SJ sideline, move with the action.
- e. After the runner is down, maintain a broad view of the dead-ball action. If the play ends out of bounds, hustle to the sideline and ensure players separate and return to the in-bounds area. Get the ball and prepare to spot it for the next down.
- f. If the ball is dead between the inbounds marks, hustle to that spot while keeping your head up to observe the action around the field.
- g. Your points of interest/keys:
 - i. False starts
 - ii. Illegal shifts
 - iii. Blocking around the QB and the runner by Team A players
 - iv. Illegal acts around the runner
 - v. Reverses and trick plays
 - vi. Flag guarding when the angle is correct

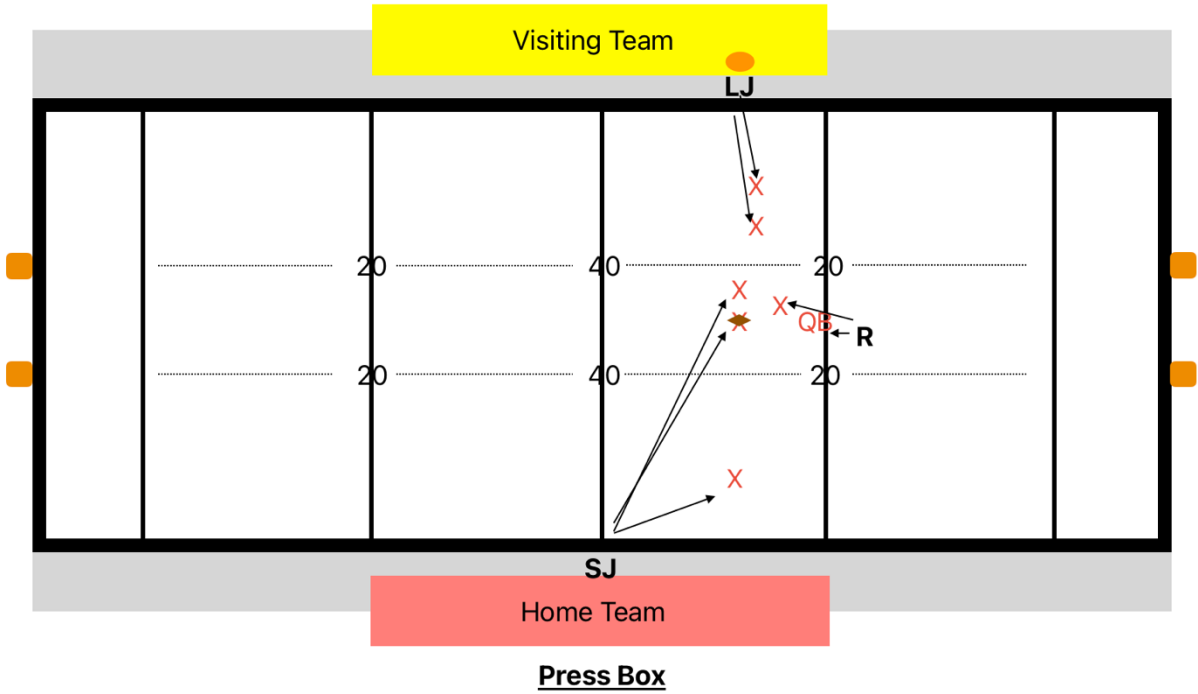
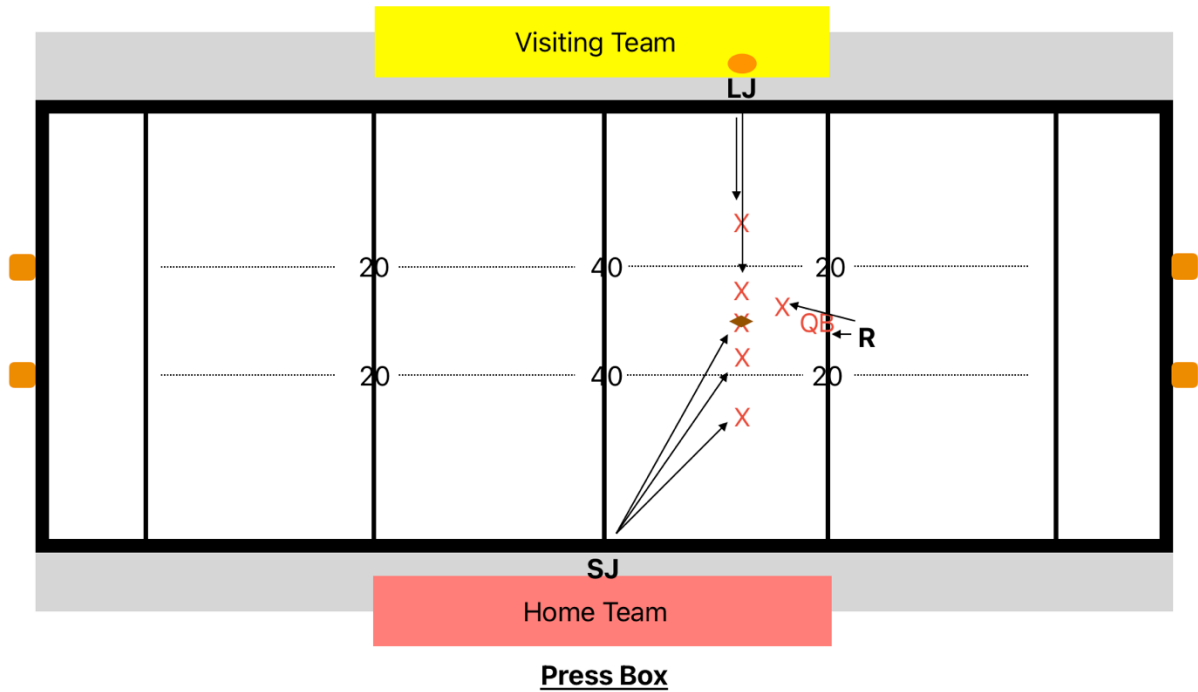
II. Line Judge and Side Judge

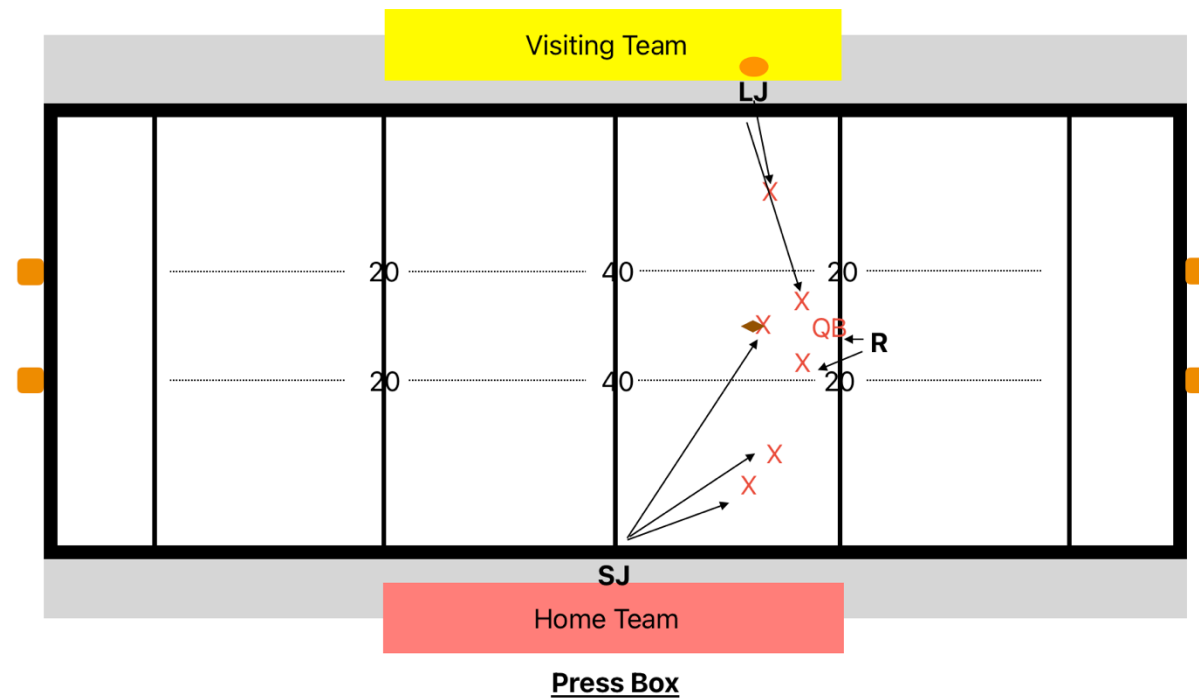
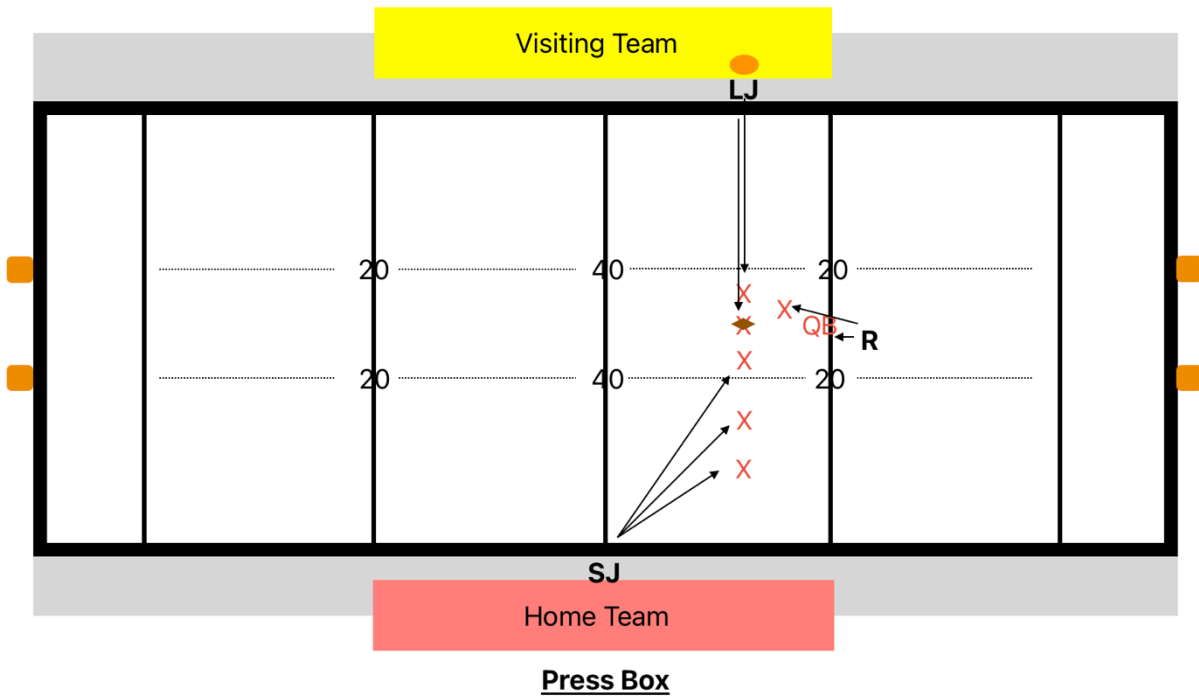
- a. After reading the run play, momentarily locate the ball and the runner.
- b. You always have the progress spot until the runner crosses the goal line, including an accurate spot when the runner goes out of bounds.
- c. On plays within the 10-yard line, if a play threatens the goal line, be prepared to be at the goal line to make the appropriate call.
- d. Maintain a broad view of the action while paralleling the progress spot, observing the player's conduct away from the play.
- e. If the play is toward your side, observe blocks and watch for contact in front of the runner until you take over responsibility for the runner and forward progress.
- f. If the runner is headed toward your sideline, allow the play to go past you (move into the offensive backfield, if necessary), then trail the play.
- g. Be aware of the angle when players extend the ball, and ensure you mark the exact forward progress of the ball.
- h. If the runner crosses the sideline, hustle to the spot and mark progress.
- i. Signal (S-3) while observing the out-of-bounds dead-ball action when under stop-clock timing. Do not look at the ground. If the runner crosses the goal line and continues out of bounds, signal touchdown while continuing to turn with the action.
- j. Pre-snap communication between officials is a must. All officials need to know who is responsible for covering a line to gain and who is responsible for covering the goal line.
 - i. When communicating your intent to move to a line, point with both hands to your torso, then point with one hand at the line you intend to cover after the snap.
 - ii. Repeat this as needed until you receive confirmation from your fellow officials that they have seen your intent. They will nod or point at you when they have seen your communication.











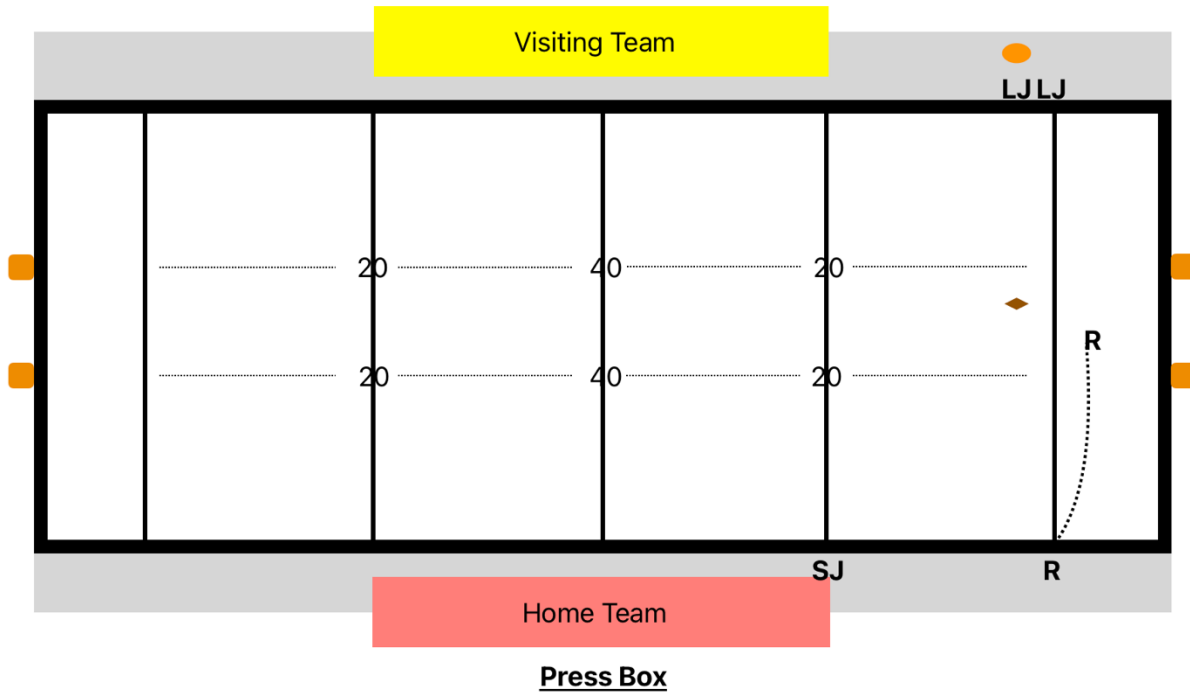
RUNNING PLAYS -- MECHANICS – 3-Officials

I. Referee

- a. Observe the snap, then momentarily read the quarterback's action to determine the type of play.

- b. Allow your reads to focus on the point of attack while maintaining primary responsibility for action on and by the quarterback.
 - c. The referee has primary responsibility for the legality of screen blocking behind the LOS.
- II. Line Judge**
- a. Move and position the “box” as necessary to ensure it is marking the correct down and distance.
 - b. Observe the snap, then momentarily read run /pass by observing the Quarter Back.
 - c. Locate the ball and the point of attack, but do not focus on it.
 - d. On plays beginning within five yards of the line to gain, move to the line to gain at the snap and officiate back to the line of scrimmage.
 - e. On plays beginning within five yards of the goal line, move to the goal line and officiate back to the line of scrimmage.
 - f. On plays beginning at or within the three-yard line, going out of the end zone, moving back to the goal line, and officiating forward to the line of scrimmage.
- III. Side Judge**
- a. Observe the snap, then momentarily read run/pass by observing the Quarter Back.
 - b. Locate the ball and the point of attack, but do not focus on it.
 - c. Move to the end line on plays beginning at or within five yards of the goal line.
 - d. On plays beginning at or within five yards of the line to gain, move downfield, and continue officiating.
 - e. On play beginning 6-10 yards from any line to gain or the goal line, be ready to move back to the LTG or the goal line to rule on forward progress of the ball carrier.
 - f. Maintain focus on receivers downfield, watching for blocking and illegal contact.
- IV. All Officials**
- a. Regarding screen blocking – remember that angles matter and you must see the contact and know the direction of movement of the player initiating the contact.
 - i. The R is primary on screen blocking behind the LOS
 - ii. The LJ is primary on screen blocking at or within 5 yards of the LOS
 - iii. The SJ is primary on screen blocking beyond 5 yards of the LOS
 - iv. These standards are set regardless of the distance the calling officials are from the foul.
 - b. Working Zone coverage, once a running play is observed, will assist all officials in identifying blocking fouls and flag-guarding penalties. All officials should maintain an angle that allows them to officiate ahead of the play and avoid ball-watching.
 - c. Plays beginning on or behind the 40 –
 - i. LJ has LOS
 - ii. SJ has Line to Gain

EXCEPTION – any snap where five or fewer yards will gain a first down, the LJ is responsible for the LTG, and the FJ is accountable for all other plays downfield.



Optional Referee Positioning – Short Yardage (Five Yards or Less to Line to Gain or Goal Line)

When the ball is snapped with five yards or less to gain for a first down or when the line to gain is the goal line, an optional positioning mechanic may be utilized to ensure continuous and effective coverage of both the line of scrimmage (LOS) and the line to gain/goal line.

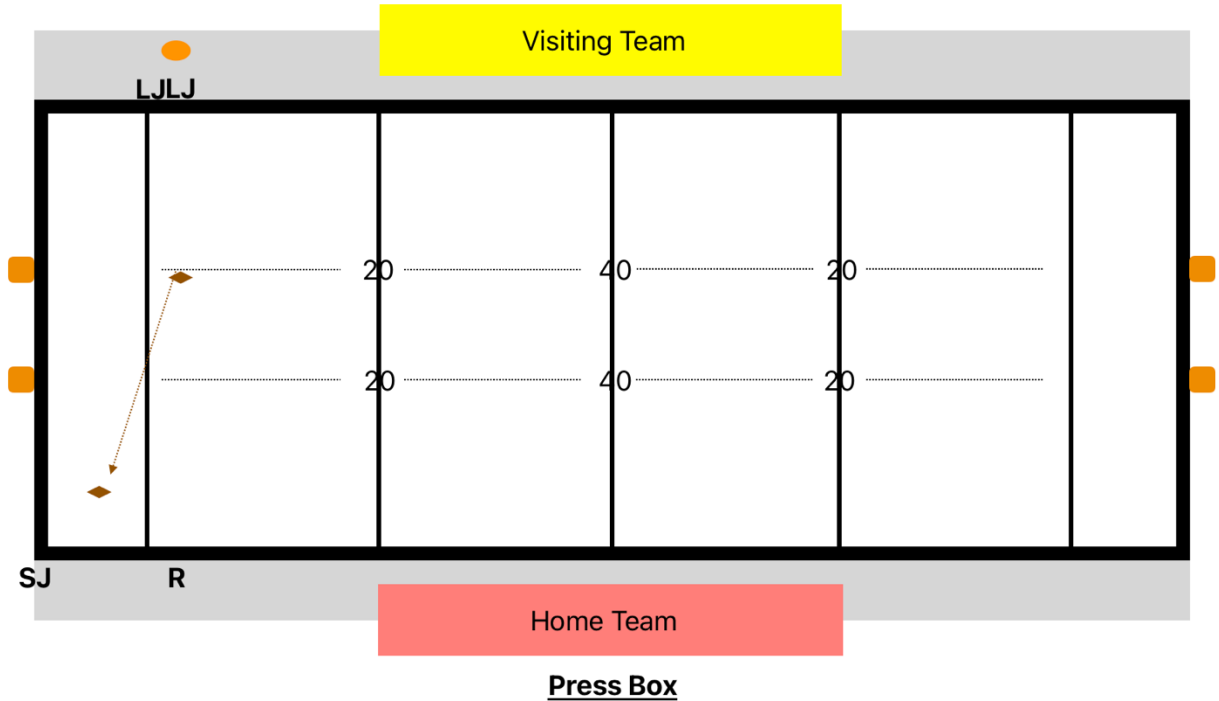
In this situation, the Referee (R) may adjust their pre-snap position from the offensive backfield to the sideline opposite the press box (SJ side) and align on the line of scrimmage. This adjustment allows the R to assume primary responsibility for the LOS at the snap.

With the Referee assuming LOS responsibility, the Line Judge (LJ) is then able to vacate the LOS prior to the snap and establish position on the line to gain or goal line, as dictated by the situation. This ensures that the critical line is covered at the snap without delay or transition.

The Referee must remain disciplined in this alignment, maintaining a wide field of vision to officiate play at and immediately behind the LOS, including illegal forward passes, pass direction, and action involving the quarterback. Following the snap, the Referee will officiate the play in accordance with standard mechanics, transitioning from the LOS into an officiating position that maintains proper spacing and coverage geometry.

This optional mechanic should be communicated clearly to the crew prior to the snap to ensure all officials understand shifts in responsibility, particularly regarding LOS coverage and initial key responsibilities.

- d. Plays beginning on B-20 to B-25
 - i. LJ has Line to Gain
 - ii. SJ has the Goal Line
- e. Plays beginning on B-19 to B-6
 - i. LJ has LOS
 - ii. SJ has the Goal Line
- f. Plays beginning on B-5 and in
 - i. LJ has the Goal line
 - ii. SJ has the End Line
 - iii. R has LOS



PASS MECHANICS – 3-Officials

COVERAGE MECHANICS (In addition to Running Play)

I. Referee

- a. Observe the snap, then momentarily read the quarterback's action to determine the type of play.
- b. As the quarterback drops to pass, drop back at a 45-degree angle, maintaining position behind the quarterback toward the SJ side of the field. Observe initial blocks by offensive backs.
 - i. Staying on the SJ side of the field means looking at the back of the quarterback from time to time.

- ii. Be alerted to moving toward the LOS on the press box side or the field. If the QB moves toward the LJ side of the field, hold your position toward the LJ sideline.
- c. Look through QB to observe blocking.
- d. As the QB is threatened and attempts to pass, determine if there is illegal contact.
- e. When the quarterback is threatened and attempts to pass, determine if the flag is pulled before the pass is released.
- f. Determine all passes' initial direction (forward, backward, or lateral). The LJ is primary for the legality of the direction of the ball at and behind the LOS.
- g. On rollout plays, move with the play toward the SJ sideline and move toward the LOS when the play is toward the LJ sideline.
- h. On QB scrambles toward the LOS, determine the forward point at which the ball is released.
- i. Announce "BALL IS AWAY" and protect QB until immediate action is complete or QB moves to participate.
- j. You have all calls on QB and blocking behind the line of scrimmage.
- k. Dead-ball officiate.
- l. Spot the ball on plays.
- m. Anticipate:
 - i. Forward or backward pass
 - ii. Pass attempt vs. fumble
 - iii. Roughing passer
 - iv. Illegal pass (beyond LOS)
 - v. Illegal Blocking by the Offense

II. **Line Judge**

- a. Observe the snap, then momentarily read the quarterback's action to determine the type of play.
- b. Rule on the action by and on the key receivers during initial action. Watch for illegal contact on the defense as receivers move downfield. Initial action usually happens within 5 yards of the LOS but keep your eyes on your initial responsibilities until they are free of foul or action in your coverage zone pulls you away.
 - i. The SJ has initial responsibility for the receivers lined up to their side of the field.
 - ii. The LJ has initial responsibility for the receivers lined up to their side of the field.
- c. Following the initial action, shift to zone coverage once players are free of fouls and have moved 5-10 yards downfield.
- d. Remain near LOS until the pass is thrown. Exception – all receivers are deep, then move to a position downfield a few yards behind the shallowest receiver.
 - i. When the LJ moves downfield, the R must move to cover the legality of passes and play at the LOS.
- e. Snap from inside the 5-yard line of any LTG or the Goal, move immediately to the goal line.
- f. Snap from inside the 10-yard line, be ready to move to the goal line or LTG, and rule on forward progress.

- g. Be sure you are standing on the correct spot or the goal line (out of bounds) before indicating touchdown or 1st down. This gives credibility to the call.
- h. On QB drops of less than 3 steps or quick passes, determine the initial direction of the pass.
- i. To maintain coverage, move parallel to the sideline and be responsible for the sideline from end line to end line. This is sometimes referred to as “outside-in” coverage. Stay outside your coverage area and work in as the play develops.
- j. Focus on feet rather than hands on catch attempts near the end line or the sideline. See the hands and confirm the catch after determining that the feet were or weren’t in bounds.
- k. If a pass is caught in bounds and then the player goes out of bounds, blow the whistle, stop the clock (S-3), mark the spot, and continue to officiate. The R can then immediately wind the clock if the running clock applies—do NOT give a catch signal.
- l. Do not mark the spot of passes caught out of bounds. Simply give an incomplete pass signal.
- m. L is the primary official responsible for all pitches and tosses. Be aware of the direction of the flight of the ball and rule on Illegal Forward Pass.
 - i. Use the lines on the field to help determine the direction of the pass, pitch, or toss.
 - ii. Be aware that the forward motion of the player may make it seem lateral even when the path of the ball is forward.
- n. Responsible for progress up to the goal line.
- o. Off-ball officiate on plays away. Come into the hash mark on plays into the opposite side zone.
- p. Dead-ball officiate.
- q. Anticipate:
 - i. Holding
 - ii. Pass interference
 - iii. Catch/No-catch
 - iv. Unnecessary contact / Personal fouls
 - v. Forward/backward pass
 - vi. Illegal participation
 - vii. Forward pass beyond the LOS
- k. After the ball is dead and you have moved to the yard line where forward progress is determined, close to the dead ball spot. Do not move past players.
- l. Your points of interest / Keys:
 - i. When the line to gain is threatened
 - ii. When the goal line is threatened
 - iii. Encroachment
 - iv. False Starts
 - v. Illegal motion, shifts, formations

III. Side Judge

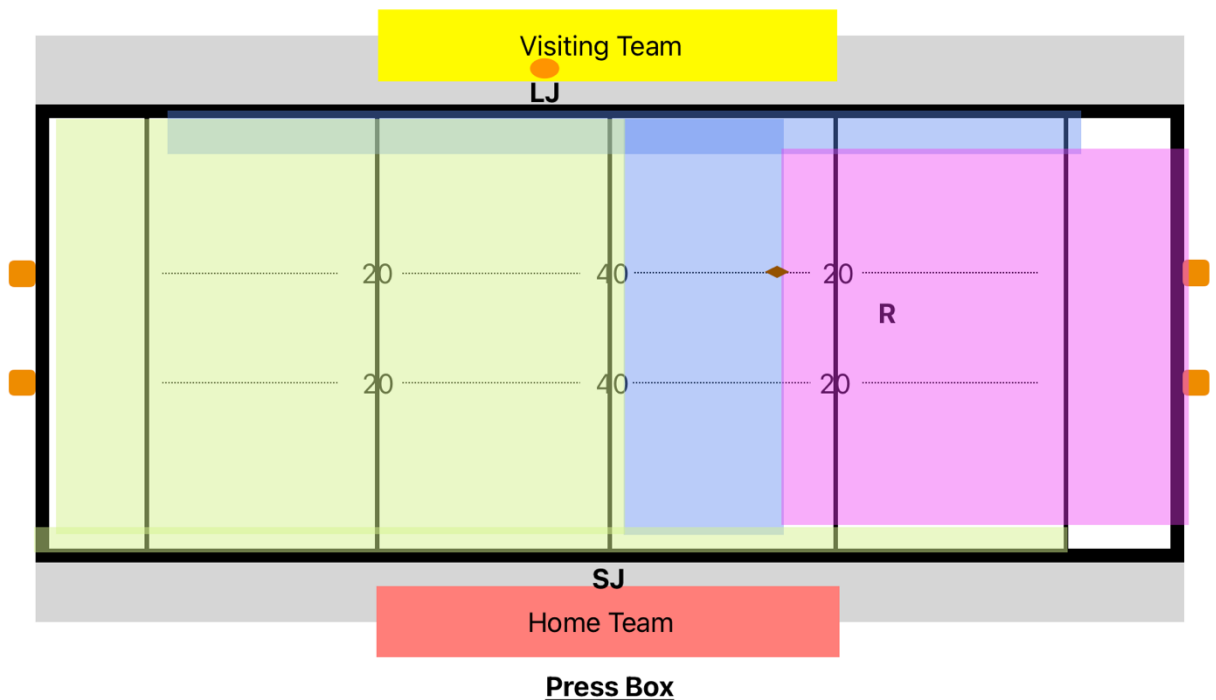
- a. Observe the snap, then momentarily read the quarterback’s action to determine the type of play.

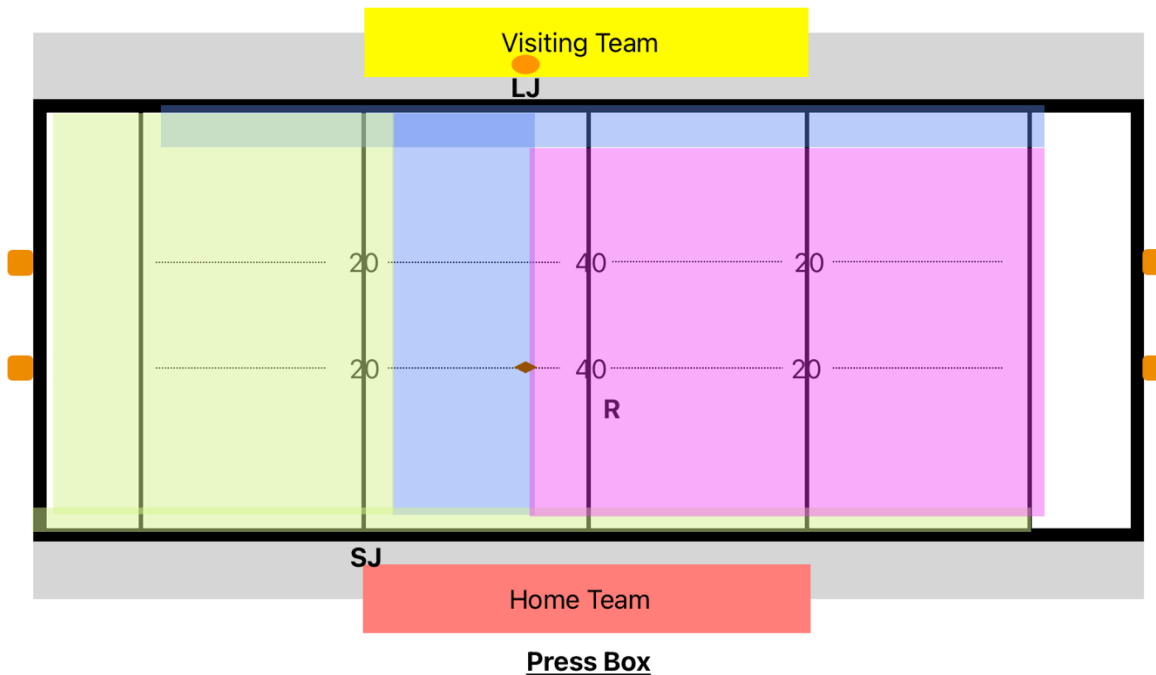
- b. Rule on the action around your initial receivers within 10 yards of the LOS. Watch for illegal contact on the defense as receivers move downfield.
 - i. The SJ has initial responsibility for the receivers lined up to their side of the field.
 - ii. The LJ has initial responsibility for the receivers lined up on their side of the field.
- c. Following initial action, shift to zone coverage.
- d. Move downfield quickly, confident you won't let any receivers beat you. Move further than you need to, and work back to the ball.
- e. Snap from inside the 5-yard line, move immediately to the end line
- f. On QB drops of fewer than 3 steps or quick passes, stop and read the play to help with action around the receiver and forward progress.
- g. To maintain coverage, move parallel to the sideline and be responsible for the sideline from end line to end line. This is sometimes called "outside-in" coverage. Stay outside your coverage area and work in as the play develops.
- h. Focus on feet rather than hands on catch attempts near the end line or the sideline. See the hands and confirm the catch after determining that the feet were or weren't in bounds.
- i. If a pass is caught in bounds and then the player goes out of bounds, blow the whistle, stop the clock, mark the spot, and continue to officiate. The R can then immediately wind the clock if the running clock applies—do NOT give a catch signal.
- j. Do not mark the spot of passes caught out of bounds. Give an incomplete pass signal.
- k. Responsible for progress up to the goal line.
- l. Off-ball officiate on plays away. Come into the hash mark on plays into the opposite side zone.
- m. Dead-ball officiate.
- n. Anticipate:
 - i. Holding
 - ii. Pass interference
 - iii. Catch/No-catch
 - iv. Unnecessary contact / Personal fouls
 - v. Forward/backward ball movement on all pitch/toss plays downfield
 - vi. Illegal participation
- m. After the ball is dead and you have moved to the yard line where forward progress is determined, close to the dead ball spot. Do not pass players.
- n. Your points of interest / Keys:
 - i. When the line to gain is threatened
 - ii. When the goal line is threatened
 - iii. Encroachment

IV. ALL OFFICIALS

- a. When the ball is not in your zone of coverage –
 - i. SJ & LJ officiates play in front of the ball carrier
 - ii. R officiates play behind the ball carrier
 - iii. All officials will call the following fouls regardless of coverage area –

1. Safety fouls
 2. Flag Guarding (angles over distance when calling flag guarding)
- b. The mechanics are such that when three officials are on the field, they should create a triangle around the players. This triangle shifts and moves as the players move. No two officials should be within 15-20 yards of each other during live ball play.
- c. Pre-snap communication between officials is a must. All officials need to know who is responsible for covering the goal line and who is responsible for covering the line to gain.
- i. When communicating your intent to move to a line, point with both hands to your torso, then point with one hand at the line you intend to cover after the snap.
 - ii. Repeat this as needed until you receive confirmation from your fellow officials that they have seen your intent. They will nod or point at you when they have seen your communication.





SCRIMMAGE KICK MECHANICS – 3-Officials

PRE-KICK MECHANICS

I. Referee

- a. Positioned to the Field Judge side of the field and slightly behind the kicker (approximately 7 yards to the side and 5 yards deeper than the kicker).
- b. Count the kicking team and confirm that they are legally equipped with the appropriate signal.
- c. Tell players to hold until after the ball is kicked
- d. Be alerted to positioning your body in a place to see the ball is legally kicked 2 yards behind the Offensive LOS.

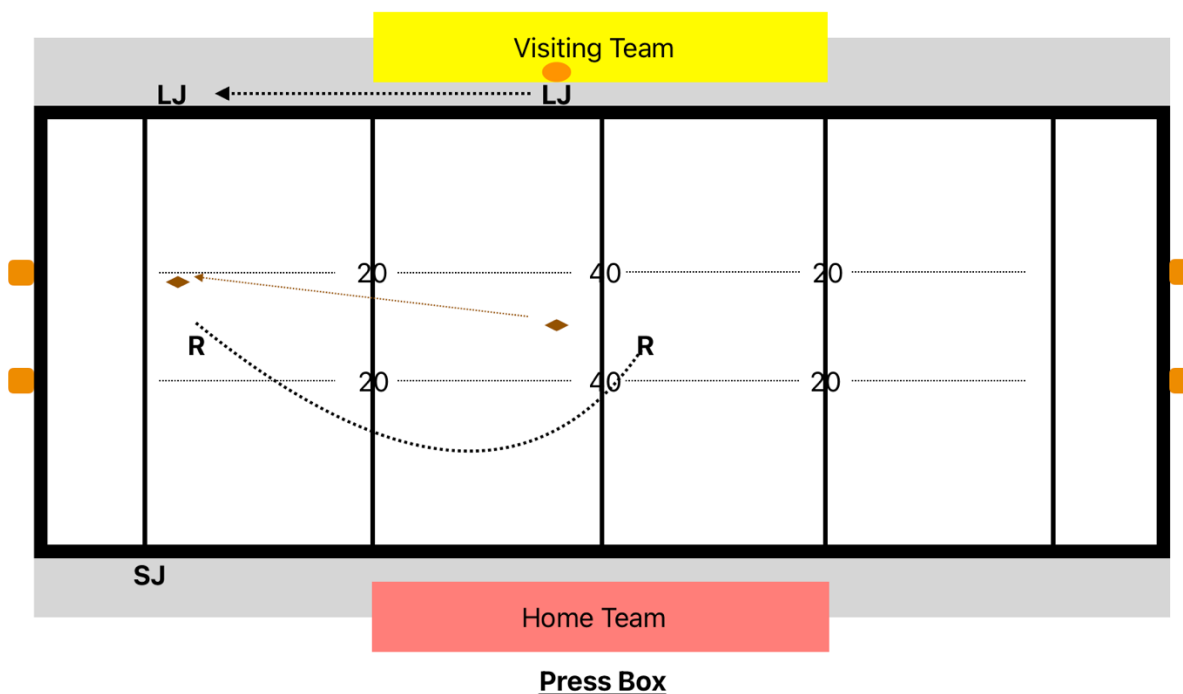
II. Line Judge

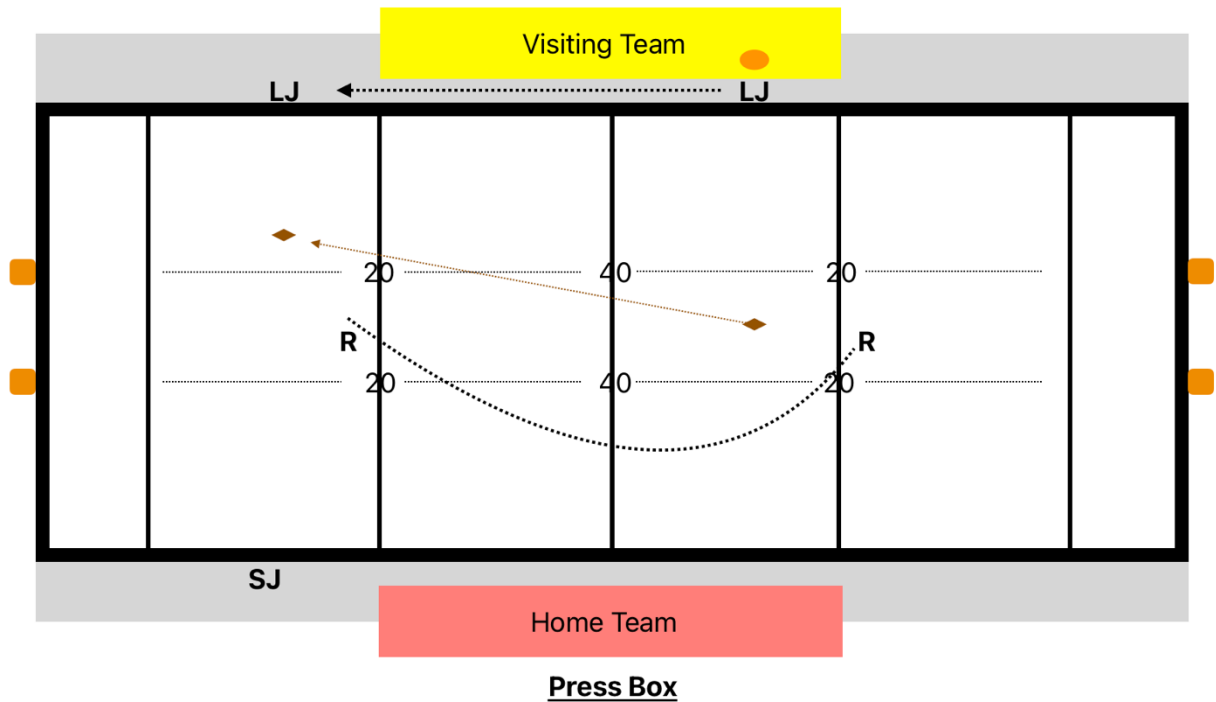
- a. Position on the line of scrimmage or in the Neutral Zone.
- b. Count the kicking team and look for confirmation from the Referee that they have seven players and are all legally equipped.
- c. View formation.
- d. View the position of the outside kicking team players. Be alert to fouls of all Team K players moving downfield on your sideline.
- e. At the snap, move to team R's restraining line to see encroachment.
- f. The defensive LOS is a plane of glass that cannot be crossed with any part of the body.

III. Side Judge

- a. Before moving downfield, be alert to the players on the field and all substitutions.

- b. Position slightly behind and to the side of the deepest receiver on your side of the field (approximately 5-7 yards to the side and 3-5 yards behind the receiver).
- c. If there are two receivers, the field position may require you to take a position between the receivers.
- d. Take a position on the goal line on kicks from inside the receiving team's 40-yard line.
- e. Count the receiving team and confirm that all are legally equipped with the appropriate signal.
- f. View the position of the outside kicking team players. Be alert to fouls of all Team K players moving downfield on your sideline.
- g. Provide fair catch instructions to the receiver(s) if possible.
- h. Hold a beanbag in your hand.





DURING THE SCRIMMAGE KICK MECHANICS

I. All Officials

- a. Strange things happen on kicks. Be mentally prepared for various scenarios based on your position.

II. Referee

- a. Be the last official down the field and box in all players from behind with a broad vision.
- b. If the return breaks through defense, be prepared to take the runner to the goal line.
- c. Bad Snap – When there is a bad snap on a scrimmage kick, mark the spot where the ball hit the ground with a bean bag.
- d. Be ready to move to the SJ sideline should they remain in the field of play, or you need to move when the returner breaks through the defense.
- e. Kick Out of Bounds—If the kick goes out of bounds in flight, signal to the FJ or LJ with a hack the out-of-bounds spot when the covering official reaches that spot on the sideline. R is responsible for the spot on all scrimmage kicks that go out of bounds.
- f. After the Play – Indicate to the Field JUDGE when to move the box, hustle to the new spot, and indicate the first down and direction of the ball.
- g. At the end of the play, DEAD BALL OFFICIATE. Spot the incoming ball to be ready for play.

III. Line Judge

- a. Look to see that the ball has been kicked and quickly see where the ball is headed (i.e. short, long, right, left). DID THE BALL CROSS THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE, HIT THE GROUND, OR A PLAYER?
- b. Normal Kick – After the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage, quickly release down the field and parallel the play from the outside with broad vision.
- c. Continue to watch the action as the players and ball move toward the receiver. Observe blocking down the field and in front of the runner.
- d. Kick Out of Bounds – On kicks out of bounds, you are responsible for your sideline. Line up deeper than where the ball went out of bounds on the sideline (no deeper than the goal line) with the outside arm straight above your head. Make eye contact with the Referee and walk toward the original line of scrimmage. The Referee will hack when you have reached the out-of-bounds spot.
- e. You are one of the covering officials. At the end of the play, you spot progress and square up with the Field Judge. You stop the clock and signal the direction of the team in possession.
- f. DEAD-BALL OFFICIATE. If you are holding the spot, cover the ball until you are relieved by another official or mark it with a bean bag.

IV. **Side Judge**

- a. Look to see that the ball has been kicked and quickly look to see where it is headed (e.g., short, long, right, left).
- b. Normal Kick: View the receiver and run up to be even with them as they prepare to catch the ball. Your only view is the receiver, so stay 5-7 yards to their side.
- c. Look to see that the receiver catches the ball cleanly, that there was no kick catch interference, and to rule on a fair catch.
- d. Drop your beanbag where the kick ends. Remember that the kick ends when any player gains possession or when the ball becomes dead.
- e. Blow your whistle and signal touchback if the kick crosses the goal line.
- f. Keep the runner between you and the Line Judge. You are responsible for coverage of the runner from an inside-out view of your side of the field. Your distance should be about 10-15 yards from the runner.
- g. You have progress.
- h. Fair Catch – View the receiver and run up to be even with the receiver as he prepares to catch the ball.
- i. View the fair catch signal (valid or invalid?). Make sure the receiver catches the ball cleanly, and it does not go through his hands.
- j. With a confirmed catch, on a signaled fair catch, stop the clock and blow your whistle.
- k. First Touch Violation – Use a beanbag if there is a first-touch violation by the kicking team. Note: there may be more than one spot of the first touching violation.
- l. At the end of the play, stop the clock and signal the direction of the team in possession. The R will wind the clock if necessary.
- m. DEAD-BALL OFFICIATE.
- n. Kick Out of Bounds – On kicks out of bounds, you are responsible for your sideline. Line-up deeper than where the ball went out of bounds on the sideline (no deeper than the goal line) with your outside arm straight above your head.

Make eye contact with the Referee and begin to walk toward the original line of scrimmage. The Referee will hack when you have reached the out-of-bounds spot.

- o. Communicate possession and direction to the Referee.
- p. Look to the REFEREE for confirmation to move the box.
- q. POINTS OF EMPHASIS
 - i. Fair Catch Signals
 - ii. Goal Line
 - iii. Illegal Batting or Forward Handing
 - iv. Muff and First Touching Violations
 - v. Fair Catch or Kick Catch Interference
 - vi. Ball Out of Bounds in Flight

SECTION: OVERTIME PROCEDURE (RESOLVING TIED GAMES)

END OF REGULATION PLAY

I. Referee

- a. Direct the teams to their respective team areas. Announce or otherwise notify the press box that: "Regulation play has ended with a tie score and there will be a three-minute intermission followed by an extra period of play."

II. All Officials

- a. Gather at the center of the field to review extra-period rules and procedures. Overtime procedures should also be reviewed during the pre-game conference or at halftime, especially if the game is close and there is a chance of it ending in a tie. After the three-minute intermission, break to positions for the coin toss.

III. Back Judge

- a. Ensure the field clock is turned off or displays 00:00.

Overtime Procedures

When the score is tied at the end of regulation, the game will be decided using the following overtime procedure.

General Structure

Overtime will consist of a series from the opponent's 10-yard line followed by a try. Each team will be given an equal opportunity to possess the ball.

If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime period will be played. Beginning with the second overtime period, teams will run alternating try plays from the 3-yard line until a winner is determined.

Intermission and Coin Toss

The first overtime period will begin three (3:00) minutes after the conclusion of regulation play.

During this intermission, officials will direct both teams to their respective team areas.

The Referee will conduct a coin toss at midfield with team captains.

The winner of the coin toss shall choose one of the following:

Offense or defense for the first overtime period

The loser of the toss shall:

Exercise the remaining option (offense or defense), and

Determine the end of the field that will be used for all overtime periods

There is no option to defer.

First Overtime Period (10-Yard Series + Try)

The ball will be placed on the opponent's 10-yard line, centered between the hash marks.

The offensive team will run a possession series, beginning with first down.

The possession series continues until:

A touchdown is scored,

The offense fails to reach the line to gain, or

A change of possession occurs

The ball becomes dead immediately upon a change of possession.

Following the series, the scoring team will attempt a try.

After Team A completes its series and try, Team B will be given an opportunity to match or exceed the score using the same procedure.

If Team A scores during its possession, any turnover or failure to score by Team B during its possession will immediately end the game.

The team with the greater number of points at the conclusion of both possessions and tries will be declared the winner.

Second and Subsequent Overtime Periods (3-Yard Alternating Try Format)

Beginning with the second overtime period, each team will attempt a single try from the 3-yard line.

There will be no additional coin toss.

The team that was on offense first in the first overtime period will be on defense first in the second overtime period.

This alternating order will continue in each subsequent overtime period until a winner is determined.

Teams will alternate attempts.

If one team scores and the opponents do not score during the same round, the scoring team is declared the winner.

Timeouts and Timing

Each team is permitted one (1) timeout for all overtime periods.

Timeouts from regulation play do not carry over into overtime.

Unused overtime timeouts do not carry over between overtime periods.

The game clock is not used during overtime.

The play clock remains in effect.

Additional Guidelines

All overtime periods will be played at the same end of the field as determined by the coin toss.

Officials must clearly communicate possession order, down and distance, and try status prior to each series or attempt.

Approved Rulings in Overtime

- I. **Other than on a try**, Team B scores a touchdown after intercepting a forward pass, intercepting, or recovering a backward pass or fumble, or returning a blocked field goal attempt. **RULING:** Score 6 points for Team B, period and game are ended, and Team B is declared the winner.

- II. During the first possession series of a period, Team B intercepts a forward pass, or intercepts or recovers a fumble or a backward pass and does not score a touchdown. **RULING:** Team A's possession series is ended, and Team B starts its series on the 10-yard line (unless relocated by penalty). Team B becomes Team A when the referee declares the ball ready for play.

- III. During the first possession series of a period, Team B gains possession and then loses possession to Team A, which (a) scores a touchdown; (b) does not score a touchdown. **RULING:** (a) The score counts. In both (a) and (b), Team A's possession series ends, and Team B begins its possession series.
- IV. During the first possession series of a period, B10 intercepts a forward pass on his six-yard line and downs the ball in her end zone. **RULING:** Safety: two points for Team A. Team A's possession series is over. Team B will put the ball in play, first and 10 on the 10-yard line at the same end of the field. 6-5-2a Exception, momentum exception applies starting at the 5-yard line.
- V. On the first possession series of a period, Team A scores a touchdown. On the TRY, Team B intercepts a pass and begins to return it. **RULING:** The ball is blown dead as soon as Team B secures possession has failed to score. There are no 2-point touchdowns on PATs for Team B in High School (NFHS). Only Team A may score during a try.
- VI. After the end of the first possession series by Team A, Team B commits a dead-ball foul. **RULING:** Team B starts its possession series on the 10-yard line, first and goal. The interpretation is that the LTG was set before the penalty was enforced.
- VII. During the first possession series, B37 intercepts a forward pass and has a clear field to the goal line when she makes an obscene gesture toward the nearest opponent. **RULING:** Six points for Team B. The game is over.

SECTION: CFOA STANDARDS

The following standards have been adopted for CFOA games.

I. Ball Spotting

- a. The ball can be placed on a yard line to begin the next series after a change of possession. For example, if a punt return ends between the 33- and 34-yard lines, move the ball forward to the 34-yard line.
- b. Be certain that the forward-most point of the ball is used to determine the spot. Often, the official's eyes go to the flag pull to see fouls and the exact moment of the pull. Keep your vision wide to know both the time of the flag pull and the spot of the ball.
- c. Be aware that players' forward motion and extending the ball are often causes of officials miss-spotting the ball by 1-2 yards. Give the players every yard they earn.

II. Line Of Scrimmage

- a. The neutral zone must be free of both A and B players at the time of the snap. Any encroachment or false start is a dead-ball foul.

III. Counting Players

- a. When less than 7, palms down, below the belt
- b. When more than 7, hamster wheel or finger whirl
- c. When players are not legally equipped, they are immediately sent off the field of play. Use an official's timeout if necessary.

IV. Bean Bags

- a. PUNTS: Officials shall drop the bean at the spot the kick ends or the spot of first touching.
- b. Be accurate. You are marking a potential enforcement spot, or spot of the ball.
- c. Do not drop your bean bag after an interception, except when inside the 5-yard line to mark the spot of momentum.
- d. Use a bean bag behind the line of scrimmage to help mark intentional grounding by the Passer.

V. Defensive Pass Interference

- a. Both the offensive and defensive players have an equal opportunity to catch a forward or backward pass.
- b. Actions that constitute defensive pass interference include, but are not limited to, the following five categories:
 - i. Early contact by a defender who is not playing the ball is defensive pass interference, provided the other requirements for DP have been met, regardless of how deep the pass is to the receiver.
 - ii. Playing through the back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
 - iii. Grabbing and restricting a receiver's arm(s) or body in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
 - iv. Extending an arm across the body (arm bar) of a receiver thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of the fact of whether or not the defender is looking for the ball. Cutting off or riding the receiver out of the path to the ball by making contact with him without playing the ball.
 - v. Hooking and restricting a receiver in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that causes the receiver's body to turn prior to the ball arriving.

VI. Not Defensive Pass Interference

- a. Actions that do not constitute defensive pass interference include but are not limited to:
 - i. When there are tangled feet, and both players are looking back at the ball, or neither player is looking back at the ball.
 - ii. When either player is making a legitimate play on the ball or there is shoulder-to-shoulder contact, players are coming from different angles.
 - iii. When the contact is so close to the touching of a pass that we refer to it as bang-bang pass interference, it will not be called.
 - iv. When a defender places a hand on a receiver's body but does not initiate a turn or twist, nor a pull or push.

VII. Offensive Pass Interference

- a. Actions that constitute offensive pass interference include, but are not limited to, the following two categories:

- i. Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing off, thus creating separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
- ii. Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.
- iii. Blocking beyond the line of scrimmage during a pass (“screen” or “pick” play).

VIII. Not Offensive Pass Interference

- a. Actions that do not constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to:
 - i. A pick play if the defensive player is blocking the offensive player when the pick occurs. May have a foul for blocking.
 - ii. After any forward pass has been touched by Team B, the conditions for Pass Interference expire.

IX. Other Passing Situations

- a. When in doubt about an action against the passer, it is considered roughing the passer.
- b. The defender must be attempting to avoid contact while pulling the flag. They are not allowed to make contact while trying to pull the flag, EVER!
- c. If an interception is near the goal line (inside the one-yard line) and there is a question as to whether possession is gained in the field of play or end zone, make the play a touchback.

X. Backward Pass

- a. When in question, the pass is forward, not backward.
- b. When the QB’s hand starts forward with the ball, rule the pass forward.

XI. Catch

- a. If the process of the catch includes going to the ground, the receiver must maintain possession of the ball when they contact the ground to be awarded a catch. The ground can cause an incompleteness.
- b. These requirements are the same for interceptions and fumble recoveries.
- c. There is a difference between the ball moving within the receiver’s control and moving from a loss of control.
- d. If the receiver is contacted simultaneously with or immediately after they control the ball with one foot down and lose possession, rule the pass incomplete.
- e. A play that would be ruled a catch/fumble in the field of play would be ruled a catch/TD in the end zone.

XII. Blocking

- a. Legal screen blocking is done without contact.
- b. Use “right of place” and “right of way” when explaining screen blocking calls or no calls.
 - i. Right of place is given to any stationary player who maintains normal player posture and makes no movements in any horizontal direction to change their position. Right of place supersedes right of way when determining who is guilty of a foul.
 - ii. Right of way is given to a player who has regularly established a direction of movement and does not alter that direction. A player with right of way has higher privilege when determining who is guilty of a foul than all other players except those who have established right of place.

- c. Someone is always responsible for avoiding contact.
- d. The player who does not have the “right of place” or “right of way” will generally be responsible for avoiding the contact.
- e. When the blocker is moving along the same line (even if the line is circular) as the defender, it is usually a legal screen block.
- f. When the defender has passed the shoulder of the blocker with any part of their body (other than arms), the blocker is responsible for avoiding the contact.
- g. Use “in my judgment, the contact did not rise to the level of a foul” when speaking about no calls.
- h. We know this is a non-contact sport, but there will be some contact. Be alert to all contact and use your best judgment as to the calling of all fouls.
- i. The player DOES NOT have to be knocked to the ground for contact to rise to the level of a foul. When minor contact fouls are called early in a game, the teams tend to ‘clean up’ their play, resulting in fewer contact fouls later in the game.

XIII. When In Doubt

- a. The pass is incomplete, vs. the ball is caught and then fumbled.
- b. When in question, the runner did not step out of bounds.

XIV. End Of Game

- a. If an offensive team goes into a victory formation, officials should use common-sense officiating and make every attempt not to call fouls that have no bearing on the game’s outcome.
- b. Personal Fouls and Player Safety Fouls should always be called regardless of time and score.
- c. If the Referee stops play for any reason, the game is suspended and not over.
- d. The official’s jurisdiction ends when the officials leave the playing field.

XV. Miscellaneous

- a. When issuing a sideline warning, throw the flag. Make the call at the end of a down without causing an interruption but ensure the head coach has received a prior verbal warning.
- b. The ball can be placed on a yard line to begin the next possession. At all other times, the ball is placed where it is. (Exception: If the change of possession occurs on a fourth-down running or passing play, the ball will be left at the dead-ball spot to begin the next series.)
- c. 5/5 axiom: To adjust the game clock when it has been running. There must be more than a five-second differential if more than five minutes are remaining in either half. Any time loss due to the clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead-ball foul is called, the clock must be adjusted.
- d. When a flag belt is worn incorrectly, the player is removed from the field of play. When the “illegal equipment” (equipment used incorrectly) affects the play, it will be a foul. A-32, the ball carrier, just returned to the game and put their flag belt on with the elbows pointing in, not out. While the B-33 attempts to pull the flag at the A35, it cannot be pulled loose. Result: Flag guarding penalty enforced at the A35.



- e. It is CFOA's philosophy that preventative officiating will give better results. When conducting your pregame coach meetings and player equipment checks while you observe warmups, remind the coaches and players that they will be sent from the field of play if not legally equipped and that if the ball is snapped without all players legally equipped a penalty may be enforced.
- f. All pop flags must be worn as pictured (A). **The elbow must be pointing out and angled down.** If the belt is on incorrectly, the elbow will point in and down.
- g. All players and coaches will be reminded that players are responsible for ensuring their flags are in place as designated by the rules and their shirts are always tucked in. Any player found in violation of this rule will be removed from the field for at least one (1) down, and a delay of game penalty may be given to the offending team. The play clock will not be adjusted to accommodate the removal of a player from the field for violating the equipment rule.
- h. No jewelry is allowed per the rule (see the exception for medical and religious medallions). This includes ALL JEWELRY. Jewelry covered with tape is still considered jewelry and is therefore illegal to wear. We do not allow players to "cover" their jewelry with tape.
 - i. Players may wear silicone plugs in the nose and earring holes per CIF ruling.
- i. **At the official's discretion**, flag checks after scoring plays will be conducted on all players involved in the scoring play by the official nearest the player(s). **A flag check is not necessary after every scoring play. Coaches have the right to stop the game and request a flag check.**

- j. At the official's discretion, a flag check on the entire team may be conducted after a scoring play. We do not want unnecessary time to run off the game clock for a flag check. The crew may elect to stop the game clock to conduct a flag check.
 - k. For all flag checks, you will ask the player to remove the flags from the belt and hand them to you for physical inspection, have the player pull their flags, or have a teammate pull the flags.
- XVI. **Time-outs –**
- a. It is the responsibility of the SJ and LJ to begin moving the player onto the field of play when the first warning whistle is blown.
- XVII. **Reinforcing appropriate conduct**
- a. Officials will NEVER touch players.
 - b. Officials must understand that part of their responsibilities are flag checks, looking for untucked shirts, and other uniform requirements. Officials CAN DO all of these with professionalism and appropriate conduct. Please remember that they are part of your official duties. "I'm not doing that" or "I'm not comfortable" is not a reason to not perform your official duties WITH PROFESSIONALISM AND APPROPRIATE CONDUCT.
 - c.

After the Contest –

Disqualification reports

Leave the field of play as a group and immediately after the game ends.

SECTION: 2-Officials Mechanics

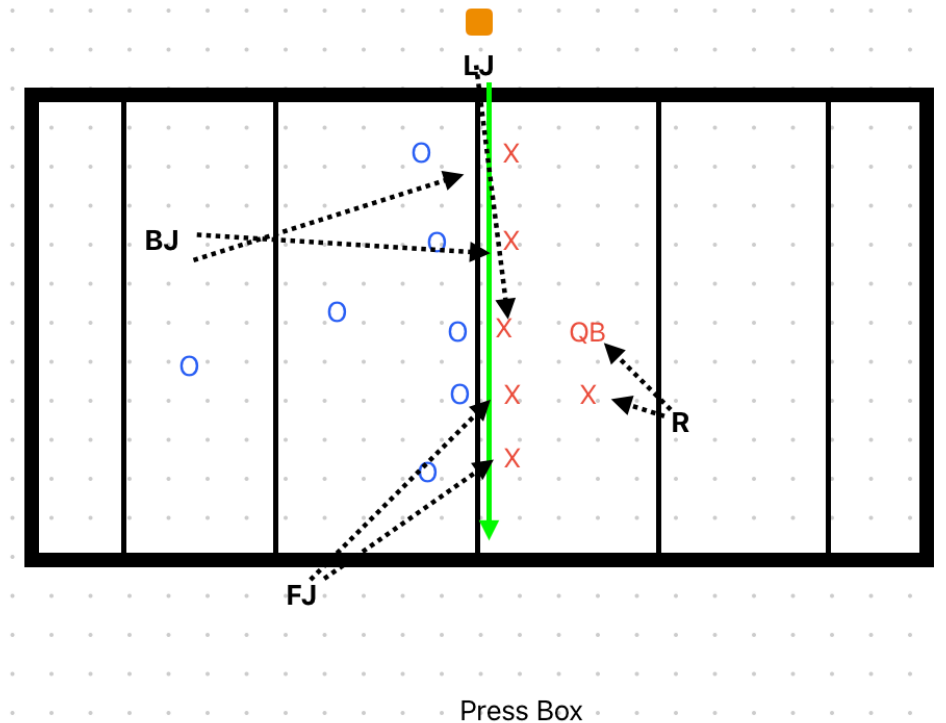
Calling the game is challenging, and it becomes even more so with only two officials. We encourage all schools to use 3-4 officials when possible.

In the Two Officials Mechanics, the R must work on the sideline

SECTION: 4-Officials Mechanics

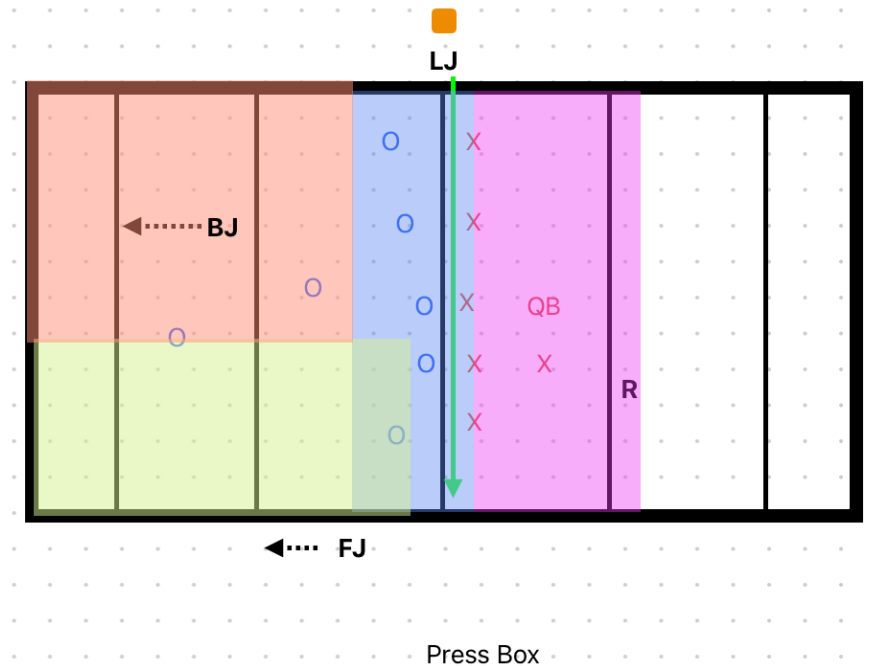
For the most part, the mechanics of 4 officials will remain the same as those of 3 officials, with the addition of a Back Judge. The BJ will always be positioned toward the LJ sideline and the R will remain positioned toward the SJ sideline.

Changes in pre-snap coverage with the addition of a BJ



4-Officials' pre-snap initial responsibilities.

- The LJ remains responsible for all pre-snap fouls relating to the NZ
- BJ & SJ are accountable for their receivers being free of foul until the ball is handed off or the pass is away.
- R remains responsible for blocking fouls and roughing the passer fouls.



1. Plays beginning on or behind the 40 –
 - a. LJ has LOS
 - b. SJ has Line to Gain
 - c. BJ has Goal Line
2. Plays beginning on Team B 26 – B 39
 - a. LJ has LOS
 - b. SJ has Line to Gain
 - c. BJ has Goal Line
3. Plays beginning on B-20 to B-25
 - a. LJ has Line to Gain
 - b. SJ has the Goal Line
 - c. BJ has End Line
4. Plays beginning on B-19 to B-6
 - a. LJ has LOS
 - b. SJ has the Goal Line
 - c. BJ has End Line
5. Plays beginning on B-5 and in
 - a. LJ has the Goal line
 - b. SJ has the Goal Line
 - c. BJ has End Line
 - d. R has LOS
6. Any play that starts within 5 yards of a LTG, the LJ will move to the line to gain at the snap and officiate back to the LOS. The R must step up to assist with calls at the LOS. The LJ remains responsible for the legality of tosses/pitches and passes (forward or backward).