

Pre-Game Conference Outline



PRE-GAME CONFERENCE

It is recommended by NYSACFO that the crew arrive at the game site at least 90 minutes prior to game time.

A pre-game conference is an opportunity for the crew to get into the right frame of mind to officiate a football game: for this reason, a pre-game conference should always be held. Although the Referee normally conducts the pre-game conference, he must ensure that all members of the crew are actively involved in the discussion and that it does not turn into a monologue. It is essential that the pre-game conference should be varied **so that it does not become a boring ritual** which everybody has heard before.

Share the responsibility for the pre-game by assigning different members of the crew to talk about different points each game. All aspects of the game must be covered during the pre-game conference; this includes both rules and mechanics. **HOWEVER**, don't waste a lot of time on things like positioning & responsibilities. The crew should already know what they are supposed to do! Instead, discuss unusual game situations and decide how you would cover them. Describe experiences of previous games and how you handled them. Discuss Team tendencies from previous games. The following checklist is only provided as a guide:

Pregame duties (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Coach's certification	Spot check players' equipment	Check balls
Identify medical facilities	Instruction of chain crew	Instruction of ball boys
Inspection of field	Sportsmanship talk	Instructions for both clock operators

Coin toss procedure (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in this area – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or if someone has a question) ** Only 4 captains out for toss!

First & second half procedures & options, Overtime options

Free kicks (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Positions	Instructions to teams	Front Restraining lines
Counting players	4 on each side of kicker	Rear restraining line
Pop-Up Kick Coverage	Starting game clock	Momentum into end zone
Touchback	Untouched kick out of bounds	Blocking below waist
Kick catch interference	Fair catch	Forward handoffs
Free kick after safety		

Free Kicks In-depth discussion:

Make sure to observe the kickers in pre-Game warm-ups so R & U can position properly to defend the pylons.

Don't ever let either team have anything but 11 players on a Free Kick – fix it!

Onside kick responsibilities – Treat K's free kick line as a plane for an onside or pooch kick; first touching; K players blocking early; kick towards you; kick away from you; bean bag mechanics.

Touchback if kick breaks the plane of the end zone whether it was touched in the field of play by R or not. R has GL.

Always assume ball carrier will break it and go all the way.

Free Kick Field Goal Attempt after a Fair Catch: R & U under goal post – U has over/under & whistle, BJ on K's FK line, LJ on R's FK line, HL halfway between Team R's Free Kick Line & the End Zone

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Punts (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Positions

Coverage of kicker – roughing

Kick catch interference

Fair catch

Touched /untouched into end zone

Momentum into end zone

Out of bounds - marking spot

First touching by kicking team

Fakes

Punts In-depth discussion:

Bad snap or kick blocked & **ball stays behind** the Line of scrimmage – HL retreats into the backfield to help R – stay wide. LJ stays at the LOS to rule on subsequent kick crossing line. Either team can recover and advance.

Blocked/touched at or behind line of scrimmage - **ball goes beyond** the line of scrimmage. Touching of the kick is ignored – Team K can only recover, not advance – ball belongs to Team R.

Coverage of runback – always assume ball carrier will break it and go all the way. BJ has Team R GL – stay inside hash. Be alert for blocking below waist, blind side blocks – don't be surprised. Bag end of kick.

Kick out of bounds: BJ or LJ – whistle 1st and signal clock to stop. If the kick bounces or rolls out, or lands just outside sideline – your spot. If the kick is way out of bounds in the air, go to spot that you know is farther downfield, hand up & look to Referee. If he motions, move up the line briskly (jog if it was a short kick) and stop when chopped in (make sure you're on a tick). Give 1st down signal in proper direction. If the kick goes out very near the Goal Line pylon, the R should give the touchback signal, and the BJ or LJ should do the same while standing on the sideline in the end zone. If the R is not aware that the kick went OOB, the BJ or LJ should immediately move up the sideline and sell their own spot.

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Field goals & kick try attempts (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Positions - coverage of posts

Counting Players

Coverage of kicker/holder – roughing

Field goals & kick try attempts In-depth discussion:

Field Goal: R alerts crew ASAP – yell “Live Ball” & Signal with rolling arms.

Field Goal: Bad snap or kick blocked & **ball stays behind** the Line of scrimmage – HL or LJ (official on LOS) retreats into the backfield to help R – stay wide. You have SL/GL if ball is advanced by Team K and SL if Team R recovers and advances. U moves up to the LOS to rule on a possible subsequent kick crossing the line. R has GL if Team R recovers and advances. LJ or HL (official under goal post) attempt to get to your SL and then the GL. Don't put yourself in the middle of the play. U should always shade open side to help with the GL.

Field Goal: Blocked/touched at or behind line of scrimmage - **ball goes beyond** the line of scrimmage. Touching of the kick is ignored – Team K can only recover, not advance – ball belongs to Team R. This play is treated like a punt.

Kick Try: ball is dead when it is obvious that the kick has failed.

Swinging gate formation: HL & LJ stay on the LOS. R moves behind kicker/holder. If the ball is kicked out of this formation, BJ has over/under, and R has good/no good. If players shift to normal kick formation, officials shift as well.

Field goal attempt with time running out in the 2nd or 4th qtrs: R alerts crew ASAP – yell “Live Ball” & Signal with rolling arms. Wing official has to hustle to get under. R - **DO NOT** stop game to allow him to get there! If it's a long way, then BJ has to be ready to move to cover either post.

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Scrimmage plays – general (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Positions	Crew communication	Counting players
NO CLIPPING	Substitutions	Legality of offensive line - wing officials signals
Eligibility of receivers	Man in motion	Dead-ball fouls
		Legality of snap

Scrimmage plays – runs (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Coverage of runner - in backfield, between tackles, sweeps, pitchout	Action in front of runner
Clean-up coverage	Forward progress - out of bounds

Scrimmage plays – runs In-depth discussion:

Goal line/short yardage situations: Wings crash on GL. Be loud with whistle and verbal communication if the runner is short of the GL. If you can't see the ball, keep coming in! If we get to the pile with no resolution, U finds ball and shows wings where it is – if they see it's in the EZ – TD signal. If they see it's short of GL, signal next down verbally and with hand.

Coverage of fumbles and ensuing advances and returns: If you see a player scoop the ball into his arm(s) with firm control while laying on the ground – the play is over! If you hesitate players will continue to try and possess what is a dead ball. If there is no obvious recovery, 1st official digs. 2nd official blows whistle stops clock and helps with pile. 3rd official also helps with unpiling players. 4th & 5th officials stay back to observe all of the other players. When digger finds the ball, don't jump up and point – it may be the wrong direction. Yell out the color of the team in possession (Red Ball!) and let another official point in the proper direction.

Scrimmage plays – passes (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Coverage of passer – roughing	Ineligibles downfield: clarify jurisdiction	Complete/incomplete
Keys and zones/Coverage of receivers	Pass interference - offensive, defensive – MUST HAVE CONTACT	
First touching	Coverage on interception - momentum into end zone, blocking below the waist, blind side blocks	

Scrimmage plays – passes In-depth discussion:

Passer behind/beyond line of scrimmage: U – take a look – no bag, just flag in exact spot. R – try to help, stop at spot. The passer must be CLEARLY beyond the line for it to be a foul. Quick look and then continue to officiate the play.

Pass behind/beyond line of scrimmage: Umpire needs to get up to the edge of the Expanded Neutral Zone & punch passes that don't cross the line. If the pass is caught less than one yard beyond, it's not beyond.

Forward/backward pass: If pass is thrown immediately to the SL after snap – wing officials' call. If wing officials have started downfield on coverage, the R has to make a judgement, but keep looking for help!

Pass/fumble: Referee's call but take help if you can get it.

Intentional grounding: R needs to set landmarks for the FBZ in his head prior to snap. Downfield officials need to let the R know if there was or was not an eligible receiver in the area, & if the pass crossed the LOS either inbounds or out. Immediately go to the R and tell him what you have. Don't ask the R what he has – it has no bearing on your info. R may have the QB being spun as he throws, or rifling the ball directly into the ground – his determination. R – try to stay near the spot of the pass in case flag needs to be dropped late.

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New Rules – cover this year's new rule changes in the 1st few pre-games of the season.

General duties (Crew members should be well aware of their responsibilities in these areas – only discuss in depth if there is a newer official on the crew, or someone has a question)

Mechanics

Ball relay/rotation

Check OTO (Official To Official) communication devices

End of quarter responsibilities

1st & 3rd

Halftime

End of the game

Timeouts

Recording

Positions

Help with hydration

Measurements

Procedures

Put the ball on a tick whenever possible and you can avoid unnecessary measurements, Use your head – plays inside the 5 or close to the LTG need to be exact!

Fouls & enforcement

New Rule (from 2023) – Penalty Enforcement - 10-4 - Quick Review

Reporting- who, what, where, when

Recording unsportsmanlike/ejection fouls

Options to Coaches

Signals

Enforcement

Overtime Procedures

Know them cold

Quick review at halftime if there is any chance of overtime.

No carry-over of time outs. Start at the 20 yard line.

Reserve positions in case of injury

If one official is hurt

If two officials are hurt