

Football Officiating Mechanics Manual



Southern Nevada Officials Association



DEDICATION

This manual is dedicated to the men and women of the Southern Nevada Officials Association (SNOA) whose efforts contribute to the success of high school and youth football in southern Nevada. These men and women exemplify the high standards of the officiating profession, including:

Professionalism, Integrity, and Ethical Conduct

Commitment and Personal Accountability

Continuous Improvement through
Self-Study, Mentoring and sharing of Lessons Learned

SPECIAL MEMORY

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PREFACE

The Southern Nevada Officials Association (SNOA) Football Officiating Mechanics Manual was developed by the SNOA Football Board in conjunction with the football crew chiefs. This manual was developed after reviewing several other football mechanics manuals and recommendations prepared by various local, regional, state and national officiating associations. Compromises were made in several areas to generate a system of mechanics that are relatively simple and can provide the best field coverage for games worked by SNOA high school officials.

The manual provides descriptions of officiating excellence, personal appearance, uniform requirements, general mechanics and signals as well as specific mechanics for crews of five, four, and three officials. The manual focuses on mechanics for a crew of five officials and includes the “dos” and “don’ts” of officiating along with recommendations to ensure mechanics are consistently applied by all SNOA officials. Descriptions of mechanics for crews of three or four officials are abbreviated to indicate the major differences between the five-official mechanics and the mechanics for the smaller crew sizes. The manual also provides instructions for line-to-gain crews, clock operators/timers, and ball persons. Officials should concentrate on mastering the mechanics for a crew of five officials and then learn the differences and adjustments required to work with crews of three or four officials.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) *Football Rules Book* is the official rules book for SNOA.

OFFICIATING EXCELLENCE

PERFECTION may not be attainable, but EXCELLENCE is what you can achieve if you consistently pursue perfection.

The integrity of the game of football is entrusted to its officials who are expected to exhibit the highest ethical standards for honesty and fairness. Officials play a major role in developing and maintaining public confidence in the game. In the pursuit of excellence, football officials shall:

- Prepare themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally to perform at a consistently high level of excellence
- Master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules
- Apply rules and mechanics judiciously and consistently
- Exercise authority in an impartial, firm, and controlled manner
- Comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the football officiating profession including integrity, neutrality, respect, sensitivity, discretion, and tactfulness
- Be punctual and professional in fulfilling all obligations and commitments
- Exhibit superior verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Accept responsibility and accountability for all their actions

An EXCELLENT OFFICIAL has full knowledge of the rules and mechanics of the game; applies them in a judicious and consistent manner to make the contest fair for all participants; and comports himself as a professional at all times.

1 APPEARANCE AND UNIFORMS

An official's appearance greatly affects how coaches, players, and fans perceive you as an official. An official who looks the part will be more readily accepted than one who conveys a sloppy or unprofessional appearance. An official who dresses and acts in a professional manner and who moves quickly from one position to another will have a much greater opportunity for success.

1.1 APPEARANCE

An official should be in good physical condition and well-groomed.

1.1.1 Physical Condition

The physical condition of an official is an important part of appearance. Football officials should have an athletic appearance. The official who is out of condition, more often than not, does a poor job of officiating simply because of the inability to properly cover the play. Football officiating requires personal mobility, agility, strength, and stamina. An official must have the mobility and agility to get into position to effectively cover plays without hindering or obstructing the movements of the players. An official must have the strength and stamina to maintain a consistently high level of athleticism and concentration throughout the game.

1.1.2 Personal Appearance

An official must be well-groomed consistent with the generally accepted standards of the football officiating profession including:

- Hair should be neatly trimmed and should not cover the ears nor extend beyond the top of the collar on the uniform shirt.
- Face should be clean shaven with no facial hair (e.g., beards, goatees, or long sideburns). A neatly trimmed moustache that does not extend over the upper lip or past the corners of the mouth is acceptable.
- Jewelry, other than a wedding ring, shall not be worn. Religious or medical alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert must be taped and may be visible.
- Sunglasses shall not be worn at any time on the field for B, JV, or varsity games.
 - Exception: The SNOA has authorized the use of sunglasses as required to officiate youth football games.
- Cell phones shall not be carried onto or used by officials at any time while on the football field.

1.2 DRESS CODE

In general SNOA football officials either dress in a game site facility or arrive partially dressed at the game site. The following guidelines have been established to ensure the officials present a proper professional image to the people associated with the games.

1.2.1 Dressing at the Site

Officials should make a good first impression on game management by wearing clean, pressed clothes to and from the game. The SNOA dress code for officials is slacks, shirts with collars, and “street” shoes. *Jeans, shorts, T-shirts, baseball caps, sneakers, sandals, sweat suits, and jogging attire are not appropriate.*

1.2.2 Arriving Partially Dressed

Officials who arrive at the game site partially dressed in their uniform should complete their preparation in the parking lot near their vehicle. Officials should be appropriately dressed before they approach the field. Socks should be pulled up; shirts tucked into the pants; and hat worn properly. After the game, the officials should return to the vicinity of their vehicles before they begin to get out of their uniforms.

1.3 UNIFORM AND ACCESSORIES FOR OFFICIALS

Officials are required to wear the standard uniform complete with required accessories as described below. Check the uniform and accessories before leaving home to ensure nothing has been forgotten.

1.3.1 Uniform

The uniform should be clean and well kept (i.e., like new). Shirts, black pants, shorts, socks, and hats should not be faded or stained. Shoes should be clean and polished.

- **Shirt:** The shirt shall include the standard one-inch black and white vertical stripes with black Byron collar, black cuffs and a breast pocket. Each shirt worn for a varsity game may have a 3-inch x 2-inch American flag centered ½ inch above the left breast pocket. The zipper should be zipped at or very near the top. Shirts shall always be tucked into the pants. A short and long sleeve shirt is required and should be brought to all games. The Referee will decide which shirt to wear. All crew members will wear the same type of shirt. *Mesh shirts shall not be worn for varsity, JV, or B games.*
- **Undershirts:** All shirts worn under the game shirt shall be black. The undershirt shall not have any logos, pictures, or writing that could be seen through the game shirt. The sleeves of the undershirt shall not extend beyond the cuffs of the game shirt. Black T-neck or mock T-neck shirts can be worn for cold weather.
- **Black Pants:** The black pant shall have a 1 1/4" white stripe running from waist to cuff.
- **Shorts:** In warm weather, black officiating shorts (5 to 7-inch inseam) with a black belt may be worn instead of the black pants for games below the varsity level. The Referee will decide which type of pants to wear. All crew members will wear the same type of game pants.
- **Belt:** The belt worn with the knickers or coaches' shorts must be all black leather, 1 ¼ to 2 inches wide, with a non-descript buckle.
- **Under-shorts:** Game shirts should be tucked into the under shorts to prevent the stripes on the shirt from showing through the knickers. Black under-shorts should be worn with the black officiating shorts. The under-shorts shall not extend below the game shorts.
- **Socks:** White crew socks shall be worn in all games when black officiating shorts are worn. Black socks shall be worn when the uniform is the Black Pants. All White crew socks are acceptable when officiating youth football games as long all crew members wear the same type of game socks.
- **Shoes:** All-black shoes suitable for football officiating with all-black laces shall be worn. Stripes, logos, or other markings on the shoes must be dyed black. Shoes shall be clean and polished for every game. **Minimal White is acceptable on the shoes.**
- **Hat:** All officials other than the Referee shall wear a fitted (not adjustable) Brooklyn-style black hat with white striping. The referee shall wear a fitted, all white, Brooklyn-style hat. *Mesh hats shall not be worn for varsity games.*
- **Jacket:** *Jackets are not part of the approved uniform and shall not be worn.*

1.3.2 Accessory Equipment

The following equipment is required by all officials:

- **Penalty Flags:** Officials should carry two light gold penalty flags: (1) nylon ball center or weighted flag as the primary flag, and (2) a smaller flat flag (15 x 15 inches) as a backup. The primary flag should be tucked inside the front waist band of the game pants. The back-up flag should be concealed inside a pocket of the game pants.
- **Beanbags:** All officials should carry at least one white or blue beanbag. All members of the crew shall use the same colored beanbags. The Back Judge, Line Judge, and Linesman who cover scrimmage kicks should carry at least two beanbags. Beanbags should be worn tucked into the belt or front waist band of the game pants. If desired, officials may carry an extra beanbag in a pants pocket. The Back Judge (5-man crew) and the Line Judge (4-man crew) shall carry one white and one blue beanbag to differentiate between first touching and end of kick spot during a scrimmage kick.
- **Down Indicator:** An elastic wrist band or other device to keep track of downs. An extra down indicator should be carried in a pants pocket as a backup.
- **Game Card:** An information card with pens or pencils to record game information, e.g., names and numbers of captains, results of coin toss, timeouts, scores, penalties, etc.
- **Whistles:** Whistles and lanyards shall be all-black. Whistles should be plastic, not metal. RECOMMEND: Officials should carry two whistles; one whistle should be carried in a pants pocket as a backup.
- **Foul Weather Gear:** If worn, foul weather gloves, head bands, or hoods should be all-black.

Special accessories are required for different positions as outlined below:

- **Referee:** Coin for the toss; and a checklist for the pregame meeting with coaches.
- **Umpire:** Indicator or device to track the lateral position on the field from which the ball was last snapped. Coin as backup for the Referee.
- **Linesman:** Two chain clips for use by the line-to-gain crew. Athletic tape to mark the mid-point of the chain. Extra beanbag to be used by the line-to-gain crew.
- **Line Judge:** Countdown style wrist watch with black band to time the game if a stadium clock is unavailable or fails during the game.
- **Back Judge:** Countdown style wrist watch with black band to time the 25-second ready-for-play interval as well as time-out intervals (e.g., charged time-outs, intervals between periods, and intervals after scores).

1.4 UNIFORM FOR LINE-TO-GAIN CREW

There are two basic uniforms authorized for use by line-to-gain crew members assigned by SNOA. The Referee should determine which uniform the crew will wear. All members of the crew will wear the same uniform.

The first uniform includes:

- Black athletic shoes. Minimal white is acceptable
- White crew socks
- Black officiating shorts (5 to 7-inch inseam) with black belt.
- SNOA Official polo shirt.
- Black official's hat with white striping (fitted, not adjustable).

The second uniform includes:

- Black athletic shoes. Minimal white is acceptable
- Black slacks (not sweat pants).
- Black socks
- SNOA Official polo shirt.
- Black official's hat with white striping (fitted, not adjustable).

The line to gain crew should also have

- Chain clips.
- Tape to mark the midpoint of the chain.
- Beanbags to mark progress spots as a back up to the down box operator when the chain is not being used
 - Series of downs start at or inside the defensive team's 10-yard line.
 - Trys.
 - Overtime periods.

2 GENERAL MECHANICS

This chapter provides a description of basic mechanics that generally apply to officials working five, four, or three-man crews. The descriptions are presented in alphabetic order with focus on the general mechanics for a five-man crew. Exceptions to these mechanics will be highlighted in the separate chapters for four-man and three-man crews.

2.1 BALL HANDLING

Ball handling includes the mechanics for relaying, spotting, and exchanging balls during the game.

2.1.1 Relaying the Ball

Officials must cover dead-ball situations before retrieving the ball. There is no hurry to get the ball. Do not leave players unattended while retrieving the ball. Use short (less than 15-yard) underhand tosses to relay the ball. Jog toward the official to reduce the distance before making the toss. Do not let the ball touch the ground.

- **Referee and Back Judge:** Help retrieve a ball that goes into the side zones or out of bounds.
- **Umpire:** Go outside the hash marks to retrieve the ball as necessary.
- **Back Judge:** Help relay the ball on side plays that gain over five yards. Do not leave players unattended to help with the relay.
- **Linesman, Line Judge, and Umpire:** Go downfield as needed to help relay a ball that becomes dead (e.g., incomplete pass) in the Back Judge's area.

2.1.2 Spotting the Ball

The official spotting the ball should face the official who is marking the forward progress spot before placing the ball on the ground. When needed (e.g., during a “hurry up” offense), take progress from the cross-field official to save time.

- **Umpire:** Spot the ball the whenever possible. If the ball goes into a side zone, key off the Referee to determine who will spot the ball. If the Referee is in the side zone, be prepared to take the relay and spot the ball at the hash mark.
- **Referee:** Spot the ball only if the Umpire has moved some distance from the spot to assist in relaying the ball.

2.1.3 Exchanging Balls

- **Line Judge or Back Judge:** Obtain a new ball from the ball person and relay it to the spotting official.
- **All Officials:** Relay the ball to the spotting official (usually the Umpire) who will place the new ball on the ground at the proper spot. Keep the old ball at the dead-ball spot

until the new ball has been placed on the ground. Then pick up the old ball and relay it to the Line Judge or Back Judge to give to the ball person.

2.2 BEANBAGS

The beanbag is used to mark spots, other than the spot of a foul, which may be needed later as a reference point. Whenever possible, drop the beanbag, rather than throw it, even if the spot is across the field. After dropping the beanbag, continue to cover the play. If the beanbag lands in the wrong place pick it up and place it at the right spot after the play has ended.

Officials *must* drop or toss a beanbag on the yard line where any of the following events occur.

- Fumble occurs beyond the line of scrimmage prior to a change of possession.
 - *(Do not drop a beanbag if you did not see where the player lost possession of the ball.)*
- Backward pass or handoff occurs beyond the line of scrimmage.
- First touching of a scrimmage or free kick by the kicking team.
 - (There could be more than one spot of first touching and all spots must be marked.)
- End of a scrimmage kick (for post-scrimmage kick penalty enforcements).
- Catch, interception, or recovery between the five yard line and the goal line when the momentum rule applies.
- Player of the offensive or kicking team goes out of bounds accidentally or intentionally prior to a change of possession.
- Any player of either team goes out of bounds intentionally.
- Inadvertent whistle is blown. (Mark the position of the ball when whistle is blown.)

Officials *may* drop a beanbag to mark other spots such as:

- Forward progress spot when a runner is stopped and driven backwards, including a quarterback sack.
- Spot where a runner or ball goes out of bounds, if the official must leave the spot to observe ensuing action, retrieve the ball, or escort players back to the field.
- Spot where a passer releases the ball close to the line of scrimmage. (The beanbag is used to help determine if the passer was beyond the neutral zone when the ball was released.)

Officials should not drop a beanbag to mark the spot where the following events occur:

- Fumble or backward pass is recovered (unless momentum rule is applicable).
- Interception (unless momentum rule is applicable).
- Free kick ends (unless momentum rule is applicable).
- Free kick, untouched by the receiving team, goes out of bounds.
- Kick is touched by a player of the receiving team.

- Muffed hand-to-hand snaps

Do not use the hat to mark any spots unless you have already used all your beanbags.

2.3 COUNTING DOWNS

All officials shall verify the number of the down on every play and ensure the down box is displaying the correct down number. Change your personal down indicator consistently throughout the game, e.g., when the ball is marked ready for play.

2.4 COUNTING PLAYERS

All officials shall count players on every down. The responsibilities for counting players depend on the type of play.

For free kicks including kickoffs and kicks after a safety, fair catch, or awarded fair catch:

- **Referee, Line Judge, and Linesman:** Count the receiving team players.
- **Back Judge and Umpire:** Count the kicking team players.

For plays from scrimmage including runs, passes, punts, field goal attempts, and tries:

- **Referee and Umpire:** Count the offensive or kicking team players.
- **Back Judge, Line Judge, and Linesman:** Count the defensive or receiving team players. (The Line Judge and Linesman should give their signal toward the Back Judge.)

Officials will use the following signals to indicate the results of counting players:

- For 11 players, extend an arm at shoulder height with a closed fist.
- For less than 11 players, place an open hand about waist high and pump it up and down two or three times.
- For more than 11 players, give a small circular motion with the wrist and index finger in front of the waist to indicate count again.

2.5 DEAD BALL OFFICIATING

Do not become a “ball watcher” when the ball is outside your coverage area. Constantly watch players in your area of responsibility during, and after the play has ended. It is particularly important to observe all players when the play is over to ensure that potential problems such as rough play, trash-talking, and other personal or unsportsmanlike fouls are controlled. Do not be in a hurry to get the ball, report fouls, or engage in any other action that will take your attention away from the players. Use verbal commands to let players know that they being observed or to break-up a tussle. To be an excellent official, you must be an excellent dead-ball official.

2.6 FOULS AND PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

Anticipate The Play – Not The Call!
Make It Be There – Let The Play Call Itself!
Get The Big Ones – And Get Them Right!

2.6.1 Calling Fouls

Use good judgment in applying the advantage-disadvantage philosophy when determining whether to call a foul. Call any foul you see that puts a team at a disadvantage or any personal or unsportsmanlike conduct foul. Make calls that will stand-out in films especially when calling holding, block in the back, pass interference, or kick catch interference fouls. If in doubt, do not call the foul. When a foul is detected, throw the flag and continue to officiate. Mentally note the spot of the foul, the number of the offending player, and the status of the ball (e.g., in player possession, loose, or dead). When the play is over, blow the whistle and give the stop-the-clock signal. Other officials repeat the stop-the-clock signal.

There are two ways to throw the flag:

- For spot fouls (e.g., holding, clipping, block in the back) carefully throw the flag to a spot on the yard line where the foul occurred and near the offending player.
 - Do not throw the flag at the offending player.
- For fouls that are not spot fouls (e.g., false starts, late hits, illegal motion), throw the flag into the air.
 - Do not hold and wave the flag over your head instead of throwing it into the air.

When the play is over, ensure that the down box and line-to-gain equipment are not moved. The calling official(s) should ensure the flag(s) are at the correct spot(s). If the flag landed at the wrong spot, pick it up and place it at the right spot. If there are multiple flags for the same foul, move all flags to the same spot before the foul is reported to the Referee. (Do not kick a flag to move it to the right position.)

Place the ball on the ground at the dead-ball spot until the Referee or Umpire asks for it. A non-calling official should cover the dead-ball spot. If possible another non-calling official should cover the spot of the flag. Continue to observe players while fouls are being reported and penalty options administered.

2.6.2 Reporting Fouls

2.6.2.1 Calling Official

Verbally report your foul to the Referee. Do not use foul signals to communicate with the Referee, players, coaches, or other officials. (Exception: the Back Judge may use the foul signal to report a delay of game foul to the Referee.) Provide the following information to the Referee:

- Type of foul.
- Offense/defense or kicking/receiving team (not the color of the jersey).

- Number of the fouling player.
- Spot of the foul.
- Status of the ball at the time of the foul.
- Short description of what the fouling player did to warrant a penalty.

The calling official is primarily responsible for ensuring that the Referee and Umpire properly assess all aspects of the penalty.

If there are multiple flags on a false start or encroachment situation, the Linesman and Line Judge will meet with the Umpire in the middle of the field to determine which foul is to be penalized. The Umpire will report their decision to the Referee.

- **Referee:** After being notified of the foul(s), move to a clear area away from the players; come to a complete stop facing the press box; give the preliminary foul signal; and point to the offending team's goal line. Give the dead-ball signal prior to all dead-ball foul signals.
 - *If the penalty flag was mistakenly thrown and there is no foul, do not give any type of foul signal.* Only give the “disregard flag” signal and indicate the number of the next down.
 - If the foul involves a false start, encroachment, or illegal snap infraction, the preliminary signal may be given while the Umpire marks off the penalty. No final signal is required after the penalty has been enforced.
 - If the foul requires penalty enforcement at the succeeding free kick spot, give the preliminary foul signal; point to the offending team; and then point to the area of the field where the free kick will occur.
- **Referee and Umpire:** If the offended team's choice of options is obvious, administer the option (i.e., penalty enforcement or results of play) without consulting with the captain. (Give the captain a quick explanation of how the option is being administered.) If the choice of options is not obvious, meet with the captain near the spot of enforcement. Explain the options to the offended captain. Encourage the captain to look at the coach for help in choosing the preferred option. When a decision is made, instruct the Umpire on how to administer the option (i.e., results of the play or penalty enforcement).
- **Umpire:** Meet with the Referee and captain to discuss options. Listen to ensure the explanations of options given by the Referee are correct. Ask for additional clarification if the explanations are not clear or correct.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Get an explanation of the foul from the appropriate official. Report the foul and penalty options to the respective head coaches.
 - Tell the coach of the offended team the type of foul that occurred and the penalty enforcement options.
 - Tell the coach of the offending team the number of the fouling player, the type of foul, and a brief description of what the player did.
- **All Officials:** If an unsportsmanlike conduct or flagrant personal foul is called, record the pertinent information on your game card (i.e., number of a player, name or role of a non-player, name of the team, the period, time remaining in the period, and a brief description of the foul).

2.6.3 Penalty Enforcement

If the penalty is declined or if there are offsetting fouls,

- **Referee:** Go to the area of the ball; face the press box; and give the foul signal or signals followed by the penalty declined signal and the number of the next down.

If the penalty is accepted,

- **Umpire:** Mark off all penalties except those administered by the Back Judge on a succeeding free kick. Carry the ball between the hashes, parallel to the spot of to the spot of enforcement; verify the spot visually and mark Linesman; and then mark off the appropriate penalty yardage with the Linesman. On a properly marked field, avoid stepping off the penalty. Instead calculate and visualize the distance to be penalized and then jog or walk briskly to that spot. Use an arm signal to point to each major yard line you cross. Stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman:** Ensure that the line-to-gain equipment does not move until you signal them to do so. Go to the spot of enforcement on your sideline stand at the spot until the Umpire confirms the spot. Mark off the penalty yardage along your sideline while the Umpire marks off the yardage in the field of play. Confirm with the Umpire that the correct yardage has been marked off. Direct the down box to move to the new spot and ensure the correct down number is displayed. If the penalty enforcement results in a first down, personally mark the first down spot on the sideline and direct the line-to-gain crew to set the down box and chain at that spot.
- **Line Judge:** Go to the spot of enforcement on your sideline and immediately mark off the penalty yardage. Stand at the succeeding spot until the Umpire administers the penalty. Verify that the correct yardage has been marked off.
- **Referee:** While the Umpire is marking off the penalty, take a position in the clear, facing the press box, and give the final signals for the foul and related enforcement factors. Signals should include the type of foul, the offending team, loss of down or first down, and the number of the upcoming down. After the foul options have been administered, take your position for the next play. Confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the appropriate ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal.
- **Back Judge:** If a penalty is to be enforced on a free kick, go to the succeeding free kick spot; place the ball on the ground; face the press box; and repeat the preliminary foul signal given earlier by the Referee. Pick up the ball; and enforce the penalty yardage. *(Do not give another signal to the press box.)* Hold the ball at the yard line where the free kick will occur until the kicking team is ready.

In cases involving multiple fouls, the penalty for the first foul should be enforced and the ball should be placed on the ground while the Referee gives the final signals for that foul to the press box. Then the penalty for the next foul should be enforced and the proper signals given to the press box. Continue until all fouls have been enforced.

2.6.4 Disqualification

Players, substitutes, coaches, trainers, or other persons affiliated with the team can disqualify themselves by committing any of the fouls listed below. (Other persons affiliated with the team include school mascots, photographers, statisticians, school administrators, principals, etc. that are in the team box or along the sidelines.)

- **Players and Substitutes**
 - One flagrant personal foul.
 - One flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct foul.
 - Two unsportsmanlike conduct fouls.
- **Coaches, Trainers, and Other Affiliated Individuals**
 - One flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct foul.
 - Two unsportsmanlike conduct fouls.

The mechanics for handling a disqualified individual are described below.

- **All Officials:** Record pertinent information about the disqualification on your game card (i.e., name of a non-player, number of a player, name of the team, the period, time remaining in the period, and a brief description of the foul).
 - Do not touch or point to a disqualified player, coach, or other individual.
 - Do not escort a disqualified player off the field.
- **Referee:** Meet the offending team’s coach in front of the team box within six feet of the sideline. Notify the coach about the disqualification of any team members or affiliated personnel by identifying the individual and providing a quick description of the foul or fouls that resulted in the qualification. Explain the situation by using statements such as: “Number 73 has disqualified himself by throwing a punch at number 22;” or “Your assistant coach has disqualified himself by committing his second unsportsmanlike foul for swearing.” If necessary, ask the calling official to join the conference to provide additional information. Keep the discussion short and to the point. End the conference as soon as the appropriate information has been provided to the coach.
- **Linesman or Line Judge:** The official on the sideline of the offending team, keep the head coach near the sideline in front of the team box until the Referee arrives. Join the Referee to witness the conference discussion and to keep other coaches and sideline personnel away from the area of the conference.
- **All Officials:** Do not direct a player to leave the game to “cool off.” You may notify the captain and head coach of a potential problem. You may even suggest that the head coach consider removing a player temporarily. However, the ultimate decision belongs entirely to the coach. If the coach chooses to keep the player in the game and that player behaves in a manner that constitutes a foul, call the foul and enforce the penalty.

2.7 FUMBLES

An official who sees a player fumble the ball should drop or toss a beanbag on the yard line and near where the fumble occurred and continue to cover the play. (It is not necessary to throw the beanbag to the exact spot where the fumble occurred. What is important is the yard line where the fumble occurred.) The first official who is certain who has gained possession of the loose ball will give the appropriate signal and not worry about who eventually comes out of the pile with the ball. If the offense recovers the ball, the covering official should signal the number of the next down. If the defense recovers the ball, the covering official should give the stop-the-clock signal and point in the direction of the opponent's goal line.

If the fumble results in a pile-up of players, the official nearest the pile becomes the digger, i.e., the official responsible for removing players from the pile and digging into the pile to determine who recovered the ball. Other officials give the stop-the-clock signal and assist with removing players from the pile and keeping other players away from the pile. Notify the Referee verbally when the recovering team has been determined. If the offensive team recovers the ball, the Referee will indicate the next down and give the start-the-clock signal. If the defensive team recovers the ball, the Referee will give the fist down signal while facing in the direction of the opponent's goal line.

2.8 INTERMISSIONS BETWEEN PERIODS

As the time winds down toward the end of the period, the officials must increase their awareness of game clock management. Officials should notify each other when there is about one minute left in a period. A recommended signal is to extend your arms out in front of your body and tap the top of your watch or wrist with your other hand to indicate one minute left. The Referee and Umpire should pay close attention to the clock to ensure the ball is snapped before time expires in the period. With about two minutes left in a half the Referee or Back Judge (who ever is facing the game clock) should time the 25-second count by using the game clock.

- **Referee:** When time expires, check with the other officials to ensure there have been no fouls, inadvertent whistles, requests for a coach-referee conference, or timing errors that need to be corrected. If none, hold the ball over your head designating the official end of the period.

2.8.1 Intermissions at the End of the First and Third Periods

- **All Officials:** Record the team in possession of the ball, down, distance to go for a first down, yard line, and lateral position of the ball on the field.
- **Back Judge:** Time the 60-second intermission. Go to the spot at the other end of the field where the ball should be placed to start the next period. Confirm the ball placement with the Umpire. Notify the Referee with a short warning whistle when there are 15 seconds remaining in the intermission, and again when the intermission has expired.
- **Linesman:** While standing with your back to the field of play, grasp the chain clip and rotate the chain before moving it to the other end of the field. While facing the field of play, personally reset the chain equipment and the down box in the proper positions to start the next period. Ensure the down box displays the correct down number.
- **Umpire:** Ensure the crew has time to write period change information on game cards, then pick up the ball; jog to the other end of the field; and place it at the spot that corresponds to the previous spot. Stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Line Judge:** Jog down the sideline to the yard line where the ball will be spotted to start the next period.
- **All Officials:** After the ball and line-to-gain equipment are reset, take positions and assume the duties for regular time-out situations.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Get the teams back onto the field to start the next period when the Back Judge gives the 15-second warning whistle.
- **Referee:** Confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the ready-for-play signal.

2.8.2 Intermission at the Half

- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Notify the coaches on your sidelines that they are solely responsible for getting their teams on the field before the halftime intermission ends.

(Officials will not go to the locker rooms to alert them.) Tell the coaches to have their captains on the sideline no later than three minutes before the end of the halftime intermission.

- Linesman – tell the line-to-gain crew to be back on the field five minutes before the start of the second half.
- Line Judge – tell the ball person to be back on the field five minutes before the start of the second half.

Take possession of the game balls before leaving the field for halftime.

- **Referee:** Wait until the teams have cleared the field and then give the start-the-clock signal to the time to begin the halftime intermission countdown.
- **Back Judge:** Time the halftime intermission and notify the crew when there are five minutes remaining in the intermission. Time the three-minute warm up period when both teams have returned to the field.
- **Line Judge and Back Judge:** Get the captains lined up on the sidelines for the second half selection of options.

2.8.3 Intermission before Overtime Periods

- **Referee:** Instruct both teams to return to their respective team boxes.
- **Back Judge:** Time the three-minute intermission between the end of the fourth period of the game and the first overtime period; or the two-minute intermission between any subsequent overtime periods. Notify the Referee when 15 seconds remain in these intermissions and again when the intermissions expire.
- **All Officials:** Meet in the middle of the field at the 50-yard line to review the rules and mechanics for overtime. Take positions for the coin toss for the first overtime period; or for the alternating selection of options for any subsequent periods.

(See Chapter 6, *Overtime*, for a full description of overtime mechanics.)

2.9 MARKING BALL READY FOR PLAY

Only the Referee can mark the ball ready for play. The Referee will blow the whistle while giving one of two signals.

- Ready-for-play signal is used when
 - The clock is stopped and will start when a free kick is touched by any player other than first touching by the kicking team.
 - The clock is stopped and will start with the snap.
 - The clock is running and will continue to run.
- Start-the-clock signal is used when
 - The clock is stopped and it will be started when the signal is given.

Only one of these two signals is used. *Do not give the ready-for-play signal followed by the start-the-clock signal when you want to mark the ball ready and have the clock started.*

2.10 MARKING FIRST DOWNS

The Linesman will personally locate the down box and line-to-gain chain whenever a first down is awarded. At the start of every new series of downs, the Linesman will go to the sideline facing the field and mark the spot of the first down by placing a heel of the downfield foot on the sideline at the foremost point of the ball. The down box operator will place the box at that spot and the chain crew will set the chain accordingly.

2.11 MARKING PROGRESS

One of the more important responsibilities for any football official is determining and marking the runner's forward progress spot. Officials must remember that the progress spot is determined by the foremost point of the ball in player possession when that player's advancement toward the opponent's goal is ended by rule. During most scrimmage plays the forward progress is determined by the wing officials.

- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Move up and down the field with the runner parallel to the sideline; then “square off;” and move to the progress spot at right angles to the sideline. Unless a first down or a touchdown is at issue, marking the progress spot should be decidedly undemonstrative. To mark forward progress, stand erect, hands at the side, feet together, toes pointing at the ball, with the downfield foot (the foot closest to the opponent's goal line) slightly ahead of the other foot, and in line with the foremost point of the ball. Hold the spot until the official who is placing the ball (usually the Umpire) has placed the ball on the ground. In general, if the ball becomes dead inside the hash marks, mark progress from about the nine-yard marks (i.e., the top of the numbers). Do not penetrate the hash marks to mark a spot unless the spot needs to be sold such as a close play for a first down or touchdown. *Do not jump over fallen players or run around players to get closer to the dead ball spot.*
- **Line Judge:** Stop the clock if the ball becomes dead at a spot that is obviously beyond the-line-to-gain stake. If the ball becomes dead close to the line-to-gain stake, the Line Judge notifies the Referee that the ball is close to a first down. In the last two minutes of a half, the Line Judge can stop the clock if the ball is close to a first down.
- **Referee:** Decide whether to stop the clock for a measurement. If the Line Judge has stopped the clock in the last two minutes of the half, you will most likely call for a measurement. However, if you determine that the ball is obviously short of the line to gain, immediately give the start-the-clock signal and move quickly into position and mark the ball ready for play.

2.12 MEASUREMENTS

2.12.1 Determining Need for Measurement

There are two primary methods used to help determine the need for a measurement: (1) the chain tape, and (2) the line-to-gain stake.

2.12.1.1 Use of Chain Tape

The middle of the chain should be marked with tape before the game. The tape is used to determine whether a five-yard penalty by the defense will result in a first down for the offense.

- **Linesman:** Prior to the game, ensure that the middle of the chain is marked with tape. If the ball becomes dead near the mid-point of the chain, check whether the foremost point of the ball is beyond or behind the tape. Notify the Referee and Umpire of the position of the ball with respect to the tape by pointing with hand at waist level to the front or back stake, if the ball is centered on the tape, indicate by placing a fist over an open palm and bringing them together. This allows the Referee to know immediately if a five-yard penalty on the defense will result in a first down without having to make a measurement.

2.12.1.2 Use of the Line-to-Gain Stake

The line-to-gain stake is used whenever the down ends and the ball becomes dead close to the line to gain.

- **All Officials:** Call out “take a look” and/or “its close” to alert everyone not to move the ball. If needed, hand the ball to the covering official to place on the ground with the foremost end of the ball at the point of forward progress and the long axis of the ball parallel to the sideline. *Do not toss the ball to the covering official, nor place the ball at the covering official's feet.*
- **Referee:** Determine if a measurement is needed. If the ball is not close to the line to gain, announce and signal the number of the next down. If a measurement is warranted, give the official's discretionary time-out signal and motion to the Linesman to bring the chain crew for the measurement.
 - A request for a measurement from either team's captain should be honored unless
 - The ball is obviously beyond or behind the line to gain.
 - The request comes after the ball has been moved from the dead-ball spot.
 - The request comes after the ball has been marked ready for play.

2.12.2 Measuring for a First Down

- **Referee:** After calling for a measurement, maintain a position near the ball, keeping players away from the ball and from the area where the chain will be brought to the ball for measurement.

- **Umpire:** Stand over the ball until the Back Judge has taken control of the ball on the ground.
- **Back Judge:** Kneel down at the rear of the ball in a position parallel to the sideline and on the press box side of the chain. Hold the ball on the ground so it does not move until the Referee has made a decision on the measurement.
- **Line Judge:** Mark the spot where the Linesman will place the chain clip to make the measurement. Place a foot on the back of the major yard-line stripe closest to the rear stake and in a direct line behind the ball. Hold this spot until the Linesman begins to place the chain clip at the mark. Then move toward the front stake and clear players from the area of the ball, so the press box will have a clear view of the measurement.
- **Linesman:** Go to the sideline. Ensure the box operator moves the box to the forward point of the ball with the old down showing. Ensure a clip has been placed on the chain at the intersection of the sideline and the back edge of the major yard-line stripe nearest the rear stake. Grasp the chain on either side of the clip and with the two stake holders, carry the chain to the spot marked by the Line Judge. Place the clip at the back edge of the yard line marked by the Line Judge. Direct the front stake holder to take the line-to-gain stake to the forward point of the ball and give it to the Umpire. After getting a firm grip on the clip and chain, notify the Referee and Umpire that you are ready for the Umpire to extend the chain.
 - *Do not step or stand on the chain to hold it in place during the measurement.*
- **Umpire:** Take the forward stake and pull the chain tight to ensure there are no kinks. Place the stake in a vertical position on the ground on the side of the ball opposite the press box.
- **Referee:** Determine whether the ball is beyond or behind the line to gain and give the appropriate signal as listed below. (If the foremost point of the ball touches any part of the line-to-gain stake, it is a first down.)
 - If the ball is beyond the line to gain, give the first down signal for the offensive team.
 - If the ball is behind the line on first, second or third down, use hands or fingers to indicate to the press box the distance between the ball and the line to gain. Signal the number of the next down.
 - If the ball is behind the line to gain on fourth down, give the first down signal for the defensive team.

Ensure the ball, chain stakes, and down box have been properly reset. Confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the appropriate ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal.

2.12.3 Resetting the Line-to-Gain Equipment

There are six different mechanics scenarios for resetting the line-to-gain equipment and the ball following a measurement. The three primary cases are (1) first down awarded to offensive team, (2) first down awarded to defensive team, and (3) offensive team is short of the line to gain. For each of these three cases there are separate mechanics depending upon whether the ball became dead between the hash marks or in a side zone outside the hash marks.

2.12.3.1 First Down Awarded to Offensive Team

If the ball becomes dead between the hash marks and beyond the line to gain, the offensive team is awarded a first down. The line-to-gain equipment must be reset.

- **Umpire:** Give the front stake to the stake holder and stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman:** Accompany the chain crew to the sideline and mark the spot where the chain will be set to start the next series of downs. Ensure the down box is moved to the forward progress spot and displays “first down.”

If the ball becomes dead in a side zone and beyond the line to gain, the offensive team is awarded a first down. In addition to resetting the line-to-gain-equipment, officials must re-spot the ball at the nearest hash mark.

- **Back Judge:** Mark the forward progress spot of the ball before it is moved.
- **Umpire:** Give the front stake to the stake holder. Move the ball to the nearest hash mark and place it on the ground at the forward progress spot being marked by the Back Judge. Stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman:** Reset chain and down box as previously described for a first down.

2.12.3.2 First Down Awarded to Defensive Team

If the ball becomes dead between the hash marks and behind the line to gain following a fourth down play, the defensive team is awarded a first down. The line-to-gain equipment must be reset and the balls must be exchanged.

- **Back Judge or Line Judge:** Retrieve the new ball from the ball person and relay it to the Umpire. Receive the old ball from the Umpire and relay it to the ball person.
- **Umpire:** Give the front stake to the stake holder. Stay near the existing ball to receive the new ball. Set the new ball on the ground along side the old ball. Pick up the old ball and relay it to the Back Judge or Line Judge for return to the ball person. Stand over the new ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman:** Reset chain and down box as previously described for a first down.

If the ball becomes dead in a side zone and behind the line to gain following a fourth down play, the defensive team is awarded a first down. The line-to-gain equipment must be reset and the balls must be exchanged.

- **Back Judge:** Mark the forward progress spot of the old ball. Leave the ball on the ground until the Umpire has placed the new ball on the ground at the hash marks. Then pick up the old ball and relay it as required to the ball person.
- **Line Judge:** Retrieve a new ball from the ball person and relay it to the Umpire.
- **Umpire:** Give the front stake to the stake holder. Take a position to receive the new ball from the Line Judge. Set the ball on the ground at the forward progress spot being marked by the Back Judge. Stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman:** Reset chain and down box as previously described for a first down.

2.12.3.3 No First Down Awarded

If the ball becomes dead between the hash marks and behind the line to gain on first, second, or third down, the offensive team retains possession of the ball for the next down.

- **Umpire:** Give the front stake to the stake holder and stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman:** Grasp the chain on either side of the clip and with the stake holders return the chain to the sideline. Use the clip to reset the chain and stakes in their previous positions. Ensure the down box is moved to the forward progress spot of the ball and the new down number is displayed.

If the ball becomes dead in a side zone and behind the line to gain on first, second, or third down, the offensive team retains possession of the ball for the next down. The officials must use the chain to move the ball from the dead ball spot in the side zone and re-spot the ball at the hash marks.

- **Back Judge:** Mark the forward progress spot of the ball in the side zone. Stay at that spot until the Referee has re-spotted the ball at the proper place at the hash marks.
- **Referee:** Grasp the chain link at the front end of the ball. Pick up the chain and the ball and move them to the nearest hash mark. When the chain has been set and stretched, place the ball on the ground with the foremost tip of the ball at the chain link you are holding.
- **Linesman:** Grasp the chain on either side of the clip. Pick up the chain on the Referee's signal and move it to the hash mark area. Reset the chain by placing the chain clip at the back edge of the appropriate yard line. Hold the chain at that spot until the Referee has spotted the ball.
- **Umpire:** Move the front stake to the hash mark area on the Referee's signal. When Linesman has the clip placed at the correct spot, extend the chain and set the forward stake in an upright position on the ground at the hash marks. After the Referee has spotted the ball, give the front stake to the stake holder and stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Line Judge:** Keep the area around the chain and ball clear of players.
- **Linesman:** After the ball has been spotted by the Referee, grasp the chain on either side of the clip; return the chain with the chain crew to the sideline; and reset the chain and stakes in their previous positions. Move the down box to the forward progress spot of the ball and display the new down number.

2.13 SIDELINE PLAYS

On wide runs from scrimmage or quick sideline passes, wing officials should allow the play to pass in front of them and then trail the play by a minimum of five yards. If you find yourself too close to the runner, take a step back towards the offensive backfield and let the play clear in front of you. Letting the play get by you widens your field of vision, allows you a better view of the action, and decreases your chance of being injured. When the ball carrier steps or is taken out of bounds, sound your whistle and move quickly but cautiously to the spot. Direct your attention to the players immediately around the dead-ball spot being especially alert if the play ends in or near a team box.

The presence of more than one official on sideline plays is imperative to maintain control of the game. The Back Judge and Referee should help on sideline plays as required. Officials should use voice commands to let the players know an official is present. If opposing players begin taunting, shoving, or fighting, the covering official should drop a beanbag at the dead-ball spot and move quickly to separate the players and any other sideline personnel involved in the confrontation. The Back Judge and the Referee should quickly close on the area to help control the situation. The officials should accompany any players who have gone out of bounds into the opponent's team box area back onto the field. The officials should not leave the spot until the area has been cleared. Officials not needed on the sideline must continue to observe the players on the field.

2.14 SIDELINE WARNING AND SIDELINE INTERFERENCE

The sideline warning or sideline interference call is associated with team violations of the restricted area, coaches' area or the team box rules.

- The coaches' area rule allows a maximum of three coaches and no other personnel in the coaches' area. (REMEMBER: The coaches' area is not part of the team box.)
- The team box rule requires that no persons affiliated with the team (other than the three coaches in the coaches' area) may be out of the team box and not on the field.

Restricted area with no contact, the first violation of these rules warrants a warning. The second violation is a 5-yard penalty. Any subsequent violations are considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will result in a 15-yard penalty.

2.14.1 Sideline Warning

Good judgment will dictate when a sideline warning should be given. (If possible, don't stop the clock or break a team's momentum to give a warning. Wait until the clock has been stopped for some other reason.

- **Calling Official:** *Do not toss a flag for a warning.* Give the stop-the-clock signal and report to the Referee that a sideline warning is to be given.
- **Referee:** Give the sideline warning signal facing the press box and point to the offending team's goal line. *Do not give the signal by facing the offending team on the field or the offending team's sideline. Do not point to the sideline of the offending team.*
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** The official on the offending team's sideline notifies the head coach that this is a warning and that any additional infractions will result in a penalty. The other wing official notifies the non-offending head coach that a warning is being given to the opposing coach.
- **All Officials:** Record the team, quarter and time of the warning on their game card.
- **Referee:** Confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the appropriate ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal.

2.14.2 Sideline Interference

After receiving a warning, a team will be penalized for any further violations of the coaches' area or team box rules. The officiating mechanics for these incidents are different from those for a sideline warning. Sideline interference will be administered as any other penalty situation.

Some key points include:

- **Calling Official:** Throw your flag when the ball is dead.
- **Referee:** Give the signals to the press box like any other foul. The sequence of signals is different for the 5-yard and 15-yard penalties.
 - 5-yard penalty signals are: dead ball, sideline interference
 - 15-yard penalty signals are: dead ball, sideline interference, and unsportsmanlike conduct.
- **All Officials:** Record all pertinent information on your game card for the 5-yard and 15-yard sideline interference penalties. The 15-yard penalty is recorded as an

unsportsmanlike conduct foul and is counted when considering disqualification of a person.

2.15 TIME-OUTS

There are three basic types of time-outs: charged team time-out, coach-referee conference time-out, and an official's time-out.

2.15.1 Charged Team Time-Out

A player or head coach from either team may request a time-out when the ball is dead and the team has time-outs remaining. The covering official should give the stop-the-clock signal, and notify the Referee who (player number or coach, and team) that called the time-out. The covering official may inconspicuously point to the team, but should not give the arm signal that designates the calling team. All officials should mirror the stop-the-clock signal. The Referee will grant the time-out unless there is a penalty that must be administered first. In such cases the Referee will administer the penalty options and then confirm if the team still wants the time-out.

- **Referee:** Give the stop-the-clock signal facing the press box and indicate which team called the time-out by facing the team, extending both arms shoulder high, and giving three chucks toward the team's goal line. If it is the final charged time-out of the half, turn and face the press box and give three tugs on an imaginary steam whistle. Move to a position about five yards from the ball in the offensive backfield and away from players, coaches, and other officials. When the Back Judge gives the warning whistle with 15 seconds remaining in the time-out, point to the Linesman and Line Judge to get their teams lined up for the next play. When the Back Judge gives the time-out expiration signal, confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the ready-for-play signal. (REMEMBER: Charged time-outs may be reduced in length only if both teams are ready to play prior to the 25-second ready-for-play signal by the Referee.)
- **All Officials:** Record the team and player number or coach that called the time-out; and the period and time remaining on the game clock. Confirm the number of time-outs remaining for each team by pointing to the team, and indicating with your fingers the number of time-outs the team has left. Officials should not bunch together or visit with players or coaches during the time-out.
- **Umpire:** Stand over the ball until the Referee gives the ready-for-play signal.
- **Back Judge:** Move to a position about 15 yards from the ball in the defensive backfield and away from players, coaches, and other officials. Start timing the 60-second time-out period when the Referee grants and signals the time-out. Notify the Referee with a short toot on the whistle when 15 seconds remain in the time-out. Point to the Referee when the time-out interval has expired. If both teams are ready to resume play before the expiration of the time-out, notify the Referee to mark the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Take a position on the playing field about 10 yards away from where the players and coaches of your team are huddled and where you can observe the conference, substitutes, and activities on the sideline. Ensure teams comply with the rules for authorized conferences.
 - The on-field time-out must be conducted between the hash marks anywhere on the field.

- The sideline time-out conference must be conducted in front of the team box between 25-yard lines and no farther on the field than the top of the numbers (i.e., nine-yard marks).
- In no case should there be any coaches or players between the hash marks and the top of the numbers.

On the Back Judge's 15-second warning whistle or on the Referee's notification, inform the teams that the time-out is over and direct them to take their positions on the field for the next play. Relay the number of time-outs the teams have remaining to the respective head coach and captain(s). When a team has used all its allotted time-outs for the half, personally inform the head coach that the team has no time-outs remaining. Notify the Referee that the coach is aware that the team is out of time-outs.

2.15.2 Coach-Referee Conference

A head coach, or a player directed by the head coach, may request a time-out to meet with the Referee to review a decision which may have resulted from a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule. Such a request must be made prior to the ball becoming live following the play to be reviewed. The covering official should grant the time-out and give the stop-the-clock signal. All officials should mirror the stop-the-clock signal. The covering official notifies the Referee that a time-out has been requested for a coach-referee conference.

- **Referee:** Give the stop-the-clock signal facing the press box and indicate that it is an official's time-out by tapping the chest with both hands. Meet with the coach in front of the team box in the field of play and within five yards of the sideline.
- **Linesman or Line Judge:** If your coach is involved in the conference, join the conference to witness the exchange between the coach and the referee and to ensure the Referee's explanations are correct. Keep assistant coaches and other team personnel away from the conference. The other wing official should stay near the sideline of the team not involved in the conference to keep players on the field and coaches and team attendants off the field. Coaches may talk to players but attendants may not provide water or other assistance to the players.
- **Back Judge:** Move to a position to keep the players from the team involved in the conference within the hash marks and well away from the coach-referee conference.
- **Umpire:** Stand over the ball until the Referee informs you of the results of the conference.

If the conference results in a change to the Referee's ruling,

- **Referee:** Notify the opposing team's head coach of the change. Direct the Umpire and other officials on how to administer the change (e.g., move the ball, change the down, and/or reset the game clock). When the changes are made, confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal as appropriate.

If the conference does not result in a change to the Referee's ruling, the requesting team will be charged a team time-out if they have any time-outs remaining. If the team is out of time-outs, it will be penalized 5-yards for delay of game. The team requesting the coach-referee conference

will not be given another 60-second time-out after the Referee has made his decision and given the appropriate signals to the press box.

- **Referee:** Return to the area of the ball and give the charged team time-out or delay of game signal as appropriate. Following the administration of a delay of game penalty, give a final signal to the press box and indicate the number of the next down. Confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal as appropriate.
- **Umpire:** If required, mark off the delay of game penalty.
- **Linesman, Line Judge, and Back Judge:** Get the players into position for the next down.

2.15.3 Official's Time-Out

An official's time-out occurs without a time-out being charged to either team. The rule book identifies a list of occasions when an official's time-out is warranted. Some of these situations are listed below:

- Measurement for a possible first down.
- Administration of a penalty.
- Change of team possession.
- Player who appears to be injured.
- Equipment repair that doesn't exceed 25-seconds.
- Hydration break.
- Delay in getting the ball ready for play.

In addition the Referee may call a discretionary official's time-out to deal with any situations not specifically called out in the rules.

The mechanics for an official's time-out vary from situation to situation. Some situations have specified mechanics, for example the mechanics for "Measurements" and "Penalty Enforcement." In situations where no specific mechanics have been prescribed, use the following general mechanics.

- **Referee:** Face the press box. Give the stop-the-clock signal followed by tapping the chest with both hands. At the end of the time-out period, confirm that the teams and officials are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the ready for play or the start-the-clock signal as appropriate.
- **Umpire:** Stand over the ball until the Referee marks it ready for play.
- **Linesman, Line Judge, and Back Judge:** Ensure players are complying with the rules governing substitutions, and interactions with coaches and team attendants. (In some situations the Referee may allow teams to engage in a sideline time-out conference with their coaches and team attendants.)

2.15.3.1 Injury Time-Out

If a player sustains an injury that appears serious, give the stop-the-clock signal immediately if the ball is already dead, or as soon as the ball becomes dead. Beckon the coach and medical staff onto the field. The Referee must determine if the player is unconscious by observing the player

and getting input from other officials or medical attendants. If the Referee determines the player was apparently unconscious, notify the head coach. The player may not participate in the remainder of the game without a written authorization from a medical doctor. All officials should record the following information on their game cards: the number of the unconscious player, team, quarter, and time remaining.

If a player's apparent injury appears less serious, give the player the opportunity to recover before giving the stop-the-clock signal and beckoning assistance from the sideline. If an official's time-out has been called for an apparently injured player, that player must leave the game for one down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs. Coaches may not talk to their players when they are on the field to administer to an injured player. During an injury timeout send both teams to their sideline. Officials shall not touch an injured player under any circumstance.

2.15.3.2 Equipment Repair Time-Out

If an official notices a player with an apparent need for equipment repair, notify the Referee who will decide if and when to call an official's time-out. An equipment repair time-out may be called if the equipment can be repaired in less than 25-seconds and without the assistance of sideline personnel. Otherwise, replace the player and give the ready-for-play or start-the-clock signal as appropriate. Officials shall not help any player with their equipment for any reason.

2.15.3.3 Hydration Time-Out

The Referee may declare an official's time-out when high heat could create a health risk to players. The hydration break will be administered using the same mechanics that are used for a charged team time-out, including the Back Judge timing the 60-second break. At the Referee's discretion the break time may be extended.

2.16 TIMING

2.16.1 Standard Timing

The Line Judge is primarily responsible for timing the game. The Back Judge times other intervals (e.g., 25-second count, time-outs, and intermissions) during the game. The Referee is authorized to correct obvious timing errors. All officials are responsible for making sure that the clock is stopped, started, and running at the appropriate time.

- **Line Judge:** If a visible game clock will be used, instruct the clock operator prior to the game. Time the game if there is no visible game clock or if the game clock becomes inoperable. Ensure that the game clock is operated correctly throughout the game. Check the clock to make sure it is running after the Referee gives the start-the-clock signal; and that it is not running after a score, touchback, or when any official gives the stop-the-clock signal. Notify Referee of any clock or timing errors as soon as they are observed.
- **Back Judge:** Time all game intervals other than playing time. Assist the Line Judge in confirming that the game clock is operated correctly.
 - Start the 25-second count after the Referee has marked the ball ready for play. Count the last five seconds silently while watching the ball to avoid blowing the whistle after the snap. Do not give a visual hand signal for the last five seconds of the 25-second count.
 - To the extent possible, use the score board clock to time the 25-second intervals in the last two minutes of each half.
 - Time the 60-second interval for the intermission between periods, a charged time-out, an official's hydration time-out, and between a score and the subsequent free kick.
 - Time the three-minute intermission between the end of the game and the start of the first overtime period, and the two-minute intermission between subsequent overtime periods.
- **Referee:** Correct an obvious timing error if it is discovered prior to the second live ball following the error and before the period has been officially ended. To reset the 25-second count, signal the Back Judge by giving a pumping motion of the open palm above the head.

2.16.2 Running Clock

If a game situation dictates the use of a running clock to time the game, the clock will be operated as described in Section 8.2, *Instructions for Clock Operator/Timer*.

2.17 WHISTLE USE

The whistle is a major communication tool used to

- Mark the ball ready for play.
- Indicate the ball has become dead by rule.
- Draw the attention to specific situations such as a penalty.

Always blow the whistle firmly. The tone and length of the whistle will depend on the situation. Routine plays only require a short, loud toot. A more demonstrative whistle may be required to help sell a tough call or get the attention of players or other officials.

REMEMBER: The ball becomes dead by rule; the whistle only confirms what has already happened. Learn to officiate without the whistle in your mouth until the ball becomes dead. The Referee, Umpire, Linesman and Line Judge may have their whistle in or near their mouth prior to the snap to cover possible dead ball fouls or last second requests for a time-out. At the snap they should remove the whistle from their mouth to help prevent an inadvertent whistle.

2.17.1 Ready-for-Play Whistle

The Referee is the only official who will blow a whistle to signal the ball is ready for play. The whistle should be a firm tone sounded while giving the ready-for-play or the start-the-clock signal.

2.17.2 Dead Ball Whistle

Only the official covering the area where the ball becomes dead should blow the whistle. Do not blow a whistle when the ball becomes dead outside your area. If officials are following proper mechanics, there is rarely a need for more than one whistle on a play. On occasion when coverage areas overlap there may be two whistles. The covering official must find the ball before sounding the whistle. The covering official must actually see the ball in possession of the runner who is down or whose forward progress has been stopped. If you do not see the ball become dead, do not blow your whistle. A delayed or no whistle is better than an early inadvertent whistle.

The tone and length of the whistle used to indicate the ball has become dead by rule varies by situation. A single, firm, short toot is all that is required if a runner is taken down by a single tackler or scores a touchdown on a break-away run, or a pass is obviously incomplete. A longer, louder whistle may be required to designate the ball is dead when a runner whose forward progress has been stopped is being shoved backwards by a host of tacklers. A long, loud whistle also may be effective at the end of kicking downs where players are scattered all over the field. More demonstrative whistles and signals may be required to sell close calls such as a runner down before a fumble occurs or a pass caught near the sideline that is incomplete. A short series of firm toots may be required to stop players who are still engaged in contact after the ball has become dead.

2.17.3 Inadvertent Whistle

Don't blow one; but if you do, admit it, administer it, and get over it!!!

One of the most embarrassing moments in an official's career is blowing an inadvertent whistle, but unfortunately they occur. Acknowledge the error no matter how soft you think your whistle was. Don't try to cover it up. If necessary blow the whistle again to stop the action. The ball becomes dead immediately when an inadvertent whistle is blown. Note the location and status of the ball when the whistle was sounded. If the ball is in player possession, drop a beanbag on the yard line to mark the spot where the ball became dead as a result of the whistle. Report to the Referee the position and status of the ball when the whistle was blown.

- **All Officials:** Administer an inadvertent whistle situation by using mechanics very similar to penalty enforcement. Ensure the line-to-gain equipment and down box do not move. Cover the dead ball spot and retrieve the ball.
- **Referee:** Determine the options applicable to the situation. If the choice of options is obvious, notify the Umpire where to place the ball and give a quick explanation to the affected captain. Move to a clear area facing the press box; give the inadvertent whistle signal; and indicate the number of the next down. If the option is not obvious, meet with the affected captain and explain the options in the presence of the Umpire. When the captain selects an option, notify the Umpire where to place the ball. Take your position for the next play; confirm that officials and teams are ready to resume play. Blow the whistle while giving the start the clock signal. (Since an inadvertent whistle always stops a play while the game clock is running, the clock will be started when the ball is marked ready for play.)
- **Umpire:** Meet with the Referee and captain to discuss the options. Ensure the Referee explains the options correctly. Spot the ball as directed by the Referee and stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Explain the inadvertent whistle options to your respective coaches.
- **Linesman:** Ensure the down box is placed at the proper spot and reflects the proper down number following administration of the chosen inadvertent whistle option. Be prepared to move the chain and down box if the administration of an option results in a first down for either team.

If during the down, a foul occurs prior to the inadvertent whistle and the penalty for the foul is accepted, the inadvertent whistle is ignored. In this case, use the mechanics for "Fouls and Penalty Enforcement."

3 SIGNALS

Signals are one of the most important communication tools used by officials to communicate with each other and with auxiliary crew members, coaches, players, and fans. To be effective, officials must use a common set of approved signals that must be given in a consistent, clear, and concise manner. Poorly executed signals or the use of unauthorized signals only confuse the situation and impair good communications. There are three types of signals:

- Official football signals authorized and illustrated in the *NFHS Rules Book*.
- Supplemental signals approved by SNOA.
- Unauthorized signals.

3.1 SIGNALS AUTHORIZED BY RULE

The *NFHS Rules Book* illustrates about fifty signals that are approved for use in high school games. This section provides some guidance about the do's and don'ts for some of these signals, but does not address all of them. Not all signals are used by all officials. The Referee is the only official who signals penalties and marks the ball ready for play. Under some circumstances, other officials will use some of the approved signals, for example stop the clock, touchdown, touchback, safety, incomplete pass, etc. The list below provides insight, guidance, emphasis, and restrictions for using many of the authorized signals. Not all of the authorized signals are addressed in this list. In general signals should be given slowly and deliberately. Don't be in a hurry.

- **Block below the Waist:** Use two hands on the front of the legs just above the knees.
- **Clipping:** Use one hand to the back of the leg just above the knee.
- **Dead Ball:** An arm extended above the head with open hand and palm facing forward is used only to designate dead ball fouls. Do not use the signal to indicate the runner is down.
- **Disqualification:** Never make a show of an ejection. Extend your arm with a thumb up and slowly raise your arm over your head.
- **Disregard Flag:** Two or three waves of the penalty flag are sufficient. Do not give any signal that would indicate the possible infraction that is being waved off.
- **Encroachment:** Hold hands on hips momentarily. Do not bounce the hands on the hips.
- **First Touching:** Elbows out, upper arms parallel to the ground, and finger tips of each hand on the respective shoulders. Do not bounce hands up and down on the shoulders.
- **Grasping the Face Mask:** The same basic signal is used for an incidental grasping of the face mask or helmet opening (5-yard penalty) as for the more serious foul of grasping and twisting, turning, or pulling the face mask or helmet opening (15-yard penalty). If the foul is for the more serious act, give a personal foul signal followed by the grasping the face mask signal.
- **Illegal Forward Pass or Illegal Forward Handing:** Face the press box; place the right arm behind the back; and move it up and down twice. Do not turn your back to the press box.
- **Illegal Motion and Illegal Shift:** The illegal motion signal uses the right arm extended outward from the chest with hand open and palm down. The illegal shift signal is the

same except two arms and hands are used. The signals should include two repetitions of the arm extensions. The illegal shift and motion signals are frequently misapplied.

- The illegal shift signal is used when an offensive team fails to have all players set for one second before anyone legally goes in motion.
- The illegal motion signal is used when the man in motion is going toward the line at the snap or when a player on the line goes in motion and is not five yards behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- If the player in motion turns abruptly toward the line of scrimmage, that is a false start (dead ball foul) and not illegal motion (live ball foul). Blow the whistle, throw the flag, and stop the play.
- If a wide out, slot back, or end beats the snap, it is a false start and not illegal motion at the snap. Blow the whistle, throw the flag, and stop the play.
- **Illegal Helmet Contact:** If a player leads with his helmet in blocking or tackling, call a personal foul. In giving the signals for the foul, give the personal foul signal followed by the illegal helmet contact signal.
- **Illegal Batting or Illegal Kicking:** Both fouls use the same basic signal, i.e., elbow out with finger tips of the right hand on the right shoulder. Hold that position momentarily. Do not bounce the hand up and down on the shoulder. For illegal kicking, follow the basic signal by pointing to the toe.
- **Incomplete Pass:** This signal is used to indicate
 - Incomplete pass.
 - Unsuccessful field goal attempt.
 - Unsuccessful try by run, pass, or kick.
 - Penalty declined.
 - Coin toss options deferred.

Stand erect and give the crossing arms signal at chest height. Do not bend forward at the waist when giving the signal and do not cross the arms at the waist or lower.

Whenever a penalty is declined, coin toss options are deferred, a pass falls incomplete in plain view, or a field goal attempt or try play is obviously no good, crossing your arms once is sufficient. After crossing the arms, hold the arms in the outward position momentarily before dropping them. When the call has to be sold, two or three repetitions of the incomplete signal are appropriate. The calling official shall never give the stop-the clock signal after giving the incomplete pass, unsuccessful try, or unsuccessful field goal signal. Other officials should not mirror the calling official's signal. Instead they should give the stop-the-clock signal.

- **Ineligible Downfield:** Pat your head twice and hold momentarily.
- **Intentional Grounding:** Give two slow strokes of the arms for this signal.
- **Pass or Kick Catch Interference:** Thrust your arms forward only once and then hold them in the extended position for about two counts. Do not give multiple thrusts of the arms.
- **Ready for Play:** The Referee gives the ready-for-play signal prior to a
 - Free kick down.
 - Scrimmage down when the clock is running.
 - Scrimmage down when the clock is stopped and will start with a legal snap.

There are two different ways to give the ready-for-play signal and either one is acceptable.

- The preferred signal is to extend an arm fully upward with fingers extended and then making a fist while pulling down on an imaginary light chain until the elbow contacts the side of the body.
- The optional signal is to extend an arm fully upward with fingers extended and then giving a “tomahawk” chopping motion.

The Referee should never use the ready-for-play signal immediately followed by the start-the-clock signal. On any down use one or the other signal as prescribed by rule, but do not use both signals to mark the ball ready for play.

- **Roughing the Passer:** Give a single, slow simulated passing movement of the arm. *Do not give two or more repetitions of the passing motion signal.*
- **Running Into or Roughing the Kicker:** Both fouls use the same basic signal, a short kick motion with the leg. For roughing the kicker, give a personal foul signal followed by the running into/roughing the kicker signal.
- **Safety:** The covering official(s) gives the safety signal by placing the hands together in front of the body and above head height. Other officials should not mirror that signal. Instead they should give the stop-the-clock signal. *The calling official shall never give the stop-the-clock signal after giving the safety signal.*
- **Sideline Interference:** Face the press box and cross your arms behind your back. *Do not turn your back to the press box.*
- **Start-the-Clock:** This signal is used by the Referee to
 - Mark the ball ready for play on a scrimmage down when the clock has been stopped and will start with this signal.
 - Start the clock after it has been stopped in error by any official.
 - Start the clock following an official’s discretionary time-out for such situations as un-piling players following a fumble.

The Referee gives the signal by facing the press box and rotating the arm in front of the body, not to the side. Three easy swings of the arm at full extension are sufficient.

The start-the-clock signal is also used by any official to indicate

- Ball was touched (other than fist touching by the kicking team) on a free kick.
- Runner’s forward progress was stopped before the runner or ball went out of bounds.
- Clock was not started following the Referee’s signal to start it.

The signal should be made toward the side of the body with three easy swings of a fully extended arm.

- **Stop the Clock:** There are numerous situations in which the stop-the-clock signal is used. There are also other signals which automatically stop the clock. *The calling official shall never give the stop-the-clock signal after giving any one of the signals listed below.* Other officials will give the stop-the-clock signal after seeing the calling official’s signal for:
 - Incomplete pass, unsuccessful try, or unsuccessful field goal attempt.
 - Touchdown.

- Touchback.
- Safety.

All officials should mirror a stop-the-clock signal given by any official.

- **Touchback:** This signal is similar to a valid fair catch signal. Extend arm above the head with open hand and wave arm slightly from side to side with arm extended over head. Three waves should be adequate. Do not give the signal by moving the arm from above the head all the way down to the side of the body, in effect a one-armed time-out signal. The calling official shall never give the stop-the-clock signal after giving the touchback signal. Other officials should not mirror the touchback signal. Instead they should give the stop-the-clock signal.
- **Touchdown:** The covering official(s) gives the touchdown signal. Other officials should not mirror the touchdown signal. Instead they should give the stop-the-clock signal. The calling official shall never give the stop-the-clock signal after giving the touchdown signal.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Extend arms out to the sides with hands open and palms facing down. Hold the signal momentarily. Do not flap your arms up and down.
- **Untimed Down:** Extend the arm fully upward with the index finger pointed upward. Rotate the finger in a circular motion and then give the ready-for-play signal. This signal is used for a try or when a period is extended because of an accepted penalty.

3.2 APPROVED SUPPLEMENTAL SIGNALS

SNOA has approved the use of some commonly accepted signals that are not listed or described in the rules book. Some of these signals are used to enhance crew communications and others help explain officials' decisions. These supplemental signals are listed and described in this section.

- **Beckoning Signal:** Extend the arm(s) with open hand(s) in front of you and pull them back toward your body in a “come here” motion. This signal may be used to notify the line-to-gain crew to move the down box and/or the chain. It may be used to beckon a coach or attendants onto the field to assist an apparently injured player. It may also be used on free kicks by the Referee after the ready-for-play signal to let the kicker know that it is ok to kick the ball.
- **Chain Tape Signals:** The Linesman will use an index finger held close to the body at the waist to indicate to the Referee and Umpire whether the ball is behind or beyond the tape placed at the midpoint of the chain. Point to the rear stake if the ball is behind the tape; and to the front stake if the ball is beyond the tape.
- **Clock Status:**
 - Clock Stopped – Cross arms below the waist to indicate the clock was stopped on the play and to indicate that the clock will not start until the snap.
 - Run Clock – Give a small circular motion with the wrist and index finger in front of the waist to indicate the clock should continue to run or the clock should be started when the ball is marked ready for play.
- **Coin Toss Options:** The following signals are used by the Referee to communicate the captains' choices at the pregame toss, prior to the start of the second half, and prior to the start of any overtime period.
 - Defer – Give the incomplete pass/penalty declined signal (Not applicable to overtime).
 - Receive – Give a catch signal.
 - Kick – Give a slight swing of the leg to simulate a kick.
 - Defend a goal – Give one chuck of the arms extended at shoulder height toward the goal the team will defend.
 - Offense (in overtime) – Give the first down signal.
- **Counting Players:** The following signals indicate the results counting players:
 - For 11 players, extend an arm at shoulder height with fist closed.
 - For less than 11 players, place an open hand about waist high and pump it up and down two or three times.
 - For more than 11 players, give a small circular motion with the wrist and index finger in front of the waist to indicate “count again.”
- **Double Stakes:** Cross arms in front of the face to indicate that the offensive team has more than ten yards to go for a first down. All crew members should confirm by using the signal.
- **Kick Out of Bounds in Flight:** The following signals are used by the Referee on scrimmage kicks and by the Back Judge on free kicks to help a covering official mark the spot where the ball crossed the sideline in flight.

- Arm pointing toward the covering official means move back away from the line of scrimmage.
- Arm raised above the head (like a dead ball signal) means move forward toward the line of scrimmage.
- A “chop” signal means stop you have the reached the out-of-bounds spot.
- **Off-Mechanics:** A pat on top of the head (identical to the signal for an ineligible down field) is used to notify the Referee when the Line Judge will be leaving the line of scrimmage to take a position in the defensive backfield. In a crew of five officials this signal is used by the Line Judge and Back Judge to indicate that they are going to line up at the pylons for a potential “coffin corner” kick. It can also be used when the Referee wants the Line Judge to release downfield immediately after the snap in certain limited situations. In crews of three or four officials, the signal is used to indicate that the Line Judge is going to line up down field to cover a punt, field goal attempt, or try kick.
- **One Minute Remaining:** Extend arms out in front of body and tap the top of your watch or wrist with the other hand to indicate there is approximately one minute remaining in the period.
- **Pass Juggled:** Give the incomplete pass signal. Then give the “juggling” signal by extending the forearms in front of the body with palms up and move the hands up and down alternatively. The juggling signal may also be use in other loose ball situations such as fumble recoveries near the sideline where a player fails to establish control of the ball before the player and/or the ball goes out of bounds.
- **Pick Play Alert:** Tap the side of the nose with an index finger to remind officials of the potential for the offense to set picks during pass plays, especially inside the defensive team’s 20-yard line.
- **Position of Widest Receiver:** The following signals are used by the Linesman and Line Judge to indicate whether the widest receiver on their side is behind or on the line of scrimmage.
 - Extend an arm at shoulder height with fist closed toward the offensive team’s backfield to indicate the wide receiver is lined up in the backfield.
 - If the widest receiver moves up to the line of scrimmage, place a hand on the opposite shoulder to indicate the widest receiver is now on the line.
 - No signal will be given if the widest receiver is lined up on the line of scrimmage.
 - If the widest receiver takes a position on the line of scrimmage and later shifts to a position behind the line, the responsible wing official shall immediately give the extended fist signal.
 - The Linesman and Line Judge should confirm that they have seen each other’s signals by pointing toward the opposite official.
 - If both wing officials have signaled that their wide receiver is off the line, they should immediately count the number of backs in the offensive backfield. If they count five or more, they should throw the flag into the air on the snap because one of two fouls has been committed, i.e., the offensive team only has six players on the line or they have more than eleven players on the field.

- **Readiness Confirmation Signal:** The dead ball signal (open hand above the head) will be used to indicate that the officials and their respective teams are ready to put the ball in play on a free kick down.
- **Receiver Out of Bounds:** Give the incomplete pass signal. Then extend arms in front of the body; sweep them toward the side nearest to the sideline or end line; and hold them there momentarily. Usually one sweep is sufficient, but an additional sweep may be used to help sell a close call.
- **Reset the 25-Second Clock:** Referee will give a pumping motion of an open palm extended above the head to signal the Back Judge to reset the clock. Two or three pumps should be sufficient.
- **Snapper Protection:** Rotate fists in front of the chest (same as a false start signal). This signal is only used by the Referee and Umpire on plays where the offensive team is in a scrimmage-kick formation and the snapper is given protection by rule. This signal is not to be used just because it is fourth down. For example if the team is not in a scrimmage-kick formation on fourth down, the signal should not be used. On the other hand, if a team lines up in a scrimmage kick formation on second or third down, the signal should be used. The signal should also be used if the team lines up in typical formation for a try by kick.
- **Stop Sign:** Arm outstretched, palm up and facing the individual(s) you want to stop. This signal is used to tell the line-to-gain crew to stay put and don't move the down box or chain. It can also be used to stop a coach, player, or team attendants from coming onto the field when they are not authorized. It can also be used to notify that you have heard enough from a coach, player, or other individuals affiliated with the team.
- **Unbalanced Line:** Place one hand on the cheek. This signal can be used by any official to help in determining eligible receivers and alert the crew of the possibility of a "covered" receiver.
- **Wide Scoring Kick:** Give the unsuccessful kick signal (same as an incomplete pass). Then give the two arm sweeping signal (same as a receiver out of bound) to the outside of the missed upright. If there are two officials under the uprights, only the official covering the missed upright should give the wide signal.

3.3 UNAUTHORIZED SIGNALS

The following signals have not been approved by the SNOA and shall not be used in any games.

- Successful catch.
- Uncatchable pass.
- Backward pass (Fist extended at shoulder level in the direction of the pass).
- Dead ball signal to indicate a runner is downed.
- Visual count of the last five seconds of the 25-second countdown.
- Fourth down fumble rule (used on all fourth downs).
 - (See the approved supplemental signal that is used for snapper protection situations.)

4 PREGAME

The pregame period starts with the arrival of the officials and includes preparation activities performed off the field, specific duties performed on the field, and the coin toss. The mechanics described in this chapter were developed for varsity games and may need to be altered by the Referee as appropriate for application to JV, B, and youth games.

4.1 ARRIVAL TIMES

Arrival times for officiating crew members and auxiliary crew members will vary based upon the level of the game, the availability of officials, and other extenuating circumstances.

4.1.1 Arrival Times for Officiating Crew

- **Varsity Games:** Officials shall arrive in the locker room two hours before game time to allow enough time to dress, participate in a thorough pregame conference, and take the field thirty minutes before the scheduled kickoff. Crews that travel together to a game site and conduct their pregame conference in the vehicle can adjust their arrival time accordingly. In such cases, the crew should allow enough time at the game site to dress and take the field thirty minutes before scheduled kickoff.
- **Junior Varsity Games:** Officials should arrive one hour before game time in full uniform to participate in an abbreviated pregame conference and take the field thirty minutes before scheduled kickoff. If circumstances do not support a one hour arrival time, an arrival time of thirty minutes before game can be agreed to by the Referee.
- **“B” Games:** Officials should arrive thirty minutes before game time in full uniform to participate in a mini-pregame conference and to take the field no later than fifteen minutes before scheduled kickoff. Because of the early start times for many B games and the lack of available officials at that time, it may be necessary to reduce the arrival time to fifteen minutes before scheduled kickoff.
- **Youth Games:** Officials should arrive no later than fifteen minutes before game time in full uniform to organize and cover major mechanics issues.

4.1.2 Arrival Times for Auxiliary Crew Members

All auxiliary crew personnel assigned by SNOA are welcome to observe the pregame conference. Otherwise, auxiliary crew members should arrive by the times listed below:

- **Varsity Games:** The timer should arrive about 45 minutes before game time to meet with the Line Judge, receive instructions, and start the 30-minute pregame countdown clock. The person assigned to operate the score board (downs, distance, score, etc.) should arrive no later than fifteen minutes before game time to check the board for potential problems. The line-to-gain crew should arrive about 30 minutes before game time to meet with the Linesman, receive instructions, and inspect the line-to-gain equipment.

- **Sub-Varsity Games:** The timer, score board operator, and line-to-gain crew should arrive no later than fifteen minutes before game time or at a time requested by the Referee.

4.2 PREGAME ACTIVITIES OFF THE FIELD

The off-field pregame activities include preliminary preparations, a pregame conference, and a uniform check.

4.2.1 Preliminary Preparations

Upon arrival at the site there are several preliminary activities that must be completed before starting the pregame conference. These activities include:

- Prepare a list of officials by position to give to each head coach. This list may be part of an evaluation sheet or card prepared by SNOA.
- Ensure all officials record the name of the head coach for each team on their game cards.
- Synchronize watches with the Line Judge who is responsible for having the correct time.

4.2.2 Pregame Conference

The purpose of a pregame conference is to prepare the crew and solidify the thinking of officials in regard to procedures, rules, interpretations, and enforcement. The pregame conference is a significant ingredient to success. If you talk about it before it happens on the field, you're better prepared to deal with it correctly. As a result the Referee must conduct a pregame conference using a written outline. Attendance at the pregame conference is mandatory for all officials. All officials should actively participate in the conference.

There are many approaches and outlines for a pregame conference, but there is no special formula for a “successful” conference. Referees may vary their approach to the conference, but the value of organizing and unifying the techniques to be use in a game cannot be overemphasized. A suggested list of topics for a pregame conference is provided in the table, *Pregame Conference Outline*, which follows this section. An opening discussion could include the following topics:

- Recent play situations or new rules that may need clarification.
- Game expectations such as teams’ offensive and defensive sets, running/passing tendencies, key players, team records, potential rivalries, and interactions with and between head coaches.
- Sideline and bench area control and the use of sideline warnings and interference penalties.
- Communications with coaches.
- Crew rotation to fill the Referee and Umpire positions if either official becomes injured or too ill to work.

Following the pregame conference, check to see that each official is properly dressed and all officials have the necessary accessories such as beanbags, penalty flags, whistles, game cards, coins, down indicators, chain clips, watches, etc.

Pregame Conference Outline

Pregame Duties – Off-field

Rules and interpretations
Plays and formations
Game expectations
Sideline and team box control
Sideline warnings/interference
Control unsportsmanlike conduct
Rotation of officials for injury

Pregame Duties – On-field

Meetings with coaches
Coaches' equipment certification
Inspect field
Spot check players' equipment
Check game balls
Instruct timer
Instruct line-to-gain crew
Instruct ball person(s)

Coin Toss

First half procedure
Second half procedure

Free Kicks

Positions
Counting players
Restraining lines – encroachment
Starting the clock
Players illegally out of bounds
Untouched kick out of bounds
Fair catch
Kick catch interference
Touchback
Momentum into end zone
Blocking below the waist
Coverage on runback; reverses
Forward handoffs; cross field pass
Free kick after safety

Onside kicks

Position adjustments
Kick grounded or in-flight
Kick in or beyond neutral zone
Touching/recovery

Scrimmage Plays – General

Positions
Crew Communications
Counting Players
Substitutions
Legality of offensive line

Restricted linemen
Eligible receivers
Wing officials signals
Shifts and player in motion
False starts/encroachment
Legality of snap
Free blocking zone
Hurry-up offense

Scrimmage Plays - Runs

Coverage of runner
Sweeps, options, pitchouts
Forward progress
Run out of bounds
Dead ball coverage

Scrimmage Plays - Passes

Coverage of passer – roughing
Passer/pass beyond/behind the line
Pass forward/backward
Pass/fumble
Intentional grounding
Ineligibles downfield
Legal/illegal touching of pass
Coverage of receivers - keys
Players illegally out of bounds
Pass interference – offense/defense
Muff – catch - fumble
Coverage on interception
Interception in end zone
Momentum into end zone

Goal Line Plays

Goal line mechanics
Swinging gate
Reverse goal line mechanics

Punts

Positions
Contact on snapper/kicker
Kicker/ball beyond/behind the line
Blocked kick or broken play
Fakes
Players illegally out of bounds
First touching
Fair catch
Kick catch interference
Untouched kick in end zone
Momentum into end zone
Out of bounds – marking spot
Coverage of runback

Field Goal/Try Attempts

Positions
Coverage – uprights and crossbar
Contact on snapper/kicker/holder
Blocked kick or broken play
Fakes
Kick beyond/behind line
Kick out of bounds
Kick short of goal line
Coverage if defense gets ball
Differences – field goal vs. try

Ball Handling

Exchange – relay – spot ball

Fumble

Bean bags and whistle control
Handling pile ups

Measurements

Using chain tape
Positions and duties

Fouls and Enforcement

Reporting – who/what/where/when
Signals
Options
Enforcement
Disqualification
Recording foul information

Timing

Game clock timing
Interval timing
Running clock

Time-Outs

Charged team time-outs
Injury or hydration time-outs
Officials' discretionary time-out
Coach-Referee conference
Positions and duties

End of Periods

After first and third quarter
Halftime
End of game

Whistle

“Better late than early”
Inadvertent whistle

4.3 PREGAME DUTIES ON THE FIELD

Officials shall enter the field together 30 minutes before game time and immediately begin their pregame duties.

- **Referee and Umpire:** Meet with each head coach, home team first, and cover all the items listed on the coach's pregame meeting checklist including:
 - Introduction of officials.
 - Introduce yourselves.
 - Give the coach a list of the officials by position and/or an evaluation sheet prepared by SNOA with the same information.
 - Identify the wing official who will be working on the coach's sideline and indicate that the wing official will be the primary source for communications between the officials and the coach.
 - Quickly describe how and when to request a coach-referee conference.
 - Equipment and player information.
 - Ask the coach if all players are legally equipped in accordance with NFHS (federation) rules.
 - Ask if there are any players wearing casts or other special equipment that needs to be approved.
 - Ask the coach for the numbers (and names if desired) of the captains and to identify the speaking captain.
 - Ask the coach if the captains know what option they should select at the coin toss.
 - Ask the coach for the game ball.
 - Timing Verification
 - Verify if the time on the countdown clock is accurate and confirm the scheduled time for kickoff.
 - Ask the coach to have the captains meet with the officials on the sideline at the 50-yardline with five minutes remaining on the countdown clock.
 - Confirm the duration of halftime and remind the coach that the coach is responsible for getting the team on the field before the halftime intermission clock expires. No officials will come to remind them of the time remaining in the halftime intermission.
 - Tell the coach to have the captains on the field to meet with the officials at least one minute before the team arrives on the field.
 - Confirm whether the overtime rule will be used in a game involving an out-of-state team.
 - Team Information.
 - Ask the coach to identify any unusual plays or formations.
 - Confirm that the coach has a bench control plan including a get-back coach.
 - Solicit the coach's support in fostering good sportsmanship throughout the game.
 - Ask the coach if there are any questions.

After meeting with the coaches, give the game balls to the Back Judge. Inspect the field to identify any potential hazards. Ask game management to have the problem taken care of immediately. Spot check player equipment and uniforms. Look for tinted eye shields, knotted jerseys, missing pads, illegal towels, or other violations. Ask the head coach to have the players make the necessary corrections before the game starts. Find out how the snappers want to have their ball positioned. Meet with the other officials to share the information gathered from the meetings with the coaches and to identify any issues that need to be resolved before the game.

- **Linesman:** Check the end line closest to the where the officials entered the field. Ensure hash mark pylons are placed 3-feet beyond the end line and in line with the inside edges of the hash marks. Ensure the goal post pads are secured and the goal posts are free of decoration. Check the sideline opposite the press box. Move yard-line markers 6-feet off the sideline.

Check the line-to-gain equipment and work with game management to repair or replace any faulty equipment. Ensure the middle of the chain is taped. Instruct the line-to-gain crew on their duties as described in Section 8-3, *Instructions for Line-to-Gain Crew*.

Some key points include:

- Operate line-to-gain equipment 6-feet off the sideline.
- Only move the chain on the Linesman's signal.
- Do not move if you see a penalty flag or beanbag on the field.
- Old spot – old down; new spot – new down.

Introduce yourself to the head coach on your sideline. Tell the coach you will be reporting information for all foul situations and other concerns the crew may have. Ask the head coach to identify the team's get-back coach. Introduce yourself to the get-back coach and solicit the coach's assistance in keeping the 6-foot coaches box clear of players, attendants, and excess coaches.

- **Line Judge:** Meet with the timer as you enter the field. Synchronize watches and/or confirm the countdown clock is correct. Instruct the timer on the duties described in Section 8-2, *Instructions to Clock Operator/Timer*. Some key points include:
 - If there is less than 60 seconds left on the pregame countdown clock when the officials break to take their positions for the opening kickoff, reset the clock to 12 minutes.
 - Start the halftime clock on the Referee's signal.
 - Do not set the clock to time the three-minute warm up period at the end of the halftime intermission. (Back Judge will time this period.)
 - Do not set the clock to time the three-minute intermission between the end of regulation and overtime. (Back Judge will time this period.)

Ask coaches or game management to help designate a responsible (at least 12-years old) ball person. (If a coach insists on using a younger ball person, let the person serve as an assistant and get an older person to be the designated the ball person.) Instruct the ball person(s) on their duties as described in Section 8-1, *Instructions to Ball Person*. Some key points include:

- Work on the Line Judge's side of the field.
- Do not enter the field.
- Provide ball to Line Judge or Back Judge upon request.

Introduce yourself to the head coach on your sideline. Tell the coach you will be reporting information for all foul situations and other concerns the crew may have. Ask the head coach to identify the team's get-back coach. Introduce yourself to the get-back coach and solicit the coach's assistance in keeping the 6-foot coaches box clear of players, attendants, and excess coaches.

- **Back Judge:** Check the sideline on the press box side. Move yard-line markers 6-feet off the sideline. Check the end line farther away from where the officials entered the field. Ensure hash mark pylons are placed 3-feet beyond the end line and in line with the inside edges of the hash marks. Ensure the goal post pads are secured and the goal posts are free of decoration.

Take responsibility for and approve the game balls received from the Umpire. Meet with Line Judge to give instructions to the ball person.

Check with game management about pregame activities and length of halftime. Instruct the administrator or band director to complete all pregame activities including introduction of players and the playing of the National Anthem five-minutes before the scheduled game time.

When on-field pregame duties are completed, the officials and line-to-gain crew should gather on the sideline opposite the press box and at the 20-yard line farthest from the entrance to the field. Stay away from coaches and players, but continue to observe both teams. Line up in a single row with heels on the sideline and hats over the heart for the presentation of the flag and the playing of the National Anthem. When the pregame ceremonies are completed, the Back Judge and Linesman will move toward the 50-yard line on the Linesman's side of the field to meet their captains and prepare for the coin toss. The Line Judge, Umpire, and Referee will cross the field to the press box sideline and move toward the 50-yard line to meet their captains and prepare for the coin toss.

4.4 COIN TOSS

There are three game situations related to the coin toss procedure. The first situation is the coin toss procedure that occurs before the game. The second situation occurs prior to the start of the second half of the game when captains must choose options based on the result of the pregame toss. The third situation occurs prior to the start of overtime.

4.4.1 Pregame Coin Toss

The coin toss should be administered at the middle of the field, three minutes before the scheduled game time. If the field is not cleared at the three-minute mark, hold the toss at an available spot such as an end zone. (Penalize the home team for delay of game on the kickoff for not having the field cleared in time.)

- **Line Judge and Umpire:** With five minutes on the countdown clock, get your captains lined up on the 50-yard line on your respective sidelines. The Line Judge should have possession of an approved game ball for each team. The Line Judge will have the speaking captain next to him and introduce the speaking captain. At the Referee's signal with three minutes remaining in the countdown, escort your captains to the center of the field and have them stand with their backs to their own sidelines. Introduce the speaking captains to the Referee. Take a position on the 45-yard line nearest the scoreboard with your back to the board. Record the results of the toss.
- **Back Judge and Linesman:** The Back Judge will have the speaking captain next to him and introduce the speaking captain. The Linesman & Back Judge joins the Line Judge on the 45-yard line nearest the scoreboard.
- **Umpire:** Move to a position at the end of the captains and facing the Referee. Confirm the captains call of the coin prior to the toss. Notify the Referee of any errors in administering the toss, such as awarding the wrong team an option. Record the results of the toss.
- **Referee:** With 3:30 remaining in the pregame countdown, walk to the center of field facing the scoreboard. With three minutes remaining, signal the officials on the sidelines to escort their captains to midfield. Acknowledge the introductions of the speaking captains and ask the captains to introduce themselves to each other. *(Do not introduce the officials to the captains.)* Acknowledge the leadership roles of the captains and ask for their support in communicating with teammates and promoting sportsmanship. *(Do not use the coin toss as an opportunity to tell the captains how the game will be officiated, nor to engage in light hearted or joking conversations with the captains.)*

Show both sides of the coin to each speaking captain, identifying which side is heads and which is tails. Tell the captains that you will toss the coin and catch it; and if you drop it you will toss it again. Ask the visiting team to call the coin before you toss it. Confirm that the opposing team and the Umpire have heard the same call. Toss the coin and catch it. Offer the winner of the toss the choice of options to defer, receive, or defend a goal. (As a preventive measure, the option for kick is not included in the list of

options because that choice usually gets the captain in trouble. If the captain wants to kick, that option is still available.)

- If the winning captain defers, immediately turn and face the press box; tap the shoulder of the captain; and give the deferred signal. Present the remaining choices (receive or defend a goal) to the other captain. (RECOMMEND: To simplify this process, the Referee should tell the captain, “I assume you want the ball.”)
- If the winning captain selects an option other than defer, withhold any signals to the press box until all choices have been made.

When all the choices have been made, ask the captains to put their backs to the goal lines their teams will defend and then give the final signals.

- If the first choice was to receive, tap the shoulder of the selecting captain and give the receive signal.
- If the first choice was to defend a goal, tap the shoulder of the selecting captain and point both arms toward the goal line being defended. Then tap the shoulder of the other captain and give the appropriate kick or receive signal as selected by that captain.

Ask the captains to shake hands and bring their teams out for the kickoff.

- **All Officials:** Meet with the Referee on the 50-yard line to confirm and record the results of the toss on their game cards. Line Judge gives the kicking team’s ball to the Back Judge. On the Referee’s signal break the midfield huddle and jog to your respective positions for the kickoff. Line Judge gives the receiving team’s ball to the ball person.

4.4.2 Second Half Options

Most of the coin toss procedure described in previous section is repeated before the second half. Some of the key differences are listed below.

- **Line Judge and Back Judge:** Get the captains lined up on the sidelines with about two minutes left in the halftime intermission or earlier if both teams are ready. On the Referee’s signal escort the captains to the center of the field. Do not introduce the captains to the Referee.
- **Referee:** With 30 seconds left in the halftime intermission (or earlier if both teams are ready), walk to the center of the field. At the end of intermission (or sooner), motion the officials to bring the captains to the center of the field. Make a brief statement to the captains about any issues you would like to bring to their attention or for which you need their assistance, for example rough play or sportsmanship. Acknowledge who won the pregame coin toss and who has the second half choice (i.e., the deferring captain or the loser of the pregame toss). Ask the captain to choose between receiving or defending a goal. Align the captains with their backs to the goals their teams will defend and give the appropriate signals to the press box.

4.4.3 Overtime Coin Toss

The overtime coin toss will be conducted immediately following the completion of a three-minute intermission between the end of the fourth period of the game and the first period of overtime. See Chapter 6 for a full description of overtime mechanics including the coin toss

5 MECHANICS FOR FIVE OFFICIALS

This chapter provides mechanics for free kicks, plays from scrimmage, punts, and scoring kicks for a crew of five officials.

5.1 FREE KICKS

There are three types of free kicks: (1) kickoff, (2) free kick following a safety, and (3) an optional free kick that may occur after a fair catch or an awarded fair catch. An onside kick is a short free kick that can be used on any free kick down, but which is used almost exclusively as a variation to the regular kickoff.

5.1.1 Kickoffs

The kickoff is used to put the ball in play to start each half of a game, and following touchdowns and successful field goal attempts. Initial positions of the officials for a regular kickoff are listed described below.

- **Referee:** Your initial position will be at the receiver's goal line and on the sideline opposite the press box.
- **Umpire:** On receiving team's 20-yard line outside sideline on the press box side of the field. **Linesman:** Out of bounds on the receiving team's free kick line (usually the 50-yard line) on the sideline opposite the press box.
- **Line Judge:** Out of bounds on the kicking team's free kick line (usually the 40-yard line) on the press box sideline.
- **Back Judge:** On the kicking team's free kick line and next to the spot where the kicker wants to place the ball for the kick.

Key responsibilities before the free kick:

- **All Officials:** Carry a beanbag in your hand. Count players. (Referee, Line Judge and Linesman count receivers. Back Judge and Umpire count kickers.) Mentally review the rules pertaining to free kicks (e.g., starting the clock, first touching, fair catch, kick catch interference, illegal blocks, and kick out of bounds). Watch for the Back Judge to give the ready signal (an open hand extended straight into the air, i.e., same as dead-ball signal) indicating that the kicking team is ready to play. Confirm that you and your team are ready by repeating the Back Judge's signal. Hold the signal until the Referee acknowledges it or marks the ball ready for play.
- **Referee:** Acknowledge the ready signals from the other officials. Blow the whistle while giving the ready-for-play signal. (If desired, you can extend both arms toward the kicker with palms up and slowly draw the forearms back to the body to signal the kicker to kick the ball.) *No other signals should be given.*
- **Umpire:** Help the Umpire to clean up the sideline, paying special attention to people who are outside the team box and on the sideline in the area of the receivers.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Monitor the intermission activities near the team box. Direct your team to take the field when the Back Judge walks to the middle of the field indicating there are only 15 seconds remaining in the 60-second intermission after a try

or successful field goal. Clear your sideline, making sure that substitutes, coaches, and other individuals are in their proper locations. Watch for encroachment of your free kick line. Encroachment is a dead ball foul. Throw your flag high into the air and blow the whistle aggressively to immediately stop the play.

- **Back Judge:** Following a try or successful field goal, time the 60-second intermission. Take the ball up the hash marks nearest the scoring team's sideline. Stop at the kicker's free kick line until 15 seconds remain in the intermission. Move to the middle of the field on the free kick line indicating the intermission is about to end and the teams should be taking their positions for the kickoff. Administer any penalties that are to be marked off from the kicking team's free kick line. Hand the ball to the kicker; point out the Referee; and instruct the kicker to wait until the Referee blows the whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal before kicking the ball. Move to a position near the kicker that allows you to prevent the kicker from kicking the ball before the Referee marks the ball ready for play. **Prior to giving the ready signal when the kicker and kicking team are set, verify that at least 4 K players must be on each side of the kicker until the ball is kicked. Verify no K players, with the exception of the kicker, may be more than 5 yards behind the kicking team's free-kick line.** (Do not let play start without eleven kicking team players.) Start the 25-second count on the Referee's whistle and move aside to let the kicker approach the ball.

As the kicker approaches the ball, all officials should think about the possibility of an intentional or unintentional short kick. Because a short free kick is a relatively infrequent event, officials can easily get caught off guard if they are not mentally prepared to make calls concerning first touching, fair catch interference, recovery by the kicking team, or kicks out of bounds. Think short kick first no matter what the situation is, including the opening kickoff of the game. After the kick:

- **All Officials:** The covering official should
 - Give the start-the-clock signal when the ball is touched by
 - Any receiving team player anywhere on the field (whether the touching is legal or illegal).
 - A kicking team player after the ball has gone ten yards and touched the ground (in any order).
 - Do not start the clock if the ball is
 - Illegally touched (first touching) by a kicking team player.
 - Caught or recovered by a player who is legally down.
 - Fair caught by a receiving team player.
 - Caught (in flight) by a kicking team player, i.e., kick catch interference.
 - Watch action around the catch or recovery if the kick goes into your coverage area. Pick up and cover the runner until the play ends or the runner moves into the coverage area of another official.
 - Watch for the legality of blocks and for possible fouls away from the ball if the kick goes into the coverage area of another official. Be prepared to take over a runner that comes into your area.
 - Blow the whistle; give the stop-the-clock signal; and mark the runner's forward progress spot when the ball becomes dead in your area.

- Throw the flag high in the air and go to the spot where the ball crossed the sideline to mark the spot if the ball goes out of bounds without being touched by the receivers.
- Be alert for a player going out of bounds voluntarily (beanbag) and returning to the field of play (penalty flag).
- Be alert for fair catch, kick catch interference, reverses, forward handoffs, backward passes (including cross-field passes), and illegal blocks.
- **Back Judge:** When the ball is kicked, know whether the ball was kicked into the air or directly into the ground. Watch for illegal contact on the kicker. Key on the blocks made by the middle player(s) on the receiving team's front line. After the ball has gone downfield, move deliberately in that direction while focusing on the action around your key players and watching for fouls away from the ball. Be alert for fair catch signals made by the up-backs on the receiving team. Maintain your position toward the middle of the field and be prepared to cover the runner on a long return. If the kick goes out of bounds in flight, help the sideline officials mark the spot using the kick out-of-bounds mechanics described in the Section 5.6, *Punts*.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Be alert for first touching of the kick by the kicking team. Mark the spot with a beanbag. Key on the two widest receiving team players on your side of the field. If the ball has gone downfield, move deliberately in that direction for about 25 yards, while focusing on the action around your key players. You are the guardians of your sidelines throughout any kickoff return, so stay wide. Cover the runner who enters your area of coverage. Maintain your positioning to be able to cover your sideline at all times. If a kick goes out of bounds without being touched by a member of the receiving team, ask the receiving team's head coach and/or captain if they want the ball on the hash mark at the out-of-bounds spot; at the hash mark 25-yards beyond the kicker's free kick line; or have the kicking team re-kick the ball after a 5-yard penalty from their free kick line.
- **Umpire:** Maintain a position to observe the play in front of the deep receivers. Look for fair catch signals, kick catch interference, muffs and fumbles. If the ball goes into your area, follow the runner until another official takes over the coverage.

Be alert for deep kicks that threaten the goal line pylon on your sideline. Retreat to the pylon to determine if the kick goes out of bounds short of or beyond the goal line, or remains in the field of play. If in doubt the ball has penetrated the goal line resulting in a touchback. Give the touchback signal. This is the only time you should give the touchback signal.

- If the ball is out of bounds short of the goal line and was touched by a receiving team player, mark the spot. The receiving team will put the ball in play from the hash mark at the out-of-bounds spot.
- If the ball is out of bounds short of the goal line and un-touched by a receiving team player, throw the flag and mark the spot. The receiving team will have the choice of options to take the ball on the hash mark at the out-of-bounds spot; take the ball and the hash mark 25 yards beyond the kicker's free kick line; or have the kicking team re-kick the ball after a 5-yard penalty from their free kick line.

Any time a kick goes out of bounds un-touched by the receiving team, take the ball to the most advantageous spot (either the spot where the ball went out of bounds, or 25 yards beyond the kicker's free kick line) and place it on the hash mark nearest to the sideline where the ball went out of bounds. If the coach of the receiving team opts to have the ball re-kicked after a 5-yard penalty, pick up the ball and relay it to the Back Judge to administer the penalty.

- **Referee:** If the ball is kicked toward the middle of the field or toward your sideline, pick up and follow the runner until another official takes over coverage. If the ball is kicked out of bound in your area untouched by the receivers, throw your flag and mark the spot. Stay on the spot until the Linesman covers it. Then go to a clear spot on the field and signal the penalty. If the ball is kicked deep, retreat to the goal line to rule on a touchback or to mark the spot inside the 5-yard line with a beanbag where the ball is recovered or caught and momentum takes the runner into the end zone. You are solely responsible for the entire goal line from one sideline to the other. You should be the only official on a kickoff who rules on momentum situations and touchbacks (other than when the Line Judge rules on a kick that threatens the goal line pylon on the press box sideline).

5.1.2 Onside Kick

The onside kick is a planned intentional short free kick that may be used by the kicking team in an attempt to recover the ball after it has touched the ground and gone beyond the receiver's free kick line (in any order). The onside kick is usually attempted late in the game when the kicking team is behind in the score and needs to immediately regain possession of the ball. However, teams may try an onside kick as a surprise play at any time in the game. Officials must think about the possibility of a short free kick on every kickoff. When game situations indicate the possibility of an onside kick, the Referee will notify the crew to adjust their kickoff positions as follows.

- **Referee:** In the middle of the field about ten yards behind the deepest receiver(s). Be alert for a long kick that may threaten the goal line.
- **Umpire:** Out of bounds on the receiving team's free kick line (usually the 50-yard line) on the press box sideline.
- **Linesman:** Same as regular kickoff, i.e., out of bounds on the receiving team's free kick line on the sideline opposite the press box.
- **Line Judge:** Same as regular kickoff, i.e., out of bounds on the kicking team's free kick line on the press box sideline.
- **Back Judge:** On the kicking team's free kick line and next to the spot where the kicker wants to place the ball for the kick.

Officials shall not give any kind of signal to designate that a short kick is anticipated, even if they have definite knowledge that an onside kick will be attempted. Such signals are not authorized for SNOA use for two reasons: (1) the signals can often tip-off the opposing team that an onside kick is imminent and (2) officials should be thinking "short free kick" on every kickoff and should not be surprised when it happens. (RECOMMEND: Referee should consider going to

onside kick mechanics whenever a kickoff is made from a spot inside the receiving team's 50-yard line.)

The officials' have the same key responsibilities before an onside kick as they do for a regular kickoff (e.g., carry a beanbag, count players, and indicate readiness). If an onside kick is anticipated, it is very important to move all non-player personnel back away from the sidelines to give you an unimpeded path to cover the play.

If the kick is short, the four officials positioned on the two free kick restraining lines will have a lot of action and players to cover. Officials must be prepared with a thorough knowledge of the applicable rules to effectively and confidently handle the situations that can arise during a short free kick.

- **Line Judge, Back Judge, Linesman, and Umpire:** Ensure no players break their respective restraining lines before the ball is kicked. If a player encroaches into the neutral zone, blow the whistle; toss the flag high into the air; and come onto the field to stop the play. Know whether the ball was kicked into the air or directly into the ground. Know if the kick broke the plane of the receiving team's restraining line. Be alert for first touching by the kicking team; touching of the kick by the receivers; illegal blocks below the waist or in the back by either team; fair catch signals or kick catch interference, and kicks out of bounds. Give the start-the-clock signal as appropriate. Be responsible for the players in your area and be ready to cover a runner as required.
- **Referee:** Watch players away from the ball. Slowly converge on the play as necessary.

If the kick is long, the Referee, Umpire and Back Judge will have to hustle to get into position to effectively cover the kick.

- **Referee:** Retreat toward the goal line. You are responsible for the entire goal line including both goal line pylons because it is doubtful that the Umpire will be able to get to the pylon in time to help. If in doubt, declare the ball broke the plane of the goal line resulting in a touchback. After getting into position, use regular kickoff mechanics.
- **Umpire:** Sprint down your sideline to get as close to the deep receivers as you can. If possible, help the Referee with kicks that threaten your pylon. Once in position, use regular kickoff mechanics.
- **Back Judge:** After the kick has cleared the neutral zone, move quickly toward the middle of the field near the 50-yard line and implement regular kickoff mechanics.
- **Line Judge and Linesman:** Use regular kickoff mechanics.

5.1.3 Free Kick after Safety

A free kick is used to put the ball in play following a safety. This is the only time a punt can be used as a free kick. The officials will take the same relative positions as for a regular kickoff, but at the respective free kick lines used following a safety. The officials will execute all duties and responsibilities prescribed for a regular kickoff. **REMINDER:** All kickoff rules apply to a free kick following a safety even if the ball is punted. These rules include the right of the kicking team to recover and possess the ball under certain conditions and the penalty options for kicks that go out of bounds untouched by a receiving team player.

5.1.4 Free Kick after Fair Catch or Awarded Fair Catch

A free kick may be selected by the offensive team as the means for putting the ball in play following a fair catch or an awarded fair catch. The use of a free kick in this situation is a very rare event. The kick must be a place kick; a punt is not allowed. This is the only time a free kick may be used to score a field goal. Some additional mechanics are needed to prepare for this kick.

- **Referee:** Take a position on the receiving team's end line near the upright opposite the press box. After acknowledging that all officials and both teams are ready, blow the whistle while giving the ready-for-play signal. Move quickly to a position behind the upright to determine whether the field goal attempt is good. You are responsible for the crossbar and to blow the whistle when the ball becomes dead in or beyond the end zone.
- **Umpire:** Take a position behind the receiving team's upright nearest the press box to determine whether the field goal attempt is good.
- **Linesman:** Move the line to gain equipment to the spot of the fair catch. Set the box and chain stakes like any first down. The box identifies the kicking team's free kick line. The stake at the line to gain spot marks the free kick line for the receiving team. After setting the chain, help align the receiving team behind their free kick line. Take the same relative sideline position as for a regular kickoff and follow all mechanics for a regular kickoff.
- **Line Judge:** Help align the kicking team behind their free kick line. Take the same relative sideline position as for a regular kickoff and follow all mechanics for a regular kickoff.
- **Back Judge:** There is no one-minute intermission between the fair catch and the free kick down. Hand the ball to the kicker who may place the ball anywhere along the free kick line and between the hash marks. Instruct the kicker to wait until the Referee marks the ball ready for play before kicking the ball. Follow all the mechanics for a regular kickoff.

The officials will execute all duties and responsibilities prescribed for a regular kickoff, except the Referee and **Umpire** will remain at the uprights if the kick approaches the end zone. If the kick is short of the goal line, the Referee and **Umpire** will move quickly toward their regular kickoff positions to cover players and activities on the field. REMINDER: All kickoff rules apply to a free kick following a fair catch or awarded fair catch even if the kick is a field goal attempt. These rules include the right of the kicking team to recover and possess the ball under certain conditions and the penalty options for kicks that go out of bounds untouched by a receiving team player.

5.2 SCRIMMAGE PLAYS – GENERAL

5.2.1 General Duties after Every Play

At the completion of the previous down, the officials will spot the ball, arrange the line to gain equipment, and take their basic positions for the next down.

- **All Officials:** Ensure the ball is placed at the correct spot. Confirm the down and yards to gain for a first down. Give the double stakes signal if there are more than 10-yards to go to gain. If the clock was stopped, the Line Judge, Umpire, and Back Judge should confirm with the Referee whether the clock should start on the read-for-play signal or on the snap. (Use the “Clock Status” signals described in Section 3.2, *Approved Supplemental Signals*.)
- **Linesman:** Do not signal for the down box to move until the Referee designates the number of the next down. Do not turn your back on the field of play while the down box is moved. Ensure the box displays the correct number for the next down. Use the proper mechanics to move the down box and chain if the play ends with a first down for either team
- **Referee:** Announce the new down number to the Linesman and allow time for the Linesman to move the box or chain as needed. Take about three seconds before marking the ball ready for play. Ensure the players and officials are ready. Announce the down and distance to a first down. Blow the whistle while giving the ready-for play or start-the-clock signal as appropriate.
- **Back Judge:** Start the 25-second clock when the Referee marks the ball ready for play.

5.2.2 General Positions for Scrimmage Plays

The general positions for the officials on scrimmage plays are described below. Some adjustments to these positions will be required for punts, field goal attempts, and kick tries as described in separate sections of this chapter.

- **Referee:** Always work on the passing-arm side of the quarterback, approximately twelve yards behind the offensive line of scrimmage and three to four yards deeper than the deepest back. Be at least as wide as the tight end and be able to see the ball, the backs, and the offensive tackle on the opposite side.
- **Umpire:** Stand over the ball until the Referee marks the ball ready for play. Move five to seven yards behind the defensive line of scrimmage and between the defensive ends. Make sure you can see the snapper and the ball. Vary your position so you do not limit the movement or vision of the linebackers or defensive backs.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Straddle the line of scrimmage on or just outside your respective sidelines. (*SNOA officials will not use “off-mechanics.” The wing officials will not line up on the sideline in the defensive team’s backfield.*) On some short yardage situations when the offense lines up in a tight formation, you may take a position closer to the formation; but never closer than the nine-yard marks (i.e., top of the numbers.) Make sure that no player lines up behind you. If the play comes to your side, retreat to the sidelines and step back into the offensive backfield to let the play

clear your position. Never get caught in the play. You are still responsible for your entire sideline

- **Back Judge:** Start approximately twenty yards beyond the defensive line of scrimmage and deeper than the deepest defender. Favor the wide side of the field. Lateral position on the field will vary depending upon the location of the snap and the formations of the teams. For example, if the ball is spotted at the hash marks, do not get any wider than the nearest upright.

5.2.3 General Keys for Covering Receivers

The following keys for covering receivers are only used to determine coverage at the initial snap. As the play develops, the Back Judge and wing officials will revert to zone-type coverage. The keys are based on the strength of the offensive team's formation which is determined by counting the number of eligible receivers positioned outside the offensive tackle on each side of the field. (Receivers located in the backfield between the tackles are not counted in determining the strength of the formation). When there is the same number of eligible receivers outside the offensive tackles on each side of the formation, the strength is declared toward the Line Judge's side. (*The strength of the formation has nothing to do with the number of linemen on either side of the snapper.*)

If a player goes in motion, the strength of the formation may change depending on the position of the player at the snap. In such situations, the Back Judge, Linesman, and Line Judge cannot determine the strength of the formation until the ball is snapped.

The key responsibilities for initial receiver coverage are allocated as follows:

- **Back Judge:** Key on the inside eligible receiver(s) on the strong side of the formation. If the formation is balanced, key on the inside eligible receiver on the Line Judge's side. If there are trips (three or more receivers outside the offensive tackle), key on the two inside eligible receivers on the strong side of the formation.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Key on the all the eligible receivers on your side of the formation other than the receiver(s) taken by the Back Judge. The wing officials are responsible for the actions of the tight end except if the tight end is the widest receiver on the strong side of the formation.

5.2.4 General Duties and Responsibilities Prior to the Snap

- **All Officials:** Call out and indicate the number of the next down by a show of fingers above the head (use a closed fist to indicate fourth down). Ensure the down box indicates the correct number of the down. If the line to gain is more than ten yards, give the "double stakes" signal (crossed wrists in front of the face). Be alert for quick passes to the flats or over the middle, and for a quick kick.
- **Referee:** Observe the huddle to ensure there are no violations of the substitution rules. Count the offensive players as they break the huddle and confirm the count with the Umpire by using the appropriate signals. Use the hand to cheek signal to indicate an unbalanced line. Identify eligible receivers in the backfield. Observe shifts and backs in

motion. Make sure the team is set for one second following the huddle or a shift. Watch for false starts or other pre-snap infractions, including head bobs and jerky motions used by the quarterback in attempt to cause the defensive team to encroach on the neutral zone. Ensure the hand to hand snap exchange with the quarterback is legal.

- **Umpire:** Note the lateral position of the ball on the field by adjusting your ball position indicator as needed. Count the offensive players as they break the huddle and confirm the count with the Referee by using the appropriate signals. Ensure the offense has five players numbered 50 through 79 on the line, except when the team is in a scrimmage kick formation. Note the numbers of the ineligible players on the line of scrimmage. Use the hand to cheek signal to indicate an unbalanced line. Note which defensive players are on the line of scrimmage and in the free blocking zone. Listen for defensive players interfering with offensive teams snap count. Observe the snapper for snap infractions (including head bobs and flinching the wrist or shoulders) and observe the guards for false starts.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Count the defensive players as the offensive team breaks the huddle. Confirm the count with the Back Judge by using the appropriate signals. Assist the Referee in monitoring substitutions. Identify the line of scrimmage by extending the foot nearest the offensive team slightly forward in line with the back end of the ball. Take final position straddling the neutral zone. Count linemen to verify there are at least seven on the line. Use the hand to cheek signal to indicate an unbalanced line. Be alert for unusual formations. Watch for false starts and encroachment.

Identify the eligible receivers on your side of the field. Make sure that a receiver on the line is not “covered up” by another wider receiver who is also on the line of scrimmage. Determine the strength of the offensive team’s formation and identify your “key” receiver(s). Use the extended arm signal to notify the opposite wing official that the widest receiver on your side is in the backfield. Hold your arm signal until the other wing official recognizes your signal by pointing at you. If after signaling, the widest receiver moves up to the line of scrimmage, the covering official should place a hand on the opposite shoulder to indicate the receiver is now on the line. If both wing officials indicate their widest receiver is in the backfield, count the number of backs. If there are five or more backs, throw a flag at the snap because the offensive team has committed a foul by either not having enough players on the line, or by having more than eleven players on the field at the snap.

Observe any player that goes in motion away from your position to ensure the motion is legal. If the player changes direction, continue to observe the motion. This assigned responsibility does not relieve the opposite official from making an obvious call, especially if the player is closer to the opposite official than to the responsible official. **REMEMBER: If the player in motion breaks abruptly toward the line of scrimmage before the snap, it is a dead ball false start penalty.** If the player is veering toward the line of scrimmage at the snap, it is a live ball illegal motion penalty. If two players are moving at the same time and only one player stops while the other continues in motion, it is a live ball illegal shift penalty.

- **Back Judge:** Count the defensive players as the offensive team breaks the huddle. Confirm the count with the Line Judge and Linesman by using the appropriate signals. Determine the strength of the offensive team’s formation and identify your “key” receiver(s). Call delay of game penalty if the offense does not snap the ball within 25 seconds after the Referee marks the ball ready for play.

5.2.5 General Duties and Responsibilities after the Snap

- **Referee:** Key on the opposite side offensive tackle to read possible pass or run play. Be alert for a muffed snap or fumble by a runner. Cover the runner and blocks behind the offensive line of scrimmage. Move behind the play in the direction the play is going. Stay wide and deep to avoid hindering a reverse or delayed play.
- **Umpire:** Key on the center and guards to read possible run or pass play. Be alert for quick passes over the middle. Watch for illegal contact on the snapper. Check for illegal use of hands or arms or other fouls near the neutral zone and pay particular attention to the free-blocking zone restrictions.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Watch for illegal actions by or against your key receivers. Be alert for quick passes toward your side of the field. Watch initial line charge of lineman, especially the tight end, on your side of the snapper. Check for illegal crack back blocks. Cover your entire sideline from end line to end line. Watch for players going out of bounds voluntarily (beanbag) and returning to the field of play (flag).
- **Back Judge:** Watch for illegal actions between your key receivers and defenders. Check for illegal crack-back blocks. Cover players who are deeper than the Linesman or Line Judge. Stay far enough away to keep the play boxed in. Maintain inside-out coverage. On out-of-bounds plays, especially in the team areas, move into the area of the dead ball and assist officials in maintaining order and keeping opponents separated. Responsible for the defensive team’s end line on every play and for the defensive goal line on most plays except when goal line mechanics are invoked.

On break-away runs, the covering official shall not give the touchdown signal until the official has stopped on the goal line. Only the covering official who actually sees the ball in possession of a runner break the goal line plane should signal a touchdown. Other officials should not mirror the covering official’s touchdown signal, but should give the stop-the-clock signal. After ensuring there are no fouls on the play, the Referee will turn to the press box and give the confirming touchdown signal.

The covering official is primarily responsible for potential acts of unsportsmanlike conduct (e.g., taunting, baiting, or excessive celebration) by a player who makes a great play or scores a touchdown or safety. The other officials should observe other players and encourage them to keep their celebration short. On typical touchdown plays from scrimmage, the Back Judge will be responsible for the scoring player.

5.3 SCRIMMAGE PLAYS – RUNS

This section describes specific mechanics for officiating run plays from scrimmage that are additions to the general mechanics described for all plays from scrimmage.

5.3.1 Runs up the Middle

- **Referee:** Observe the handoff or pitchout. Watch for illegal contacts on the quarterback after the ball has been released. Move to follow the play focusing on the ball, the runner and the blocks around the runner until the runner crosses the neutral zone. Move slowly downfield and observe action in your area behind the runner.
- **Umpire:** Observe the line blocking to find the point of attack. When the hole opens, move away from it to avoid interfering with the runner or the defensive pursuit. Cover action at the point of attack and then. Generally, do not blow the whistle or mark forward progress if the ball becomes dead between the hash marks near your position. If the runner continues downfield, turn and move downfield to observe players in your area behind the runner.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Move downfield and observe action around the runner. Square off to mark the spot of forward progress. Be positive of the ball location before sounding the whistle. If the runner is tackled for a loss, move into the backfield; square off and mark the spot of forward progress to help the Referee.
- **Back Judge:** Watch downfield activities of receivers, offensive blockers, and defensive backs. If the run ends after a short gain or a loss of yardage, move toward the line of scrimmage and observe the actions of players especially those away from the pile. When the runner breaks loose watch blocking in front of the runner. If the run continues for more than 15 yards downfield, take over coverage of the runner. Square off to mark the spot of forward progress.

5.3.2 Runs toward the Sideline

- **Referee:** Observe the handoff or pitch. Determine if the pitch is backward or forward. *Do not give any signal to indicate the pitch is backward.* Watch for illegal contact on the quarterback after the handoff or pitch. Move with the flow of the play. Advance into the side zone whenever possible to assist other officials covering the play. Observe the runner and action around the runner until the player turns and crosses the neutral zone. Move slowly downfield and clean up after the play. On runs that end out of bounds, especially in a team area, move quickly into the area of the dead ball and assist officials to maintain order. Escort players back onto the field.
- **Umpire:** Watch action at the point of attack. Pick up near side Tackle as they come into your view. Flow with the play, watching action in front of the runner. Be alert for illegal blocking / personal foul action from the inside out. Be alert for a reverse or counter play. When the play ends in a side zone, move outside the hash marks and toward the sideline to clean up behind the play. If necessary, get the ball back to the hash mark and set it at the progress spot. *Do not automatically halt at the hash marks and wait for the other officials to get you the ball.*

- **Linesman and Line Judge:** The duties and responsibilities differ whether the play is flowing toward or away from the official.
 - On a sweep play toward you – observe blocks and action in front of the runner until the runner enters into your area. Be especially alert for crack back blocks at the point of attack. Move down field with the runner watching action around the runner. Release coverage of the runner to the Back Judge about 15 yards downfield. Continue following the play down the sideline watching action behind the runner and ensuring the runner does not step out of bounds. Square off and mark the spot of forward progress. If the Back Judge already has the spot, mirror the spot on you sideline.
 - On a sweep play away from you – move slowly toward the play and observe action of players not involved in the flow of the play, especially action on linebackers and backside pursuit. Be alert for a reverse, counter, or cutback toward your side. Move slowly downfield and clean up after the play. Square off to mirror spot of forward progress as required.
 - On a down-the-line option play toward you – observe the player in position to receive the pitch. Be alert for a loose ball. Determine if the pitch is a backward or forward pass and if the pitch was made behind or beyond the neutral zone.
 - If the player catches or recovers a backward pitch, the player may advance the ball. Cover the runner like a sweep play.
 - If the player catches a forward pitch made from in or behind the neutral zone, the player may advance the ball. Cover the play like a sweep play.
 - If the player catches a forward pitch made from beyond the neutral zone, throw the flag for an illegal forward pass and let the play continue. Cover the runner like a sweep play.
 - If a forward pitch touches the ground any where in the field of play, it is an incomplete pass. Blow the whistle and give the incomplete pass signal.
 - If an incomplete forward pitch is made from beyond the neutral zone, throw the flag for an illegal pass and then blow the whistle and signal incomplete.
 - On a down-the-line option play away from you – cover the play like a sweep play except don't move downfield until the runner turns up and crosses the neutral zone. Pay close attention to blocks on the linebackers and pursuit players. Help the Referee to cover the quarterback after the ball has been pitched.
- **Back Judge:** Observe action between your key receiver(s) and defenders. Read run and move toward the flow of the play while maintaining an inside-out position that is behind the deepest player. Watch for action in front of the runner until the runner enters your area and then take over coverage of the runner. Square off to mark the spot of forward progress. If the run ends in the side zone mark the progress spot from the hash marks. If the run end outside the numbers, go the top of the numbers to mark progress. On runs that end out of bounds, especially in a team area, move quickly into the area of the dead ball and assist officials to maintain order. Escort players back onto the field.

5.4 SCIMAGE PLAYS – PASSES

This section describes specific mechanics for officiating pass plays from scrimmage that are additions to the general mechanics described for all plays from scrimmage.

- **All Officials:** Be alert for illegal passes. Observe touching of the pass by a defensive player and give the tipped ball signal. Observe touching or catching of the pass by an ineligible player. REMEMBER: An overthrown screen pass that crosses the neutral zone may lead to ineligibles downfield or offensive pass interference if the ineligibles are blocking beyond the neutral zone. Watch for contact between the receivers and defenders beyond the neutral zone before and after the pass is thrown. REMEMBER: Face guarding is pass interference even if there is no contact. Watch for pick plays by the receivers. Only the covering official should give the incomplete pass signal; the other officials should give the stop-the-clock signal.
- **Referee:** Observe blocks by the opposite tackle and backs as the passer retreats. (Make sure they are above the waist.) Remain wide and deeper (10 to 12 yards) than the passer. Determine whether the pass is forward or backward. Do not give any signal to indicate a pass is backward. (When in doubt, the pass is forward.) After ball is released, continue to observe the passer not the ball. Verbally alert the defenders that the pass has been thrown, e.g., “the ball is gone.” Penalize illegal contact with the passer. Continue to observe action behind the neutral zone before leaving the area.
 - Determine if a loose ball is a pass or fumble. If it is a pass that touches the ground, immediately blow the whistle and give the incomplete pass signal.
 - Rule on intentional grounding. You are solely responsible for calling intentional grounding, but you may get assistance from the covering official who might ask or tell you if there was an eligible receiver in the area.
 - Watch for the pass to be tipped by the defense (give tip signal) or illegally touched or caught by an ineligible offensive player behind the line of scrimmage (flag).
 - Determine whether the passer was beyond the line of scrimmage when the pass was thrown by going to the spot of the pass and observing the location of the passer’s feet. When in doubt the pass was legal. The Umpire or wing official may be able to help on this determination.
- **Umpire:** Be alert for a draw or delayed handoff. When you read pass, step toward the line of scrimmage. Be alert for receivers crossing your zone. Be alert for quick passes over the middle. Observe players in and just behind the neutral zone. Know where a forward pass touches anything in or behind the neutral zone. If the ball is touched by a defensive player give the tipped ball signal. Rule on whether an ineligible is illegally downfield. Be alert for ineligibles downfield when an attempted screen pass is overthrown beyond the neutral zone. On short low passes over the middle, pivot to help determine if a receiver facing you has caught or trapped the ball. If the pass is high or long, turn more slowly than on quick hit pass plays. Give your keys a second look for personal foul action. Once turned, be alert to action to the inside and behind the receiver / runner. Move up field with your head on a swivel, working dead ball mechanics to the new dead ball spot. Begin pre-snap mechanics. If necessary help determine if the passer was beyond the line when the ball was thrown.

- **Linesman and Line Judge:** No wing official will line up in an “off” position, i.e., beyond the line of scrimmage and in the defensive backfield. (On fourth and long or in a two-minute drill the Referee may direct the Line Judge to release from the line when the ball is snapped.) Identify your key receivers. Be alert for wide receivers covering another eligible receiver on the line of scrimmage, thus making the inside receiver an ineligible player. Watch initial contact between your receivers and defenders including the tight end. Remain on the line of scrimmage until the pass is thrown. Know whether the pass was thrown from behind or beyond the neutral zone. (When in doubt, it was behind.) Know whether the pass crossed the neutral zone. Check for ineligible downfield beyond the expanded neutral zone. Be alert for ineligibles downfield when an attempted screen pass is overthrown beyond the neutral zone. Watch for players going out of bounds voluntarily (beanbag) and returning to the field of play (flag). The wing officials will provide pass coverage for any pass thrown toward the middle of the field out to their sideline. Watch for pick plays, especially on short crossing patterns over the middle. On passes thrown toward the middle of the field, both wing officials may be involved in the coverage as well as the Back Judge. The pass coverage mechanics for the various passes include:

- Quick pass to the flat – Remain on the line. Rule whether the pass is forward or backward. Do not give any signal to indicate a pass is backward.
- Short pass (less than 15 yards) – Primarily your responsibility for all action associated with the receiver including blocks, pass interference, trapped passes, receiver in or out of bounds. After the pass is thrown, move downfield cautiously. Don’t get too close. Keep a good viewing angle. Short passes can often be ruled incomplete without leaving the line of scrimmage.
- Medium to long pass – After the pass is thrown, proceed quickly downfield and assist the Back Judge with action around the receiver including blocks, pass interference, trapped passes, receiver in or out of bounds.
- Pass near the sideline – Be alert to rule on pass to an airborne player near the sideline. Ensure the player returns to the ground inbounds with full control of the ball. Watch feet first and then check for control of the ball. If the receiver is not facing you, get help from the Back Judge in determining whether a catch was made. Do not give the catch signal if the catch is good. Just mark the spot and stop the clock if appropriate.

If the ball is thrown toward the other sideline, read the play and either stay near the line to help the Referee and Umpire with line play, or drift downfield to help the Back Judge with activities down field away from the ball.

- **Back Judge:** Read pass and retreat far enough to be deeper than the deepest receiver. Watch initial contact between receivers and defenders. Watch for possible pick plays. Cover the deep receivers down the middle and to each sideline. Responsible for sideline to sideline on long passes (greater than 15 yards). When the pass is in flight, move quickly toward the intended receiver and be in the best possible position to observe the play. Watch for interference by either team. If necessary help the wings to rule on airborne catches at the sideline. Be ready to rule on passes near the goal line or end line. Be alert to apply momentum rule on passes intercepted by the defensive team inside

their own 5-yard line. Mark the spot of the interception with a beanbag. **REMEMBER:**
Balls that are intercepted in the end zone remain alive and may be returned.

5.5 SCRIMMAGE PLAYS – GOAL LINE

This section describes specific mechanics for officiating run or pass plays line when the ball is snapped near the goal. These mechanics are additions to the general mechanics described for all plays from scrimmage.

5.5.1 Goal Line Mechanics

Goal line mechanics are used when the offensive team snaps the ball inside their opponent's 10-yard line. The mechanics are adjusted again if the snap is made inside the opponent's 5-yardline. These goal line mechanics are also used for try attempts made by running or passing the ball.

When the offense snaps the ball at or inside the 10-yard line near its opponent's goal, the officials will use standard run/pass mechanics except as noted below.

- **Linesman and Line Judge:** When the ball is snapped, stay even with or slightly ahead of the runner so you can be on the goal line to observe a possible scoring play when the runner gets there. (Do not trail the runner.) If the runner is threatening your goal line pylon, get to a position at least 6 feet off the sideline and straddling the goal line extended. Be alert for pick plays on passes. Watch for players going out of bounds voluntarily (beanbag) and returning to the field of play (flag). Be ready to assist the Back Judge in determining catches of passes in the corner of the end zone. If you see the receiver is out of bounds on the sideline or does not have control of the ball before going out of bounds, immediately signal the pass is incomplete. If neither you nor the Back Judge rules incomplete, make eye contact and then give the touchdown signal simultaneously with the Back Judge
- **Back Judge:** Solely responsible for the end line and primarily responsible for the goal line (with the assistance of the Linesman and Line Judge). Start on the end line favoring the wide side of the field. On running plays that threaten the goal line move forward and straddle the goal line to observe for potential score. Be alert for pick plays on passes. Watch for a receiver going out of bounds on the end line by voluntarily or accidentally stepping on or outside the end line, or touching the goal posts or the pylons in the end zone (beanbag) and then returning to the field of play (flag). On passes to the corner of the end zone, coordinate judgments about whether the pass has been caught with the covering wing official. If see the receiver is out of bounds on the end line or does not have control of the ball before going out of bounds, immediately signal the pass is incomplete. If neither you nor the wing official signals incomplete, make eye contact and then give the touchdown signal simultaneously with the wing official.

When the offense snaps the ball at or inside the 5-yard line near its opponent's goal, the officials will use the same mechanics described above, except

- **Umpire:** Never mark the progress spot near the goal line, nor give the touchdown signal. Do not give the wing officials any kind of verbal (e.g., "ball is in") or physical (e.g., two thumbs up, touch the cap) signals to help them determine if there is a score.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Solely responsible for determining whether a touchdown has been scored on a close play at the goal line. (Although the Umpire is in no position

to provide substantial information to the wings, it doesn't prevent you from asking for help. Make the request quick and quiet so that the teams cannot hear what is said. The ultimate decision is yours to make.) On the snap immediately move to a position about 6 feet out of bounds on the goal line extended. If the runner is stopped short of the goal line, work your way back up the sideline and square off to mark the forward progress spot. If the ball becomes dead very near the goal line and you do not have the spot, move toward the pile on the field of play side of the goal line. If you have the spot, sell it by pointing toward it as you come running in blowing the whistle. If you see the ball in possession of a runner break the goal line plane, hesitate a moment to ensure no one is blowing the ball dead, and then signal the touchdown while straddling the goal line or standing in the end zone. Other officials should not mirror the covering official's touchdown signal unless they also observed the ball in player possession cross the goal line plane.

When the offensive team is awarded a first down at or inside the opponent's 10-yard line, the line-to-gain crew must adjust some of its standard mechanics. The chain and stakes will not be used. They should be placed on the ground well away from the sideline. The down box will be used to indicate the down and the spot where the ball will be put into play. One of the stake holders should place a beanbag on the ground at least 3 feet behind the box and then stand over the bag. The beanbag can be used to replace the box at the correct yard line in case the box was displaced during a play or was moved prematurely. The chain person should leave the beanbag at the previous spot until the Referee marks the ball ready for next play. After the Referee's whistle the chain person should move the beanbag to the succeeding spot, 3 feet behind the box, and stand over it.

5.5.2 Covering the Swinging Gate Formation

The swinging gate formation is often used on try plays. The offense lines up with the snapper, holder, and kicker between the hash marks and the majority of the remaining players in a side zone. Because this formation presents several options for scoring, the officials must position themselves to determine the legitimacy of the formation, the legality of the unfolding action, and the result of the play that is actually run. Depending on how the defense reacts to this formation, the offense can:

- Snap the ball to the potential holder or kicker who can run or pass the ball forward or backward.
- Snap the ball to the potential holder for a kick try.
- Snap the ball (e.g., an oblique shovel snap) to a backfield player in or near the side zone who can run or pass the ball forward or backward. (REMEMBER: There is no requirement that the snap must go between the snappers legs as long as it is a "quick and continuous backward motion of the ball during which the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper.")
- Shift into a normal formation to run, pass, or kick the ball.

The officials will need to adjust their positions and some duties to effectively cover the swinging gate formation and the multiple plays that can be run from it.

- **Referee:** Take a position facing the potential holder, but a little deeper and wider than for a normal kick try so that you are out of the way of trick plays. Determine if the team is lined up in a scrimmage kick formation (i.e., potential holder 7-yards or more behind the snapper and no player “under” the snapper). If the team is in a scrimmage kick formation, give the Umpire the snapper protection signal. Determine if the snapper is an eligible receiver based on position and jersey number. Make sure the players are set for one second after taking their initial positions or after any shifts. Watch the snap and the actions of the snapper. Protect the snapper, holder, and kicker if the ball is kicked. If the ball is not kicked, follow the runner until the runner is back to the line of scrimmage. If the runner passes the ball, determine whether the pass is forward or backward. (REMEMBER: Only one legal forward pass may be thrown during a down.)
- **Umpire:** Take a position off the line of scrimmage at the hash mark nearest to the side zone where the majority of the interior linemen are positioned. Give the snapper protection signal to the Referee if the team is lined up in a scrimmage kick formation. Check for the legality of the numbers along the line of scrimmage. Identify the ineligible receivers. If the team is not lined up in a scrimmage kick formation, ensure there are at least five players numbered 50 through 79 on the line. Watch for an illegal snap. Watch the blockers in the side zone for illegal blocks since they are out of the free blocking zone. Check for ineligibles downfield.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Stay on the line of scrimmage until the offense snaps the ball or shifts to a different formation. (The wing official on the sideline opposite the side zone where the majority of the players are positioned can pinch in to the top of the numbers to cover the play.) Watch for encroachment, especially by the offense while shifting back into a normal formation. Check for eligible receivers. Know if backs are in legal positions and if receivers are covered. Check to see that all players have been set for one second and that no one is moving illegally at the snap. Watch the blockers in the side zone for illegal blocks since they are out of the free blocking zone. Help to determine if passes are forward or backward. Check for ineligibles downfield. Rule on plays at the goal line.
- **Back Judge:** Take a position (usually on the end line) between the uprights. Determine if the snapper is an eligible receiver. If the ball is kicked, rule on whether the kick is successful or not and give the appropriate signal(s). Watch for action between receivers and defenders. Check for ineligibles downfield. Rule on plays at the end line.

If the offense shifts from the swinging gate formation to a standard run/pass scrimmage formation, the Referee, Umpire, and Back Judge will shift to normal scrimmage play positions. If the ball is snapped inside the defensive team’s 10-yard line, the officials will employ goal line mechanics to cover the play.

If the offense shifts from the swinging gate formation to a normal field goal or kick try formation, the officials will have to quickly adjust their positions for normal kick coverage. The Referee will move to the normal position, looking into the holder. The Umpire will move to the normal position behind the defensive linemen. The wing official to the Referee’s back will hustle to the end line and take a position behind the upright. The Back Judge will move to cover the other upright. The opposite wing official will stay on the line of scrimmage and move into the

field of play to help the Umpire clean up the scrimmage line entanglements after the kick and to protect the kicker and holder when the Referee turns to signal the results of the play to the press box.

5.5.3 Reverse Goal Line Mechanics

When the offense puts the ball in play inside its own 3-yard line, the officials will use standard run/pass mechanics except as noted below.

- **Referee:** Responsible for the end line behind the offense. Be alert for ball becoming dead in the end zone. If the ball becomes dead in the end zone in the possession of the offensive team, give the safety signal. If the ball becomes dead in the end zone in the possession of the defensive team, give the touchdown signal.
- **Umpire:** Never give progress spot or any scoring signal associated with the goal line.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** On the snap immediately retreat to a position about 6 feet off the sideline and straddling the goal line extended to determine if the ball gets completely out of the end zone before it becomes dead. Stay on the goal line until it is no longer threatened. Pinch-in on the field of play to mark progress or look for the ball near the goal line. Pinch-in in the end zone to signal safety or a touchdown by the defensive team. (REMEMBER: If any part of the ball gets out of the end zone, consider the whole ball out of the end zone and mark the progress spot at least a foot into the field of play.) Work back toward the line of scrimmage and square off to identify the forward progress spot if the ball becomes dead in the field of play away from the goal line.

If the ball is punted from the end zone, the officials will use standard punt mechanics. However, the Referee, Umpire, Linesman, and Line Judge must be alert for a blocked punt or a broken play and may have to move to assist in covering action involving the goal line. The Referee has sole responsibility for the offensive team's end line.

5.6 SCRIMMAGE KICKS – PUNTS

This section describes mechanics for covering normal punts, punts when the ball is snapped inside the defensive team’s 35-yard line, and quick kicks.

5.6.1 Normal Punts

The initial positions for punt plays:

- **Referee:** Three to four yards in front of and seven to ten yards outside of the punter on the punter’s kicking-leg side. Be able to see the ball and observe all backs.
- **Umpire:** Set up a little deeper (approximately 8-yards deep) favoring the Line Judge’s side of the field.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Initial positions are the same as for other plays from scrimmage.
- **Back Judge:** Seven to ten yards wider than the deepest receiver on the Linesman’s side of the field. It’s acceptable to be in front of or behind the returner. Work the angle.

The primary duties and responsibilities for covering punt plays:

- **Referee:** Give the snapper protection signal to the Umpire. Be ready to move to cover an errant snap, muff, fumble or blocked kick in the offensive backfield. Be ready to rule on a recovery and to cover the advance of any player who runs with the recovered ball. Observe blocks around the kicker. When the ball has been kicked, alert defensive players by saying something such as “the ball is gone.” Watch for illegal contact with the kicker. Take a quick look to see the direction of the ball and determine if you may need to help downfield officials in spotting a ball that goes out of bounds in flight. Continue to observe action in the backfield until the players begin to go downfield for a potential return. Slowly follow the players downfield while looking for illegal blocks, personal fouls, or other infractions.

If the kick goes out of bounds in flight, the Referee will help line up the covering official by using the following signals:

- Arm pointing toward the official means move back away from the line of scrimmage.
- Arm raised above the head (same as a dead-ball signal) means move forward toward the line of scrimmage.
- Give a “chop” signal when the covering official reaches the out-of-bounds spot.

If you don’t have the spot, stand with hands at your sides while facing the covering official. The covering official will then move to the spot where the ball crossed the sideline and give a “chop” signal.

- **Umpire:** Give the snapper protection signal to the Referee. Remind the defensive players about contacting the snapper. Call out the numbers of the ineligible players on the line not numbered between 50 and 79. On the snap watch the defense for illegal contact on the snapper or for use of the pull and shoot technique. Watch the offense for chop blocks and illegal blocks below the waist because the free blocking zone will disintegrate quickly after the ball is snapped. Help determine if a short kick crossed the

neutral zone. After the players have gone past you, turn and cautiously move downfield while observing the actions of players in front of the runner.

Linesman and Line Judge: Have a bean bag in hand and another available to mark first touching and the end of the kick. Be alert for a fake kick or a broken play (e.g., bad snap, block kick). Remain on the line and observe action in front of the ball. Cover the play like any run/pass play from scrimmage.

Observe initial action on the widest players on the line. Linesman will remain on the line until the kick crosses the neutral zone, while the Line Judge will release once the ball is kicked. Know whether the ball crossed the neutral zone. After the kicked ball crosses the neutral zone, hustle downfield on the sideline. Watch for players going out of bounds voluntarily (beanbag) and returning to the field of play (flag). Observe the action of blockers and watch for touching of the ball by either team. Look for fair catch signals and kick catch interference. Cover short kicks (i.e., less than 15 yards) to your side including marking the spots of first touching, end of kick, or where the kick rolls out of bounds.

- If the ball goes out of bounds in flight sound the whistle and give the stop-the-clock signal. Move farther downfield than where the ball went out of bounds. Raise your hand (like a dead ball signal) and walk up-field until the Referee gives you a “chop” signal.
- If the Referee does not give you any type of hand signals, walk to the spot where you think the ball crossed the sideline, and give the “chop” signal.

If a runner from the receiving team breaks loose on the return watch blocks and action around the runner until the runner enters your area of coverage. Then cover the runner until the ball becomes dead (square off and mark the spot of forward progress), or the runner crosses the goal line (give touchdown signal).

- **Back Judge:** No whistle in the mouth until the ball becomes dead. Have a bean bag in hand and another available to mark first touching, momentum spot, the end of the kick, and a fumble on the runback. Remind the deep receivers about use of the fair catch signal. (Tell the receiver to keep hand(s) below the top of the helmet when attempting to shade the eyes. If the receiver gets the hand(s) above the helmet, throw the flag for an invalid fair catch signal and blow the ball dead when any receiving team player gets possession of the ball.)

Pick up the flight of the ball and immediately focus your attention on the receivers. If the kick is more than 15 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, you are responsible for kicks from sideline to sideline. Be alert for players going out of bounds voluntarily (beanbag) and returning to the field (flag). Watch for fair catch signals, illegal and legal touching of the ball, batting by the kickers, and potential momentum situations inside the 5-yard line. Blow the whistle and stop the clock if any receiver catches or recovers the ball following a valid or invalid fair catch signal by the receiver or any teammate.

- If the ball rolls out of bounds, mark the spot by standing at the top of the numbers facing the sideline.

- If the ball goes out of bounds in flight sound the whistle and give the stop-the-clock signal. Move to the sideline farther downfield than where the ball went out of bounds. Raise your hand (like a dead ball signal) and walk up-field until the Referee gives you a “chop” signal.
- If the Referee does not give you any type of hand signals, walk to the spot where you think the ball crossed the sideline, and give the “chop” signal.
- If the ball goes beyond the deepest receiver, follow the ball. The Line Judge will observe the receivers.
- If the ball threatens the goal line, take a position on the goal line to determine if the ball penetrates the goal line plane (i.e., touchback) or if the momentum rule applies to a receiver who gets possession of the kick inside the 5-yard line and carries it into the end zone.
- Only drop a beanbag to mark the end of the kick if a receiver catches or recovers the ball and runs with it.
- Only drop a beanbag to mark illegal “first touching” if a player from the kicking team is the first player to touch a kick that continues to roll after it has been touched. (There may be more than one spot of first touching, and all spots should be marked by a beanbag.)

Move with the runner who catches and advances the ball. Give up coverage to the wing officials when the runner reaches their area of coverage. Then pick up the blocks and action around the runner and clean up any activities behind the runner. When the play becomes dead inform the Referee of what happened during the play and the current status of the ball.

Some additional mechanics related to punt play coverage include:

- **All Officials:** At the end of the down, immediately notify the Referee of any penalties that were called and ensure the chains are not moved until the penalties are administered.
- **Linesman:** Do not allow the line-to-gain equipment to be moved until you receive a signal from the Referee indicating that there are no fouls or other issues that need to be resolved first. If you or the line-to-gain crew is aware of a flag, do not move the down box or chain. Notify the Referee of the presence of the flag.
- **Line Judge:** Observe action of a player who signals for a fair catch but does not catch the ball. Ensure there are no illegal blocks. If the ball goes beyond the deepest receiver, cover the receivers while the Back Judge goes with the ball.

REMEMBER:

- Any scrimmage kick that goes out of bounds (behind or beyond the line of scrimmage and regardless of the down), belongs to the receiving team.
- Contact is not required for kick catch interference.

5.6.2 Short Punt inside Opponent's 35-Yard Line

The officials will adjust their normal punt mechanics to cover a potential “coffin corner kick” when the ball is snapped from inside the opponent's 35-yard line.

- **Referee:** Must line up on the Line Judge's side of the kicker at the normal depth but wider than normal. Maintain normal responsibilities for the snap, kicker, and blocks on your side of the field. If the play breaks down, hustle to cover the Line Judge's sideline.
- **Umpire:** Maintain normal position favoring the Line Judge's side of the field and execute normal punt duties. Be alert to help cover broken plays that go toward the Line Judge's side of the field.
- **Linesman:** Maintain normal position and duties, except you are responsible for the entire line of scrimmage. Stay on the line of scrimmage until the ball has clearly gone beyond it.
- **Line Judge and Back Judge:** Signal the Referee and Linesman (with a pat on top of your head) that you are moving to positions to cover the goal line. Take a position at the goal line pylon on your sideline (Back Judge's position is at the pylon on the Linesman's side of the field). Watch the ball to determine if it goes out of bounds over, beyond, or short of the pylon.
 - If the kick goes over or beyond the pylon, it is a touchback.
 - If the kick goes out of bounds short of the pylon, give the stop-the-clock signal and move up to the spot where the kick crossed the sideline. (If the ball went out of bounds in flight, look to the Referee for help in marking the spot.) Give the first down signal for the receiving team.

Split the field in half and be responsible for the goal line and end line on your half of the field. Be prepared to rule on first touching, fair catches, kick catch interference, momentum, and returns in your half of the field.

- If the ball is short and the receiving team returns the kick in your half of the field, you are responsible for covering the runner. The other official will watch the blocks around the runner.
- The Line Judge must cover the runner all the way to the opposite goal line.
- The Back Judge will eventually turn the runner over to the Linesman and then will trail the play looking for blocks and cleaning up behind the play.

5.6.3 Quick Kicks

Quick kicks can occur on any scrimmage down, but are most likely to occur on second or third down when a team is backed-up inside their own 30-yard line. Because a quick kick is a relatively rare event, officials can easily get caught off guard. The main key for successful coverage of a quick kick is to quickly recognize the kick and to hustle to get into the positions to cover the play appropriately. Once the ball is kicked all the rules and mechanics for a punt will apply. Some additional clarifications are listed below.

- **Referee:** Cover the kicker and determine whether the kicker is afforded additional protection, or is at risk because it is not reasonably certain that a kick will be made. Pay attention to blocks around the kicker.
- **Umpire:** Be alert for low kicks across the middle. Watch for touching by either team in or near the neutral zone. After the ball has gone downfield, turn to watch action in front of any potential receivers.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** Read kick. Stay on the line until the kick is clearly beyond the neutral zone. Apply normal punt mechanics to cover the play.
- **Back Judge:** Read quick kick and pick up the flight of the ball. If the kick looks long, immediately retreat and move in the direction of the flight of the ball. In many quick kick situations the ball will clearly land beyond the normal positions of the defensive backs. Pay close attention to the actions of the defensive backs, which may not be familiar with all the rules that are pertinent for scrimmage kicks. Look for blocks below the waist and holding by the backs. Be alert for fair catch signals, first touching by the kickers, and kick catch interference.

5.6.4 Illegal Kicks

Illegal kicks include punts from beyond the neutral zone or after a change of possession. A penalty flag is thrown at the spot of the kick and the ball remains alive. From a rules perspective the ball is treated as a fumble. There can be no penalties for roughing the kicker, kick catch interference, first touching, or post-scrimmage kick enforcements. The receiving team may not be awarded a fair catch. The ball does not become dead when it crosses the goal line plane. The penalty options include a 15-yard penalty against the kicking team administered from the spot of the kick (no loss of down) or the results of the play.

Illegal kicking of the ball (e.g., kicking a ball that is laying or rolling on the ground) is handled the same as an illegal kick.

5.7 SCRIMMAGE KICKS – FIELD GOAL AND TRY ATTEMPTS

This section describes specific mechanics for officiating field goal attempts and kick tries from scrimmage that are additions to the general mechanics described for all plays from scrimmage.

5.7.1 Field Goal Attempts

Initial positions for a field goal attempt:

- **Referee:** About 1-yard to the rear and 10-yards to the side of the kicker, facing the holder and in a position to be able to see the ball, the snapper, and the holder receive the ball.
- **Umpire:** About four to seven yards deep and favoring the same side of the formation as the Referee. Maintain a good view of the ball and the snapper.
- **Linesman and Line Judge:** The wing official on the same side of the field as the Referee will take a position beyond the end line and behind the upright on your side of the field. The other wing official will assume the standard position for a scrimmage play.
- **Back Judge:** Beyond the end line and behind the upright on the side opposite the Referee.

Primary duties and responsibilities for covering a field goal attempt:

- **Referee:** Give the snapper protection signal to the Umpire. After marking the ball ready for play, give the untimed down signal. Check for illegal interlocking legs of the offensive linemen. Observe the snap and be alert for bad snaps, muffs, and fumbles. Be ready to determine if the holder's actions are legal or cause the ball to become dead. Once the kick is away, watch for fouls against the kicker and holder. Keep your attention on the kicker and holder until the action stops or the play ends. Observe the signals made by the officials covering the uprights. Repeat the successful or unsuccessful signal to the press box.

Be alert for runs or passes that may result from trick plays, muffs, fumbles, blocked kicks or other situations that could result in the kicking team or the defensive team advancing the ball. If the play comes toward you, work your way to the sideline and cover the play. If the ball goes away from you, cover the play like a regular play from scrimmage.

- **Umpire:** Give the snapper protection signal to the Referee. Check for interlocking legs of the offensive linemen. Remind defensive players to stay off the snapper. Identify numbers of players who are the exceptions to the standard numbering requirements. Observe the snap and check for illegal contact against the snapper. Carefully watch the contact along and behind the line of scrimmage. Help determine if a short kick crosses the neutral zone. Watch for runs or pass plays that may result from a trick play, mishandling of the ball, a blocked or short kick. In some situations, assist in goal line coverage if run develops to the sideline vacated by the wing official who is covering an upright.

- **Linesman or Line Judge:** One wing official will cover the line of scrimmage and the other official will cover the upright on their side of the field.
 - Covering the line of scrimmage. Cover the play using general scrimmage play mechanics. Stay on the line of scrimmage until the kick crosses the neutral zone. Then read the play and if needed, release to cover an unsuccessful kick that is still in play or to help cover the return of the kick. If not needed downfield, continue to watch the action at the line of scrimmage. Be alert for fakes or broken plays that may lead to runs or passes. Cover these situations using the general run/pass mechanics. Be alert for loose balls recovered in the backfield and advanced by either team.
 - Covering the upright. Determine if the kick passes above the crossbar and inside the upright on your side of the field. Take a step or two into the end zone in front of your upright and give the appropriate successful (touchdown) or unsuccessful (incomplete pass) signal. If the kick is wide to your side, follow the unsuccessful signal with the wide signal. Hold the signal for a few counts to allow the Referee an opportunity to see it. To avoid conflicting signals, do not verbally notify the Back Judge whether the kick is good or no good. If the kick is closer to the Back Judge's upright, let the Back Judge give the successful or unsuccessful signal. If the Back Judge rules the kick successful, move into the end zone and mirror the signal. If the Back Judge rules the kick unsuccessful, do not give any signal. In all other kick situations, such as when it is obvious the kick is good or no good, step into the end zone and hesitate a moment until the Back Judge starts to give the signal, then mirror it.

Be prepared to move to cover the play if the kick is blocked, obviously short or a fake. Move along the end line to the pylon on your side to rule on the sideline.

Next move up the sideline to a position out of bounds at the goal line extended to assist with goal line coverage.

- **Back Judge:** Responsible for the crossbar, the upright not covered by the wing official, and for blowing the whistle when the ball becomes dead. Do not blow the whistle when the kick crosses the plane of the goal line (that is an inadvertent whistle); wait until the kick becomes dead by rule. Rule on all kicks except those that threaten the wing official's upright. Take one or two steps into the end zone in front of your upright to give the appropriate successful or unsuccessful signal. If the kick is wide to your side, give the unsuccessful signal followed by the wide signal. Hold the signals for a few counts so the Referee has an opportunity to see it. If needed repeat the signal for the Referee. To avoid conflicting signals, do not verbally notify the wing official whether the kick is good or no good. If the kick is closer to the wing official's upright, let the wing official give the successful or unsuccessful signal. If the wing official rules the kick successful, move into the end zone and mirror the signal. If the wing official rules the kick unsuccessful, do not give any signal.

Be prepared to move if the kick is blocked, obviously short, or a fake. Primary responsibility is to protect the end line (especially if a pass play is possible). If a pass is not possible, move toward the goal line to determine if the kicked ball breaks the goal

line plane, to rule on possible first touching and momentum situations, and to cover possible kick receivers including fair catches and kick catch interference.

REMEMBER: An unsuccessful field goal attempt remains in play until it breaks the plane of the goal line. Once the ball is kicked, it should be treated like a punt with respect to rules coverage. It is possible to have first touching, fair catch interference, fair catch, momentum rule, touchback, etc. Following an unsuccessful field goal attempt, the ball will be put into play at the spot determined by the result of the play. The ball is never put into play by the receiving team at the spot of the snap for the field goal attempt.

REMEMBER: Any scrimmage kick that goes out of bounds (behind or beyond the line of scrimmage and regardless of the down), belongs to the receiving team.

5.7.2 Try by Scrimmage Kick

The Umpire & Back Judge will be under for all trys by kick. The ball does not remain alive if it is apparent that the kick will not score (e.g., kick is blocked, obviously short, or obviously wide); or the defensive team gains possession of the ball. In those situations, the covering official should blow the whistle and give the unsuccessful try signal.

6 OVERTIME

If a game involving two Nevada schools is tied at the end of regulation time, the NFHS overtime rules will be used to determine the winner. (If the game involves an out-of-state team, the Referee will confer with both head coaches before the game to determine if the overtime rules will apply to that game.)

6.1 INITIAL OVERTIME PERIOD

6.1.1 Intermission

If the score is tied at the end of the fourth period, the Referee will instruct both teams to return to their respective team boxes. There will be a three-minute intermission. The officials will

- **All Officials:** Meet in the center of the field at the 50-yard line to review the overtime procedure and discuss how penalties, if any, including and carry-over penalties from regulation will be assessed to start the overtime procedure. Each team shall be permitted one time-out during each overtime period. (REMEMBER: A team may not use their available time-outs until the ball has become alive.)
- **Referee:** Stay in the middle of the field to await the coin toss. If necessary meet with the head coaches in front of their respective team boxes to answer any questions about the overtime procedure.
- **Umpire:** Go to the team box on the press box sideline to gather the captains for the coin toss.
- **Linesman:** Go to your sideline and instruct the line-to-gain crew that the chain and stakes will not be used at any time during the overtime. Ask one chain crew member to assist the down box person by placing a bean bag behind the down box spot as a backup in case the box is inadvertently moved. (See the mechanics description in Section 5.5, *Scrimmage Plays – Goal Line*.) Gather the captains for the coin toss.
- **Line Judge:** Go to your sideline and check with the head coach for any questions concerning the overtime procedure. Tell the coach the number of time-outs that will be available to the team. If applicable, explain how any penalty enforcements would affect the team's choice of options. Remind the coach that any play will end whenever the defense gains possession of the ball. Get the game balls from the ball person. Join the Umpire and captains for the coin toss.
- **Back Judge:** Time the three-minute intermission. *(The clock operator will not display the three minute countdown on the scoreboard clock.)* Go to the sideline opposite the press box and check with the head coach for any questions concerning the overtime procedure. Tell the coach the number of time-outs that will be available to the team. If applicable, explain how any penalty enforcements would affect the team's choice of options. Remind the coach that any play will end whenever the defense gains possession of the ball. Join the Linesman and captains for the coin toss. Notify the Referee when the three-minute intermission expires.

6.1.2 Coin Toss

The overtime coin toss will be conducted immediately following the completion of the three-minute intermission. This is the only time the coin will be tossed during overtime. Use the pregame coin toss mechanics as described in Section 4.4, *Coin Toss*, except for the minor adjustments listed below.

- **Line Judge and Back Judge:** There is no need to introduce the captains to the Referee.
- **Referee:** There is no need to have the captains introduce themselves again. The captain winning the coin toss cannot defer, but must choose one of the following three options:
 - Offense.
 - Defense.
 - Goal to defend.

When the options have been selected, align the captains so the offensive captains are facing the goal their team will advance toward; and the defensive captains have their backs toward that same goal line. Tap the shoulder of the captain who won the toss. If the winning captain chose to go on offense, give the first down signal. If the winning captain chose to go on defense, extend two arms toward the goal the team will defend.

6.1.3 Prepare to Start Overtime Period

When the coin toss has been completed:

- **All Officials:** Meet at the 50-yard line to record the results of the toss. Line Judge will give the offensive team's ball to the Umpire. On the Referee's signal jog to complete duties and take positions for the start of the overtime period.
- **Referee:** Go to the middle of the field at the 10-yard line where the ball will be put in play. Administer any carry-over penalties. Be alert to for a request by an offensive team captain to move the ball to a different location along the line of scrimmage.
- **Umpire:** Place the ball on the midpoint of the 10-yard line. Mark off any penalty yardage as directed by the Referee. Move the ball placement as requested by the offensive team's captain and approved by the Referee. Stand over the ball until the Referee has given the ready-for-play signal.
- **Linesman:** Get your team on the field and into position to start the overtime. Line up the box operator on the yard line where the overtime will start (usually the defensive team's 10-yard line). Ensure one of the chain crew members is using the beanbag mechanics to backup the down box person. **REMEMBER:** The line to gain in overtime is always the goal line no matter what happens on any play.
- **Line Judge:** Return the unused ball to the ball person. Get your team on the field and into position to start the overtime. (The game clock is not used in overtime.)

If the ball is snapped on or inside the 10-yard line, the crew will use the goal line mechanics as described in Section 5.5, *Scrimmage Plays – Goal Line*. If the ball is snapped outside the 10-yard line, regular mechanics for scrimmage plays will be used. The regular mechanics for a field goal attempt will be used as required.

6.2 SUBSEQUENT OVERTIME PERIODS

If the score is tied at the end of any overtime period, the Referee will instruct both teams to return to their respective team boxes for a two-minute intermission timed by the Back Judge.

- **All Officials:** Meet together in the area of the field where the overtime period ended to confirm which team will have the choice of options; the number of time-outs available for each team for the next period; and the impact of any carry-over penalties.
- **Referee:** Go to the middle of the field to await the arrival of the captains for the selection of options, i.e., offense, defense, or goal to defend.
- **Umpire, Linesman, Line Judge, and Back Judge:** Notify head coach of pertinent information such as time-outs remaining, carry-over penalties, and potential options. Gather the captains for the meeting with the Referee to select options for the next period.

The Back Judge will notify the Referee when the intermission has expired. The Referee will call for the captains at the end of the intermission or sooner if both teams are ready. The mechanics will be the same as the initial overtime, except there will be no coin toss. The captain of the team that did not get the first choice of options before the previous overtime period will now choose first. (REMEMBER: The captains will have the choice of offense, defense, or goal to defend. This means that each period could be played at a different end of the field.) The Referee will give the appropriate signals toward the press box. The officials will place the ball on the appropriate yard line and get the players into position for the next period.

If the score remains tied after any subsequent overtime period, the option selection process (e.g., two-minute intermission, escort captains to midfield, and no coin toss) will be repeated. The privilege of making the first choice of options will be alternated between the teams with each overtime period.

7 POSTGAME

7.1 END OF GAME

At the end of the game the key objective is to get off the field quickly and without confrontations.

- **Referee:** Hold the ball overhead to indicate the end of the game.
- **Line Judge and Back Judge:** Return the balls to the appropriate teams. Record the total elapsed time from initial kickoff to final whistle.
- **Linesman:** Get chain clips and/or beanbag from the line-to-gain crew as required.
- **All Officials:** Hustle toward the goal line pylon nearest the exit from the field. Quickly and silently leave the field together.
 - Avoid any interactions with coaches, players, or fans.
 - Do not say anything about the game until you are well away from the field and out of hearing range.
 - Do not shake hands or congratulate each other about your performance until you are in the locker room or out of view from the coaches, players, and fans.

7.2 POSTGAME REVIEW

Once in the locker room, the officials should gather the information needed to complete any required game reports.

- Game incident reports that address major issues such as
 - Disqualification of players, coaches, or other individuals affiliated with a team.
 - Major disputes/confrontations between coaches and officials.
 - Major confrontations between players or between coaches.
 - Major injury to a player or official.
- Game site report that addresses issues such as
 - Availability of the locker room for pregame preparations.
 - Unauthorized people in the locker room area.
 - Field conditions including field markings, lighting, and potential hazards.
 - Clock and scoreboard operations and line-to-gain equipment.
 - Availability of the field to start the game on time.
 - Access to the locker room after the game.
 - Security before, during, and after the game.

After collecting the information needed to prepare the game reports, it is a good idea to review what happened during the game. The crew should discuss

- Any strange plays, rulings, or penalty enforcements.
- Sideline decorum and communications with coaches.
- Game tempo and overall game control, including sportsmanship.
- Adherence to mechanics protocols and any possible breakdowns in communications.

Ask the officials to critique their own performance and to offer suggestions for improving the performance of others. Be honest and open in these discussions. Finally, leave the locker room better than you found it.

8 INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUXILIARY CREWS

8.1 INSTRUCTIONS FOR BALL PERSON

The Line Judge has the primary responsibility for activities of the ball person(s). In most cases only one ball person will be assigned to the game. The Line Judge and Back Judge should introduce themselves to the ball person approximately 15 minutes before game time. Record the person's first name and use that name to address the ball person throughout the game. The ball person must be old enough (suggested to be at least 12-years old) to:

- Physically perform the duties.
- Keep up with the play at all times.
- Follow instructions and pay attention throughout the game.
- Stay out of the way of the sideline officials.
- Avoid possible injury when a play threatens the sideline.

(If the coach or game administrator provides a young individual to serve as the ball person, try to get an older individual to act as the primary ball person and allow the younger person act as an assistant.)

The ball person must:

- Remain impartial. The ball person cannot show any partisan reaction to the events on the field; make any remarks to players, coaches, or other persons affiliated with either team; or comment on any rulings or calls made by the officials.
- Work on the Line Judge's side of the field throughout the game.
- Start each scrimmage play approximately 6-feet off the sideline and 5-yards beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Move with the play to stay close to the Line Judge while remaining 6-feet away from the sideline.
- Stay alert for runs, passes, and kicks near the sideline and move out of the way to protect yourself.
- Provide a new ball to the officials (usually the Line Judge or Back Judge) whenever there has been a change of team possession.
 - When requesting a new ball, the official will give a verbal request to the ball person accompanied by a non-verbal signal such as clapping the hands or extending both arms forward as if catching the ball.
- Toss the ball to the requesting official with an underhanded toss.
 - Neither the ball person nor the official should use long overhand or underhand passes in exchanging the balls. The official should move close enough to the ball person to receive or throw an underhanded toss.
 - The ball persons shall not enter the field to exchange or retrieve balls. (This prevents the possibility of injury or interference with a live play.)
- Hold onto the ball at all times. Playing with the ball or tossing it into the air is not acceptable.
- Do not give the ball to any player, coach, or team personnel for any reason.
- Meet with the Line Judge five minutes before the start of the second half.

8.2 INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLOCK OPERATOR/TIMER

The Line Judge is responsible for timing the game and for game clock operations.

8.2.1 Pregame Duties

- Meet with the Line Judge in the locker room approximately 45 minutes before game time; or on the field approximately 30 minutes before game time.
- Synchronize watches with the Line Judge.
- Confirm the length of the halftime intermission, usually 15:00 minutes unless it has been
 - Extended to 20:00 minutes at the request of game administration.
 - Reduced to 10:00 minutes by mutual consent of the coaches.
- Discuss the process for the Referee to communicate with the timer.
 - Availability of head phones from the sideline to the press box.
 - Use of hand signals.
 - (A recommended technique is for the Referee to move to a position in clear view of the timer. Raise a fist in the air. Slowly signal the time you want on the clock by holding up the number fingers that correspond to the desired time. Use a fist signal to separate the finger signals. For example, to set the clock to 9:36 – show a fist; nine fingers; a fist; three fingers; a fist; and six fingers. Finger signals should be held for at least two counts. If you need to repeat the signal, drop your arm to your side and then raise the fist again and repeat the process.)
- Discuss the use of a running clock.
 - The Referee will notify the timer when the running clock rules are to be implemented.
 - The Referee will signal for an official's time-out; point to the timer; raise both hands above the head; and rotate the index fingers around each other (i.e., speed up the timing).
 - To return the game clock to normal timing, the Referee will call an official's time-out; point to the timer; extend both hands above the head; and slowly move the hands away from each other (i.e., extend the timing).
- If the Line Judge is not on the field 30 minutes prior to game time, put 30:00 minutes on the clock and start the pregame countdown.
 - Upon arrival on the field, the Line Judge can direct the timer to adjust the clock as needed.
- If there is less than 60 seconds left on the pregame countdown clock when the officials break to take their positions for the opening kickoff, reset the clock to 12:00 minutes.

8.2.2 Regular Game Timing Duties

- Any official may start the clock on a free kick (i.e., kickoff, kick after safety, and kick after fair catch).
- In all other situations the Referee is the only official who may give the start-the-clock signal. There may be times when the Referee will start the clock before the ready for play (for example when the clock has been stopped to un-pile players).
- If no signal is given, the clock will start on the snap.
- Any official may stop the clock by giving one of the five basic signals listed below:
 - Stop-the-clock signal used for a variety of situations including out-of-bounds, first down, team time-out, and official's timeout.
 - Touchdown signal, also used for a successful field goal or try attempt.
 - Incomplete pass signal, also used for an unsuccessful field goal or try attempt.
 - Touchback signal.
 - Safety signal.
- At the end of the first and third period, do not reset the clock to 12:00 minutes until the Referee holds the ball overhead signifying the official end of the period.
- If any period is extended for an un-timed down, keep the clock at 0:00 until the down is over and the Referee holds the ball overhead.
- Do not reset the clock for halftime until the Referee holds the ball overhead signifying the end of the second period. Set the clock to the appropriate time for the halftime intermission. Do not start the clock until the Referee gives the start-the-clock signal.
- Do not time the three minute warm-up period at the end of the halftime intermission. (The Back Judge will time this interval.)
- The try is an untimed down, so do not start the clock.
- If the game goes into overtime, do not time the three-minute intermission between the end of the fourth period of the game and the first overtime period or the two-minute interval between any subsequent overtime periods. (The Back Judge will time these intermission intervals.)

8.2.3 Use of a Running Clock

- The clock will be run continuously when
 - First down is awarded to either team, including following a change of possession.
 - Ball or runner with the ball goes out of bounds.
 - Legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete.
 - Penalty enforcement that does not require deliberation with captains.
- The clock shall be stopped for
 - End of a period.
 - Score (touchdown, field goal, safety).
 - Try play following a touchdown.
 - Touchback.
 - Free kick following a fair catch or awarded fair catch.
 - Charged team time-out.
 - Coach-referee conference.
 - Official's time-out for injury, faulty equipment, or other situations as required.
 - First down measurement.
 - Penalty enforcement that requires deliberation with captains.
 - Inadvertent whistle.
- Following a clock stoppage, the clock will start when the ball is
 - Marked ready for play.
 - Legally touched on the free kick following a score, or after a fair catch or awarded fair catch.

8.3 INSTRUCTIONS FOR LINE-TO-GAIN CREW

The Linesman is solely responsible for the activities of the line-to-gain crew. The line-to-gain crew usually consists of three individuals – a down box operator and two individuals that hold the stakes at either end of the chain. Unless there is a fourth crew member, the down box operator will attach the chain clip as specified. As auxiliary officials the line-to-gain crew members must remain impartial. They must refrain from any partisan reaction to the events on the field. They cannot make any remarks to coaches, players, or other persons affiliated with either team, or comment about any rulings or calls made by the officials. The crew should notify the Linesman if they are experiencing any problems with coaches, players, or other team personnel that prevents them from efficiently performing their duties. The Linesman is responsible for resolving any issues that may arise. Members of the line-to-gain crew must act only on the Linesman's instruction. The Linesman should signal the crew only after being told to do so by the Referee.

8.3.1 Pregame Duties

- Meet with the Linesman on the sideline opposite the press box 30 minutes (but no later than 15 minutes) before game time.
- Make certain that the chain and down box are in good working order. Ensure that
 - Chain including stakes is 10-yards long (measure between major line markers 10 yards apart). (A major line marker is one that goes all the way across the field.)
 - Chain is free of kinks, weak spots, and broken links.
 - Chain is fastened securely to the stakes.
 - Midpoint of chain is marked with tape.
 - Down box operates correctly and all the numbers can be displayed and easily changed.
 - Device holding the numbers is firmly affixed to the down box pole.
 - All markers have safe flat bottoms.
- Review major responsibilities, duties, and Linesman's signals.

8.3.2 Game Duties and Procedures

- The line-to-gain equipment is not used on kickoffs. It should be held at least 12 feet out of bounds near the receiving team's 20-yard line pending the results of the kickoff.
- The Linesman will mark the spot of the first down for every new series of downs. The Linesman will go to the sideline while facing the field of play and mark the spot where the down box will be set by placing the heel of the downfield foot at the forward point of the ball.
- The rear stake holder will set the stake behind the down box. The front stake holder will fully extend the chain before setting the stake.
- The rear stake holder will hold the down box while the box operator places the clip at the back edge of the major yard line nearest the rear stake.

- After setting the line-to-gain equipment, pick up the stakes and down box and move them 6 feet off the sideline. The line-to-gain equipment will be operated 6 feet off the sideline throughout the entire game.
- Hold the chain and down markers in an upright position at all times when they are in use.
- The chain crew and box operator shall not move the chain or box until signaled to do so by the Linesman. The Linesman may use a “stop” signal (arm outstretched, palm up facing the crew) to indicate that the crew should stay put and wait for the Linesman’s signal to move.
- On the Linesman’s signal (a beckoning motion of the hand or arms), the crew must move quickly to the next position.
 - If any crew member sees a penalty flag on the field, the crew should hold their positions and immediately notify the Linesman. The chain stakes or box should not be moved, even if the Linesman has signaled for you to move.
- Box operator will display the number of the down just completed until the Linesman signals for the box to be moved. The box operator will move the down marker to the new position; place it at the forward point of the ball; and then change the down number (old spot – old down; new spot – new down).
- When a runner or pass receiver is going out of bounds in the vicinity of the crew, the affected crew member(s) should carefully drop their marker(s) and quickly move away from the sideline. Do not carry the chain stakes or down box with you as you try to get away.
- The chain will not be used
 - On a try down.
 - If a new series of downs is awarded with the ball spotted at or inside the defensive team’s 10-yard line, i.e., first and goal.
 - At any time during overtime periods.
- When the chain is not used,
 - Move the stakes and chain at least 12 feet away from the sideline and lay them down.
 - Continue to use the down marker to mark the spot of the snap and track the number of downs.
 - Assign a stake holder to use a beanbag as a backup to mark the place of the snap in case the down box is inadvertently moved.
 - Place a beanbag three feet behind the down box and stand over it.
 - When the down box is moved for the next play, remain with the beanbag at the previous spot until the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
 - Then move the beanbag to the new spot, three feet behind the down box, and stand over it.
- When the chain is not being used on a field goal attempt or kick try, assign a stake holder to take a position about 10 yards behind the goal posts to retrieve the kicked ball if it goes beyond the end line. Return the ball to the Back Judge for use on the ensuing kickoff.

- At the end of the second period, secure the line-to-gain equipment at a spot outside the team box.
- Meet with the Linesman five minutes before the start of the second half.

8.3.3 Measurements

- If there are no penalty flags
 - Box operator will leave the previous down showing and move the down box to the spot of the front stake.
- If there is a penalty flag
 - Box operator will remain at the previous spot with the previous down showing.
- The Linesman will pick up the chain near the clip and together with the chain crew move onto the field toward the spot of the measurement.
- Rear stake holder will hold the stake while the Linesman places the clip on the back edge of the appropriate major yard line.
- Front stake holder will give the stake to the Umpire and move out of the way.
- When the measurement and ball placement process is over, the Umpire will give the front stake to the holder.
- If the measurement indicates the ball is short of the line to gain on other than a first down,
 - The Linesman will pick up the chain near the clip and with the chain crew take the chain to the sideline.
 - The Linesman will set the clip on the back edge of the appropriate major yard line. The stake holders will fully extend the chain.
 - The Linesman will mark the forward progress spot of the ball and signal the box operator to move the box to that spot.
 - After setting the down box, chain, and clip, the crew will move the line-to-gain equipment 6 feet off the sideline.
- If the measurement results in a first down being awarded to either team,
 - The Linesman will send the chain crew to the sideline.
 - The Linesman will mark the forward progress spot of the ball and signal the box operator to move the box to that spot.
 - After setting the down box, chain, and clip, the crew will move the line-to-gain equipment 6 feet off the sideline.

9 MECHANICS FOR FOUR OFFICIALS

The mechanics for four officials are very similar to the mechanics for five officials except that most of the Back Judge duties are assumed by the Line Judge and some may be assigned to the Referee.

The remainder of this chapter is under development and will be issued as soon as it is completed

10 MECHANICS FOR THREE OFFICIALS

The crew of three officials includes the Referee, Linesman, and Line Judge. The duties of the Back Judge and Umpire are shared among the remaining three officials.

The remainder of this chapter is under development and will be issued as soon as it is completed