

2024 HEAD LINESMAN POSITION – OUTLINE GUIDE

1. PRE-GAME CONFERENCE – REACHING AN AGREEMENT WITH THE REFEREE:

- A. Have complete uniform (warm weather & cold weather). Have 2 clips on the chains. HAVE 2 BEAN BAGS.
- B. Determine how and when Referee wants the down marker changed after a play.
- C. Discuss measurements and moving chains 6 feet back from the sideline.
- D. Movement of the chains after long gainer, pass or kick play.
 - i. The HL will give the signal for chains to move at all times.
 - ii. Referee will operate through HL to have chains moved. Following a scrimmage kick the R will point to the HL to move chains.
 - iii. Chain crew never moves unless told to do so by the HL.

2. KEEPING TRACK OF DOWNS:

- A. Change the rubber band always at the same time, usually after the ball is spotted following a scrimmage play.
- B. Make sure the down box is properly placed (on the forward tip of the ball) marking ball's forward progress.
- C. Personally locate new spot on first down.

3. INSTRUCTING THE CHAIN CREW:

- A. Inspect the chains and down box. Put a piece of tape at the mid point.
- B. Make sure you have a complete crew that includes a clip man, with 2 clips.
- C. Chains are to be operated 6 feet from sideline and on the sideline opposite the press box. On first downs, chains should begin at the sideline to accurately place clip, and then move the chains 6 feet back.
- D. Instruct the crew to never move chains unless told to do so by HL. A good signal is when you only want the box man to move, motion him with one hand only, when you want the entire crew to move, motion them with the entire arm and hand or both hands.
- E. Refrain from remarks to players or expressing opinions on rulings.
- F. When the ball is goal to go, only use the down box. The chains should be well away from the area. Box person can use a beanbag to mark previous spot (optional).
- G. If a play comes near a rod, carry the rod back (keeping the point down) and move out of the way. You can also drop the rods if the chain crew needs to move out of harm's way (preferred).

4. BEFORE THE GAME:

- A. The BJ gets the captains on your side of the field in a 5 man crew 5 minutes before the kickoff. This is your responsibility in 3 or 4 man crews.
- B. Record the results of the toss and the options. Remember if a team wins the toss and defers, the other team is now considered the winner.
- C. The chains are *ALWAYS* on the sideline *OPPOSITE* the press box during the game unless league rules state otherwise.

5. KICKOFF:

- A. Your position is on the receiver's restraining line (usually the 50) on the sideline opposite the press box. Stand on the sideline or slightly out of bounds. Insure that the sideline and coaches area are clear.
- B. Count the receiving team. Do not let play start with more or less than 11 receiving team players.
- C. Signify that you are ready by raising your arm with open hand.
- D. Do not leave your line until the ball is touched or has clearly crossed the plane.
- E. You have the sideline from about the 20-yard line of the receivers to the 2 yard line of the kickers. The R has the sideline for the first 20 yards when threatened.
- F. After the kick, know its general direction and then move down the sideline 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.
- G. Pick up the runner as he enters your area and switch from blocking to the ball carrier and initial blocking in front of the runner.
- H. 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 in to the BJ

or U. **THE BALL IS THE LAST THING TO BE CONCERNED WITH.**

I. The BJ will signal touchdown on a successful return unless your pylon was threatened.

6. **SCRIMMAGE:**

- A. At the start of every play, be in a position outside the sideline. As the play develops, remain out of bounds during the entire play.
- 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 4 or less in the backfield?
 - ii. Who is eligible?
 - iii. Who can block below the waist?
- I. Never blow the whistle on runs in the middle of the field.
- 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).
- 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. If they ask you if they are on or off the line you may answer them but do not tell them to move in either direction.
- N. You must know if the blocks on an end sweep that springs the runner are legal or not. This is the first thing that the coach can see.

7. **PASS PLAY:**

- A. You are in the best position to know when a tackle releases on a pass.
- B. On a quick stand up pass, you may have to rule on forward or backwards. Signal if a pass is backwards. You will always signal if the pass is forward and incomplete.
- C. You must have a clear understanding of what constitutes pass interference.
- D. In 3-man and 4-man mechanics, you must release quickly downfield and stay with the receiver.
- E. 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 to help 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.
- F. Once the BJ gives up the goal line the flank officials have goal line responsibility on all pass plays.
- G. In 4-Man the HL can be off the line of scrimmage in off mechanics. The LJ is the only official to start off on kicks.

8. **SCRIMMAGE KICKS:**

- A. We suggest taking the whistle out of your mouth after the snap.
- B. Stay on the line until the kick crosses the line.
- C. In 4-man, in case of an errant snap you will come back behind the LOS to box the play in with the R. In 5-man, discuss this mechanic with the R as he might want the official facing him to come back.
- D. You must know:
 - i. Did the kick hit the ground or a player beyond the zone?
 - ii. Where? And
 - iii. By whom?

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- E. Mark the spot of rolling kicks going out-of-bounds quickly. If the kick leaves the field in the air the R will give you the standard signals to move up or back for the first 15 yards. BJ has beyond that.
- F. Before the kick, watch for contact of defensive end with offensive backs.
- G. Have your bean bag out and in hand on all scrimmage and free kicks.

9. GOAL LINE PLAYS:

- A. Be at the goal line when the runner and the ball break the plane. You do not need to be on the sideline—give ground so you have a clear sight.
- 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 plane. Pinch in while identifying the location of the ball.

10. MEASUREMENTS:

- A. Move down box to forward rod before moving chains inbounds. Exception: previous spot if there is a penalty!
- B. The clip will already be attached to the chain at the 2nd line back.
- C. Down indicator should still show the old down.
- D. You personally re-spot the chains at the sideline if it is not a first down
- E. 5-man – BJ holds the ball for measurement.

11. TIMEOUTS:

- A. Cover the team on your sideline during a timeout.
- B. Notify the team on your sideline the number of timeouts they have remaining during the intermission following the 1st and 3rd quarters.

12. BETWEEN QUARTERS:

- A. Note and record the down, distance and location of the ball. Also, record the yard line of the clip. Reverse the chains and assistants (be sure clip is attached), then move to the corresponding line in the other half of the field. Hold the clip at the correct yard line while assistants tighten the chains, and set them.
- B. If the quarter ends on a first down just set the chains as a normal first down.

13. INTERMISSION BETWEEN THE HALF:

- A. Notify head coach on your side of the field when to be back on the field for the 2nd half.
- B. If the team on your sideline will be kicking to start the 2nd half, ask the coach which direction he wants to kick before they leave the field for halftime.
- C. Remind chain crew to be back and ready to go before 2nd half kickoff.

14. TRY FOR POINTS AND FIELD GOALS:

- A. 5-Man mechanics – On field goals snapped inside the 15 yard line, and all try's (see mechanics) —flank officials will remain at the line of scrimmage. U and BJ are under goal posts.
- B. 4-Man mechanic – flank official looking at R's back will be under goalposts with U.
- C. 3-Man mechanics – Both FGs and try's remain on line as the LJ will be alone under the bar to rule on the kick unless the R chooses to make the call (optional). The R is in the offensive backfield. If R rules on the kick the HL rules on roughing the kicker and holder.
- D. Have the goal line plane if it is a pass or run.
- E. Must determine if the kick crossed the neutral zone.

15. COUNTING PLAYERS:

- A. Responsible for counting B players.
- B. Check Team A for nine yard line rule.
- C. On a free kick you will count the receiving team.
- D. 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.

16. ENFORCEMENT OF PENALTIES:

- A. After all foul information is reported, the HL will march off the penalties with the Umpire or Referee.

17. Off mechanics see L position documents