

# 2024 LINE JUDGE POSITION – OUTLINE GUIDE

## 1. PRE-GAME CONFERENCE :

- A. Have complete uniform. (warm & cold weather)
- B. In 5 man mechanics you will be responsible for game clock timing if kept on the field.
- C. Make sure that all officials leave the dressing room on time.

## 2. PRE-GAME DUTIES ON THE FIELD:

- A. In 2, 3, and 4 Man Crews, locate the game clock operator and instruct him. Make sure you know where he is going to be the entire game.
- B. You are responsible for the captain and team opposite the chains. Make sure everyone is on the field at appropriate times
- C. Record results of toss, spot the ball of kicking team (3, and 4 man).

## 3. KICKOFF:

- A. i. 5 Man: On the press box side of the field, position yourself on the receiver's restraining line slightly out of bounds. Insure that the sideline and coaches area are clear.  
ii. 4 Man: Hand the ball to the kicker and tell him to wait for the whistle from the R. Move to the sideline at K's restraining line. Make sure no member of K is more than 5 yards from the ball after the ready except the kicker. Watch for encroachment by K prior to the kick. This is a deadball foul. Throw, Blow and signal TO.
- B. You have secondary responsibility for knowing if the ball is kicked into the air or directly into the ground.
- C. You have the sideline from about the 20-30 yard line of the receivers to the goal line of the kickers. The U has sideline for the first 20-30 yards when threatened.
- D. See that the kickers line up correctly and have 11 players. Do not allow play to start with more or less than 11 players on the kicking team. Verify your count with the BJ. Have your bean bag in hand.
- E. After the kick, know it's general direction then move downfield, slightly trailing the kicking team. Watch for fouls by either team, touching by either team, kickers out of bounds, ball going out of bounds, etc.
- F. Pick up the runner as he enters your area and switch from blocking to the ball carrier.
- G. When the ball becomes dead and you have the spot, square up and do not close on the spot. Hold your position closer to the sideline, watching for fouls. When all is clear be prepared to get the new ball into the BJ or the U. **The ball is the last thing to be concerned with.**
- H. The BJ (5 man) and LJ (4 man) have the goal line responsibilities on a long kick return.

## 4. SCRIMMAGE PLAYS:

- A. At the start of every play be in a position outside the sideline. Continue to officiate all plays from on or outside the sideline until the play ends.
- B. Square up your movement to the ball to mark forward progress as you move up and down the sidelines (don't round off your movement)
- C. On sweeps move back into the offensive backfield and let the play go in front of you. Plays from B's 5 in, reverse this procedure and go to the goal line to observe the entire goal line plane when the runner arrives.
- D. You have man in motion away from you, even if he reverses direction.
- E. Give proper signal if widest offensive man on your side is in backfield.
- F. If the other flank official gives you the same signal, acknowledge it by pointing to him, also start counting offensive backs. (might be 5).
- G. Give proper signal if your man moves on line after he is signaled back.
- H. Make these checks:
  - i. Are there only 4 in the backfield?
  - ii. Who is eligible?
  - iii. Who can clip or block below the waist?
- I. Never blow the whistle on runs in the middle of the field. Always see the ball before a whistle is blown.
- J. On progress, hold your spot until the ball is spotted.
- K. Give the wind the clock signal when runner is stopped near the sideline and driven backwards and out of bounds. (Not if a first down is made). Look cross-field to check for 1<sup>st</sup> down.

## 2024 LINE JUDGE POSITION – OUTLINE GUIDE

- L. If the ball goes out of bounds on your sideline, get the spot and hold it. Do not shag the ball and lose the progress spot.
- M. Show flankers and ends that your foot is the line of scrimmage and let them adjust. Let them know their position of asked but do not ask them to move.
- N. You must know if the block on an end sweep that springs the runner is legal or not. This is the first thing that the coach can see.
- O. 3-Man Crew – May use off or on mechanics, and you are responsible for the sideline opposite the HL on all plays.

### 5. PASS PLAYS:

- A. On a quick stand up pass, you may have to rule on forward or backwards. You may signal if a pass is backwards. You will always signal if the pass is incomplete.
- B. In 3-man and 4-Man mechanics release quickly downfield and stay with the receiver.
- C. You must have a clear understanding of what is pass interference.
- D. In 5-Man mechanics it is not necessary to go down field immediately if you read pass. If you read pass on your side of the field, particularly when your sideline is threatened, you should move down field with outside to inside pass coverage. Once downfield you should not come back toward LOS if the QB scrambles. In any case, you should consider down and distance and “read” the play.
- E. Once the BJ gives up the goal line the flank officials have goal line responsibility on all pass plays.
- F. In 4-Man the HL can be off the line of scrimmage in off mechanics. The LJ is the only official to play off on kicks.
- G. At the end of the half or game off mechanics may be used for obvious pass situations.

### 6. SCRIMMAGE KICKS/PUNTS:

- A. 4-Man crew - You are off the line and deep with the receiver. 5-7 yards behind and toward your sideline.
- B. 5-man crew –
  - i. After assuring a clean snap you will leave the LOS as you watch for illegal blocks and potential blocking of players into kicker.
  - ii. HAVE 2 BEAN BAGS.
  - iii. You will get all kicked ball out of bounds spots on your sideline that hit in the field of play. On kicks out of bounds in the air work with the R for proper mechanics and out of bounds spot
  - iv. In case of an errant snap you will stay on the LOS until the ball crosses. (Pregame who goes back with R in this situation.)
- C. In 3, 4, man crews, take a position to the SIDE AND BEHIND the receiver.
  - i. Fair catch and violations. (Tell receiver if he wants a fair catch to get his hand high in the air. If he signals fair catch, he cannot block.)
  - ii. Muffs or fumbles by the receivers. IMPORTANT: A member of K can advance a fumble.
  - iii. Blow ball dead when no one is going to play it. Avoid late hits.
  - iv. Stop the clock.
- D. Inform the referee as to the situation – what happened, whose ball, state of the ball when foul occurred, if any. He may not have seen your signal or the play. Volunteer this information. Don't make him ask.

### 7. GOAL LINE PLAYS:

- A. If snapping inside the 5 either direction, be at the goal line when the runner and the ball break the plane.
  - i. Reverse Goal Line – at the snap go to the goal line to make sure the ball gets out of the endzone.
  - ii. Goal Line – snapping from 5 and in, move immediately to the goal line to rule on TD. If a big pile in the middle, you must crash hard to find the ball and sell the spot/TD.
- B. If you know the ball was dead before it crossed the goal line, do not allow a score to stand.
- C. Do not give the TD signal unless you see the ball in possession break the goal line play.

# 2024 LINE JUDGE POSITION – OUTLINE GUIDE

## 8. OFF MECHANICS:

- A. The position of the ball determines whether the HL or LJ is off.
- B. Both flanks are eligible to start off in 4 man mechanics.
- C. Being off may be just for one play or during an entire series.
- D. The line to gain is the key on how far down field you normally play off the line. . Use good judgment.
- E. If a run develops into your side zone, stay to the outside and let the R cover the action until it gets to you.
- F. The R will always be on the side of field that official is off.
- G. Make sure you have communicated with the R and other Flank Official if you are going to be off.  
Remember the other Flank Official has to be aware that he has the entire line of scrimmage when you are working off.

## 9. MEASUREMENTS:

- A. Establish a spot at right angles to the line for the HL clip and chains.
- B. Observe for any kinks in the chains.
- C. 3-Man Crew – Take forward stake.

## 10. TIMEOUTS:

- A. You time all timeouts (3 and 4 man – BJ in 5 man) notify the R when there is 15 seconds left in timeout.
- B. Stay with your team's huddle, facing your team's sideline.
- C. 3-Man and 2-Man crew – with your team.
- D. Check team A for nine yard line rule.

## 11. BETWEEN QUARTERS:

- A. Double check the HL in his duties, note the yd line, down and distance.
- B. Time the intermission (3 and 4 man – B.J. in 5 man).
- C. During the intermission after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters notify the Head Coach on your side how many time outs his team has remaining.
- D. Notify the Head Coach on your side when he is to be back for the second half. Personally send out captains and the team 5 minutes before second half kickoff. Ensure team is on field for 3 minute warm up.
- E. Check Team A for nine yard line rule.

## 12. TRY AND FIELD GOALS:

- A. 4-Man Crew –
  - i. On FG snapped outside the 15 yard line, you are alone under goal posts. and trys take a position 6 feet or less behind the goal post on your side of the field to rule on the success or failure of the kick. If a FG is obviously short and is a touchback by rule give only the 'touchback' signal and do not give the 'not good/incomplete' signal (signal #10).
  - ii. Responsible if ball goes over or under the crossbar.
  - iii. Communicate with other official verbally on a close call.
  - iv. Move to the end line and give the hand signal and continue to officiate. Only if wide on your side do you give a pointing signal following the incomplete.
- B. 5 Man crews –
  - i. You will be on the LOS in your normal scrimmage play position and will be responsible for LOS and goal line. In case of a fake or broken play you will be responsible for runner progress, pass coverage, sideline coverage, goal line/pylon coverage, etc.
- C. Blow your whistle only when the ball is dead. Missed field goals often are alive.
- D. 3-Man and 2-Man Crew –
  - i. Alone under the bar to rule on the kick. In 3-man crew, the R has the option to rule on the kick.

# 2024 LINE JUDGE POSITION – OUTLINE GUIDE

## 13. COUNTING PLAYERS:

- A. Responsible for counting team B/R players on each down
- B. If in doubt as to the correct count and you want to indicate to the crew to recount, use the squirrel cage signal with your index fingers for this purpose.

## 14. FIRST DOWNS AND CHANGE OF POSSESSION:

- A. Stop the clock at the end of the play when it is definitely a 1<sup>st</sup> down.
- B. Close plays – CALL OUT, “Close, close”. R to stop the clock. You are the communicator for the crew on first down situations.
- C. Communicate what the state of the clock should be on any 1<sup>st</sup> down play or any change of possession.  
Be alert to:
  - i. Give cross wrist or wind the clock signal on any play out-of-bounds
  - ii. Repeat the signal until the U or R acknowledges.
- D. Clearly inform the R as to what has happened on a long gainer or change of possession.

## 15. PENALTIES AND INFORMATION:

- A. After all foul information is reported, the LJ will stand at the spot where the enforcement spot starts. This is the same spot the U or R will begin penalty enforcement.
- B. Relay information to the coach on your sideline about all penalties.
- C. If a player on your side is disqualified, you must tell the Head Coach.
- D. Scrimmage line fouls – give no signals. Move in and discuss with crew.
- E. If a receiver catches a pass inbounds and is driven back and out-of-bounds, wind the clock providing progress is not a 1<sup>st</sup> down.