

Three-Man Crew Officiating

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Three-man officiating will follow the same general pattern of duties and responsibilities as four-man and five-man crews -- differences are defined in the following discussion of 3-official mechanics.

Refer to the 5-man mechanics sections regarding:

- Signals
- Calling & Reporting Fouls
- Penalty Flags & Bean Bags
- Forward Progress
- Fumbles
- Use of Whistle
- Ball Mechanics
- Sideline control
- Other general subjects.

In a 3-man crew, there is no Umpire. Therefore each official has a wider area of responsibility. In keeping the play "boxed-in" the crew forms a triangle (as opposed to the diamond of 4-man officiating). The LJ has the option of playing "On" or "Off" the line at the snap. He should start in the "Off" position more than he would in 4 or 5 man crews as this provides a better triangle for viewing the line play. The LJ and HL are the "guardian of their sidelines", therefore they must be initially wide to stay on the outside and "box-in" all players. From this wide position they must observe some of the line play and be aware of ineligible receivers downfield. The flank officials have primary responsibility for the initial contact of the tackles and ends. The Referee must assist in watching the legality of play in the middle of the line. The referee must follow running plays to both side zones. On pass plays, scrimmage kicks, and relaying the ball at the end of the play the flanks do a lot of running. All three officials must be mobile and hustle to do the job correctly.

Before the Game

All:

There are several activities that must be completed prior to the start of the game: meet with coaches, verify that all players are properly equipped, inspect field, instruct chain crew and clock operator, approval of game balls, and official's Pregame discussion.

Numerous games requiring 3 officials are scheduled on "practice fields" therefore; one of the first things to check is the safety of the field. If you feel there is a serious cause of concern the officials should notify the game management to rectify the situation. Hazardous situations must be resolved to the Referee's satisfaction before the game begins.

It is important to conduct a Pregame Conference (even if brief and on the field) to ensure each official has his mind on the game and understands his crew responsibilities. Each official should be dressed and on the field 30 minutes prior to high school games (20 minutes for youth games).

Referee:

- Pregame meeting with Head Coaches to verify legality of player equipment, explain that everyone is expected exhibit good sportsmanship, etc. (a second official **shall** accompany the Referee to meet each head coach.
- Assume Umpire's responsibilities regarding legality of player equipment.
- Check & approve game balls and instructs ball boys (if any).

Line Judge:

- LJ instructs the game clock operator.
note: If time is kept on the field by the officials, the Referee should keep the game clock. The LJ will time the 25-second count, timeouts, and half time.
- Accompany Referee to meet with head coaches
- Introduces the captains of the team from the sideline opposite the HL to the referee at the coin toss.

Headlines:

- Instruct chain crew.
- Introduce captains from your sideline to the Referee at the coin toss.

Coin Toss

All

- Coin toss is three minutes prior to kick-off.
- Start the game on time.

Referee:

- Proceed to the 50-yard line in the middle of the field, facing the scoreboard.
- Signal the other officials and captains to proceed to the center of the field.
- Conduct the introductions and coin toss per 5-man instructions.

Line Judge & Headlines:

- Bring an approved team ball with you.
- Bring captains (max of 4) to center of field and introduce the Referee.
- Line up on the 45-yd line facing the Referee.
- As soon as it is determined which team will kick, LJ places their ball on the K 40-yd line.

All officials will verify and record the results of the toss and the captain's choices.

Instruct the teams to enter the field and line up.
Jog to your kickoff positions (don't walk).

Kickoff Positioning

(Please insert diagram)

Referee

- Start in center of field at the 10 yard line (may move up for younger players)
- Count the receiving team. Don't mark the ball ready unless the correct numbers of players are on the field (both teams).
- Verify that the other officials are ready then raise your arm high above head, blow your whistle and signal ready for play.
- Cover the receiver and action immediately around him. Signal clock to start when kick is touched (other than first touching in neutral zone by K). Box in the runner between the HL or LJ as he advances. R has primary responsibility for forward progress to the 30-yd line. If the runner breaks for a long gain the R has "wide vision" clean-up responsibilities.
- If the kick is deep retreat to goal line to rule on touchback.
- If kick is deep and out-of-bounds, determine if Receiver had touched the ball inbounds.

Flank Officials

- Both officials count to verify there are 11 players on their respective teams. LJ counts the kickers. HL counts the receivers. Don't allow free kick down to start with the wrong number of players.
- **LJ** hand the ball to the kicker and remind him to wait for the Referee's whistle before kicking the ball. Then jog (don't walk) to the sideline opposite the HL on the Kicking Team's restraining line. Ensure that the sideline and coaches area are clear of players and spectators.
- **HL** is at the receiving team restraining line opposite the press box. Ensure that the receivers are behind the restraining line and that the sideline and coaches area are clear of players and spectators.
- Raise arm straight above head to signal Referee that you are ready. Lower arm on referee's whistle.
- Be prepared to rule on encroachment, short free kicks, first touching, is the kick grounded, did it go 10 yards, was it muffed or fumbled, etc. Have beanbag in your hand.
- After the kick, know it's general direction and move downfield slightly trailing your team. Watch for fouls by either team - low blocks & block in the back are the most common problems on open field plays. Flanks are responsible for the sideline from end zone to end zone.
- Pick up the runner as he enters your area - you then have primary responsibility for the runner and the action immediately in front of him. Take the runner all the way to the goal line.
- Mark forward progress when the play ends beyond the R 30-yd line.
- Continue to observe the action until all is clear then be prepared to get the new ball to the R.
- When the play is away from you in the other side-zone, come onto the field - you now have "clean-up" responsibility.

All

- Wind clock when kick is touched, other than first touching by K in neutral zone.
- Kick out-of-bounds between goal lines:
 1. Sound whistle
 2. Give time-out signal & mark spot
 3. Flag if receivers did not touch ball in bounds
- Sound whistle and signal time-out when ball becomes dead in your coverage area.

Whistles

When you blow the whistle, blow it loud -- One strong blast to signal the end of the play.

"Toot, toot, toot" is used to get attention!

"Toot, toot, toot", throw the flag, and stop the clock if a dead ball foul occurs before the snap.

"Toot, toot, toot" and stop the clock after the play is over (to get other officials attention) when you have a flag during the play.

Do not "toot, toot, toot" at the end of a normal play!

Between Downs (before each down)

All

- Verify status of the clock.
- Change your down indicator when the Referee gives the ready for play signal.
- Know the down & distance and the position of the ball.
- Verify down box & chains are correctly set.
- Count players: R counts offense. LJ & HL count the team on their sideline. Signal 11 players with a closed fist, arm extended toward the team you counted. Flanks should drop the count signal by the time the offense gets to the line of scrimmage.

Scrimmage Plays

(2 diagrams please - "On" & "Off" positioning)

Referee

- Your initial position is deeper than the offensive backs and opposite the HL when the LJ is playing off.
- You may start on the wide side of the field when the LJ is playing on.
- Play wider and/or deeper to cover the larger area required by the 3-man crew.
- You have initial responsibility for action in the center of the line. No Umpire, so you must take more responsibility for watching the blocking and the actions of the onrushing defense. Observe the opposite guard & snapper for run/pass keys.
- Responsible for ball, runner and action around him thru the neutral zone.
- You have primary whistle responsibility between the inbounds marks when play ends behind the expanded neutral zone.
- Follow a running play into either side zone, keep the action "boxed-in"
- R has clean-up responsibility behind the play when a runner breaks for a long gain up the middle or when a pass is thrown down field.
- Trust the other crewmembers to do their job.
- You are the primary spotter of the ball between the inbounds marks. Move quickly to the spot when the ball is dead.
- Hustle!

Both Flanks

- Count the team on your sideline for eleven players.
- You are responsible for movement by any flanker outside the Referee's position, as the R will be looking inside.
- Observe the initial action involving the tackle and tight end on your side. Action of the tackle is your primary key as to type of play that is developing.
- Hold your initial position until the play has developed. Do not move downfield just because the wide receiver does.
- Pick up the runner as he establishes his position on sweeps to your side or advances thru the neutral zone on plays in the middle.
- Primary whistle responsibility is in your side zone and to the middle of the field beyond the expanded neutral zone. There should be only one whistle at the end of the play.
- Do not be the first whistle when it is out of your area of primary responsibility. The correct use of the whistle cannot be overstated - slow down, allow the play to kill itself.
- Do blow the whistle when the runner's progress is stopped and he is controlled by the defense.

- On plays that are out-of-bounds, sound your whistle and signal time-out as you move to the OB spot. Keep your eyes on the players at all times (not the spot on the ground). It is preferable to have your body facing down the sideline with your head turned to view the OB players.
- When marking forward progress:
 1. Look at the players, not the ground, as you square up and move in to the spot.
 2. Stand upright, facing toward the middle of the field, with your feet about shoulder width apart. Your most downfield foot indicates your forward progress mark.
 3. Use your voice in a neutral way to let players know you are there and that the play is over.
 4. Continue to officiate.

Line Judge

- You are responsible for your entire sideline on runs & passes.
- When using "off mechanics" your initial position is in towards the 9-yd marks and 10 to 15 yards deep into the defensive backfield. Maintain your wide position outside of all players as the play develops. "Off mechanics" gives you a different angle to view the initial line play and gives you a head start when a long pass or a break-a-way play develops.
- Ensure other officials know when you are "off" as this effects their position and coverage responsibilities.
- You may use "On mechanics" when the game situation warrants. On mechanics are helpful in ruling on alignment/positioning, encroachment, motion, forward progress, short yardage situations, etc.
- Count the team on your sideline for eleven players.
- Count the offensive line for the 7 required players (when using "On" mechanics)
- Time the 25-second count, time-outs, and time between quarters.
- Work with the referee re handling of the ball for penalty enforcements.
- Hustle!

Head Linesman

- You are responsible for your entire sideline on all plays.
- You are solely responsible for all "scrimmage line" situations when the LJ's initial position is off the line; i.e. Illegal position, encroachment, man in motion, eligible receivers, did the ball cross the neutral zone, etc.
- Since the Referee and Line Judge play wider and deeper, linesman is in best position to mark forward progress as runner advances.
- Count the team on your sideline for eleven players.

- Count offensive line for the 7 required players (every play).
- Personally mark the spot on the sideline for the chains for a new first down.
- At the end of the play, verify the next down with the Referee, and then signal the down box to advance to next down.
- Hustle!

Both Flanks

- You have a large area of responsibility for forward progress and signaling the end of the play on both runs and passes beyond the line. Flank officials have whistle responsibility for their side zone, **and** for the middle of the field once the runner has cleared the expanded neutral zone.
- Flanks have primary whistle responsibility for forward pass plays as the R will be watching the QB until he is clear then switch to "clean up" behind the play.
- Be active in retrieving the ball and moving to the inbounds line (and beyond) to spot the ball. It is OK (expected) for you to move a few steps up or down the field to retrieve the ball and then move back to the spot.
- The only time you should hold your spot and have the ball brought to you is when you are marking a "close, close, close" forward progress.
- Be alert to retrieving the ball after an incomplete pass and plays out-of-bounds. Players will help with the ball if you ask them immediately at the end of the play.
- Flanks must work diligently to maintain control of their sideline at all times during the game. Players should stay in the team box. Coaches only in the "coaches area". The sidelines outside of the team box should always be clear. Be polite, don't yell, but be persistent. Utilize a sideline warning if warranted. Request help from the head coach in keeping the sideline clear. An unruly sideline can interfere with game action, or your concentration as an official. It also presents safety issues for officials, players, and spectators alike.
- Cover the team on your sideline for all timeouts.

All

- Keep the play boxed in. Usually two sets of eyes looking in the vicinity of the point-of-attack. The third official must maintain coverage of players and action away from the ball ("clean-up").
- All three officials have expanded areas of responsibility for signaling the end of the down by blowing the whistle. **There should normally be just one whistle!** Do not be a "ball

watcher" and habitually blow the whistle when it is not in your area of primary responsibility.

- All officials must be alert to dead ball activity at the end of a play. Use your voice and your physical presence to be visible at the end of plays. This will prevent most problems and unsportsmanlike behavior. Do not let problems escalate because of inattention to "clean-up" responsibilities or dead ball situations.
- Hustle and add to the smoothness of the crew.

Pass Plays:

Know who the eligible receivers are -- by position (backs and ends) and by number. Note: 6-man, 8-man, and most Youth Leagues do not have numbering requirements.

Referee

- Identify eligible backs
- Stay wide and deep. Be in position to rule on the legality of action involving blocking backs and linemen that retreat into the backfield.
- Move with the quarterback as he rolls out. Do not get caught inside if he reverses field or retreats.
- As always, you are primarily responsible for observing action by and against the quarterback.
- Know if the pass is forward or backward.
- Rule on the legality of the pass (intentional grounding, thrown from beyond line, etc.).
- Continue to observe player action behind neutral zone. Do not watch the flight of the ball downfield.
- Trust the rest of the crew to do their jobs.

Head Linesman & Line Judge

- Know the eligible receivers - ends, flankers, & closest back.
- Key off restricted linemen for run or pass.
- Rule forward or backward on quick passes toward you.
- Observe downfield action by both offense and defense. Holding by the defense and illegal blocking by the offense are the most common situations.
- Move slowly downfield to cover passes on your side. You must split your coverage between the deep receivers and the action near the line of scrimmage. Do not initially go deep with the receiver.
- Once the ball is in the air concentrate your attention on the action in the area where it is going. Hustle to catch up with the deep ones.
- Be prepared to rule on interference by either team.
- After the catch your responsibilities are the same as for a running play in that area. On deep passes or passes to your side zone you are pretty much on your own.
- When you know the pass is incomplete blow your whistle and signal incomplete. The other officials will signal stop the clock.

Short Yardage Situations:

- Line Judge shall be on the line of scrimmage at the snap.
- OK to pinch-in a little - don't get caught inside if the play bounces out towards you.
- Forward progress is critical; therefore it is appropriate that you pick-up the ball & runner sooner and more exclusively than you would on other plays.
- When you are certain of your forward progress spot, do not allow the ball to be spotted incorrectly. If the spot is short of the line to gain - "sell" the spot by pointing to it and running in as you blow your whistle.
- If you don't see the ball (blocked out by a pile of players) you are to move in towards the pile and look for help. If one of the other officials is sure of the correct spot he will make the call. If not then we need to "dig the ball out" and spot it accordingly.

Goal Line:

- Similar to short yardage mechanics above. Do not use "off" mechanics when the play starts inside the 5 yard line.
- Ball snapped inside the 5-yard line - at the snap flanks start toward the goal line - lead the play. Move back to the dead ball spot and give progress if the play is short of the goal line.
- When signaling TD move in a few steps as the play allows, holding the signal for 3 or 4 steps.
- When the play is close --- HAVE SOMETHING!

Punts:
(Please insert diagram)

Line Judge

- Your initial position is at least 10 yards wide of and 5 yards behind the deep receiver. You may move in toward your hash mark depending on position of the ball. You still have sideline responsibility for all downfield situations.
- Have a bean bag in your hand.
- Remind the receiver to clearly signal if he wants a fair catch.
- Count the team on your sideline for 11 players.
- Be alert and in position to rule on fair catch signal, touching of the kick by R, first touching by K, muff or fumble, kick out of bounds, etc.
- You are responsible for the Receiving team's goal line and must rule touchback for kicks into the end zone.
- Cover the runner and forward progress until he moves into another official's zone. Then take on a wider perspective and observe blocking and action going to the ball carrier.
- Quickly move the spot when the play ends deep. You are the only one down there.
- You are guardian of your sideline.
- Be ready to rule on where the kick goes out of bounds. The Referee may help with this, but you are in better position to know where the ball crossed the sideline.

Head Linesman

- Take your regular position on the line and officiate as if a scrimmage play. You have primary responsibility for the legality of the formation and encroachment.
- Have a beanbag in your hand.
- Count the team on your sideline for eleven players.
- Hold your initial position until the ball crosses the neutral zone. You are responsible for knowing whether the kick crosses the line of scrimmage or not.
- Be prepared to rule on who touches (or is touched by) the ball when it is a short kick.
- Once the kick crosses the line, start advancing downfield and watch the action as players move toward the deep receivers. Be alert for a fair catch signal by a short receiver, blocks in the back, low blocks and clipping. You have a large area of the field to observe at this time.
- Be ready to cover the runner and action immediately in front of him if the play comes into your sidezone or up the middle of the field.
- You have "clean-up" responsibilities if the runner is in the side zone away from you.

- You are guardian of your sideline.
- Upon the referee's signal at the end of the play move the chain crew to the new spot.

Referee

- Your initial position is the same as 4 or 5-man crews - opposite the HL, at least 10 yards wide and a little behind the kicker.
- Count the offensive team for eleven players.
- Observe the snapper and the tight group of backs for any illegal movement before or at the snap.
- Observe the immediate action of the defense against the snapper (he is "protected" when offense is in scrimmage kick formation)
- Observe the blocking and actions of the players behind the snapper and the defensive rush.
- Be prepared to cover a run or broken play - you must help with the short sideline since the LJ is deep.
- Know if the ball is kicked (or fumbled). Know if the kick is "tipped".
- Be prepared to rule on roughing or running into the kicker.
- When the kick is away and the kicker is clear, move to the middle and slowly follow the mass of players downfield. Your view of the return is from the inside out.
- If kick is blocked keep the play boxed in between the R & HL.

Field Goals and Trys

Please insert diagram

It is preferred that the LJ be under the goal posts to rule on the success or failure of the kick. However, an optional mechanic is for the Referee to rule on the kick. If the Referee chooses this option the LJ will stay on the line. The HL will then be responsible for roughing the kicker and holder.

Referee

- Take a wide position in the offensive backfield opposite the head linesman.
- Count the offensive team for eleven players.
- Before the snap, observe lineman locking legs and any illegal movement of the ball
- After the snap, shift your attention to the holder and kicker.
- Know if the holder's knee was down when he received the snap.
- R is responsible for calling roughing the kicker or holder.
- Cover LJ's sideline if a broken play runs to that side.

Headlines

- Count the team on your sideline for eleven players.
- You are ruling on legal positioning (7 lineman) and watching the entire line for encroachment.
- Responsible for the mass of players in the middle after the kick is away.
- Primary responsibility for forward progress for broken plays.
- If a fake field goal, move quickly to the goal line. You are responsible for the goal line from sideline to sideline (if the LJ is under the cross bar).
- If a pass play develops you are responsible for ineligible linemen down field and for determining if the pass crossed the neutral zone.
- If a field goal attempt is blocked you are responsible for determining if the kick crossed the neutral zone.
- At the end of a "normal" kick try you should hustle in toward the mass of players to observe unnecessary contact or unsportsmanlike action. Your presence and your voice are the best preventative officiating tools.

Line Judge

- Initial position is 6 feet beyond the end line under the cross bar.
- Count the team on your sideline for eleven players.
- Watch for illegal contact on the snapper.
- You alone will rule on the success or failure of the kick.

- In case of a broken play or fake field goal, the LJ will move quickly on an angle to the goal line pylon at his sideline.

When it is not a kick we do the best we can with lots of hustle!

Measuring for a First Down

Be alert to "close, close, close" situations. The official marking forward progress should move to the spot and have the ball handed to him for placement on the ground. Stay with the ball until the Referee determines if a measurement is necessary. Once the ball is spotted on the ground it stays there until after the measurement. Don't move it!

Headlines

- Same duties as 4 or 5-man crews
- If there are no penalty flags, the box man moves to the spot of the front stake - old down showing on the box.
- Hold the clip and the chain while bringing the chains on the field for the measurement.
- Place the clip on the back yard line as indicated by the Line Judge and notify the Referee that you are ready for the chains to be stretched out.
- If it is determined to be a first down you may release the chains to go back to the sideline. The HL is to mark the new spot at the sideline for the box man.
- After measurements that are short, you are to place the chains back at their previous position on the sideline using the clip.

Line Judge

- Provide the spot for the HL to set his clip then move up to the vicinity of the ball to assist the R

Referee

- Take the forward stake from the chain crew member
- When the HL has the clip positioned on the appropriate yard line stretch the chain and complete the measurement.
- When the measurement is short and in a side zone, you will hold the chain at the forward point of the ball and relocate it at the inbounds line. The Line Judge should handle the forward stake in this instance.

First Downs:

Anytime a new line-to-gain is established the Head linesman is to go to the sideline and personally mark the new spot for the chains and down box.