

# **2019 UMPIRE POSITION GUIDE**

## **2019 Rule Changes and POI's**

### **40 Second Play Clock:**

The play clock is set to 40 seconds and is started immediately when a running play ends, team A gains a first down or after an incomplete pass.

When the 40-second play clock is in force, the ball is considered ready for play when the ball is placed and the umpire has moved to his position.

Because of this rule change, it is very important that the CREW has access to a minimum of two footballs - pace of play cannot be slowed by poor ball mechanics.

The Umpire needs to ensure that access to footballs is communicated to the HC prior to start of game; team ball boys; and at pre-game with the crew.

Finally, the relationship with "snapper" needs to be of paramount concern - since the "ready for play" whistle will not be used after every play - the snapper must be directed to hold until all officials are ready for play - especially the Umpire.

### **TRIPPING:**

The foul for tripping has been expanded to include the runner. It is now illegal to trip any opponent.

Tripping is the intentional use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knee. The penalty is 15 yards.

An added responsibility for the Umpire is to recognize a Defensive Lineman tripping the ball carrier as he passes through the free blocking zone.

### **FREE-BLOCKING ZONE AND LEGAL BLOCKING**

The free-blocking zone is a rectangular area extending laterally 4 yards either side of the spot of the snap and 3 yards behind each line of scrimmage. A player is in the free-blocking zone when any part of his body is in the zone at the snap.

Blocking below the waist can only occur in this zone and while the ball is still in the zone. Both players must be in zone at snap for a block below the waist to be legal. Any "low" block not meeting this criteria is illegal.

### **Pre-Game Conference/Duties**

1. Have a complete approved uniform. Bring both short and long sleeve shirt.
2. A black towel is optional, but recommended.
3. Conduct pre-game conference if **Referee** is detained.
4. Discuss with the referee aspects of penalty enforcement.
5. Discuss spotting the ball with **Referee** and what his intentions will be.
6. Make sure to participate in the pregame and interact with all crew members.

### **On Field Pregame Duties**

1. Accompany referee to visit coaches. Ensure that each coach appropriately replies when asked if all players are properly and legally equipped. Rule on any equipment issues. Check for Doctor's notes for players wearing casts or unusual wrappings.
2. Record any information from coach, including special plays, choices should he win toss, etc.
3. After meeting with coaches, observe each team as they run plays. Check on formations, offensive lineman numbers, work on keys and begin to warm-up.

### **Coin Toss Procedures**

1. Meet with **R** in the middle of field. Make sure you record the results of the toss. Ensure the accuracy of the coin toss conference and act if needed.
2. After the toss, all officials will meet in the middle of the field, record results, then jog to their specific kickoff positions.

### **FREE KICKS**

1. Your initial position will be at the 10 yard line on the **press box side** of the field. Ensure that the sideline and coach's area is clear.
2. Once you have counted the receivers, signal to the **R** that you are ready by extending your hand over your head.
3. You will want to adjust your positioning depending on the length of the kick. Keep in mind that the goal line and pylon are your first priority.
4. Be prepared to rule on kicks at the sideline and goal line. Know when it's OB in the field of play or a touchback. When in doubt it's a touchback.
5. The goal line is yours from your sideline to your inbounds line, which is 1/3 of the goal line. The **R** has other 2/3 of the goal line.
6. If the ball breaks the plane of the goal line, it is dead. Sound your whistle and stop the play.
7. When the kick is away from you, the far 2/3 of the field, adjust your positioning to place yourself behind the play at an angle with the inside-out look.
8. Kicks into your 1/3 of the field, which is your sideline to your inbounds line, you have the ball carrier and the action around him. Stay on your sideline with the outside-in look, to around the 20-yard line where the **LJ** will pick it up.

9. Watch for Pooch Kicks and Fair Catch signals in your area. Do not be surprised and be prepared to officiate.
10. When the ball becomes dead, make sure the players have cleared the area **BEFORE** looking for a ball.

### On Side Kicks

1. At the direction of the Referee, you will “jump” the **LJ** and move to K's free kick line.
2. Absolutely no encroachment may be allowed by the kickers. This is a foul that requires you to immediately blow the whistle and STOP the play.
3. You have secondary responsibility for knowing if the ball is kicked into the air or directly into the ground.
4. When the ball comes towards you, look for touching, legal and illegal, by either team.
5. Kicks to the opposite side of the field, move toward the play, watch for illegal blocks and clean-up. Get off the sideline.
6. Watch for illegal acts by either team, players out of bounds touching a loose ball, late or unnecessary action, safety fouls, etc.

### SCRIMMAGE PLAY

#### Pre-Snap Routine:

1. Take progress from wing official. Spot ball facing the **R**.
2. Aim to start most plays and all new series with the nose of the ball on a yard line.
3. Check for equipment that becomes illegal thru play. Any equipment issues can lead to a player being sent off the field.
4. Be aware of lateral position of ball (left hash mark, left goal post, center of field, etc.)
5. Use a down indicator or rubber band to remind yourself, every play.
6. Count the offense. You will signal the **R**, fist extended at chest height, towards offense, only when sure.
7. Identify linemen for the offense. All plays require 5 players #50-79, on the line, unless numbering exceptions are in effect.
8. If numbering exceptions are being used, signal to crew by brushing downwards along the chest with both hands. **Verify the offense lines up in a kicking formation.**
9. Be aware of your **R** and the ready-for-play signal (hacking the ball in), if an issue prevents the **R** from signaling the ready-for-play, move towards, or over, the ball **quickly**, and make it clear to the snapper that the ball will not be snapped until the ready-for-play and your command.
10. Key on the center and both guards and rule on illegal movement by center and both guards prior to the snap.
11. Be certain that the defensive team does not use words or signals to disconcert the offense.

### **Basic Positioning:**

1. You must have full sight of the football at all times and must adjust your positioning as to have the best possible view of the snap.
2. The starting position is in the defensive backfield, 6-8 yards from the ball – you should be opposite **R**.
3. Be in a position to see the snap as clearly as possible, generally without being wider than outside shoulder of either guard.

### **Running Play**

#### **Up the Middle – Between the Tackles:**

1. Start with focus on keys.
2. As play develops observe legality of all blocks at point-of-attack (POA)
3. Feel for the “safe zone”
4. The middle of the field is your responsibility. Only whistle if you are sure the runner is down and in complete control of ball.

#### **Stretch Plays:**

1. Start with focus on keys.
2. Focus on “back-side” blocks, then progress towards the POA.

### **Passing Play**

1. Always key guards and center. In passing situations, be aware of a screen pass or draw play.
2. **Any player** on the offense line who is numbered **50 to 79 is ineligible**, regardless of position. Know all ineligible players on a scrimmage kick formation.
3. Move up to the line on a pass play, and turn on a pass beyond the line to assist on trap passes. On long pass plays stay with lineman to observe any unnecessary action.
4. Observe the legality of all line play, with attention on keys.
5. Slowly move towards the line when possible, illegal forward pass, QB beyond line-of-scrimmage, is your call if the **Flanks** have released. Make sure the QB is **CLEARLY BEYOND** the line **PRIOR** to the release.
6. Pivot and turn on passes. Help out when possible on catch/no catch, possibly help on targeting defenseless receiver.
7. Be aware of touching in or behind neutral zone and give tip signal when touched in or behind neutral zone.
8. Look for holding, illegal use of hands – keep line play legal, **BE VOCAL**, let them know you are there.
9. Know what “**keys**” are and how they will help direct your attention to what possible play action may be.

**Example:** Pulling guards normally lead you to the direction of a run or trap blocking, “off side” linemen going down field – a running play, recognize pass protection blocking.

10. Observe the center adjustment of the ball and check for illegal snaps or movement of the ball.
11. Check out player complaints thoroughly and for several plays.
12. Observe offensive linemen that are restricted when their hands are on the ground for false starts. If a lineman on punts has their elbows on their knees, they may legally move. They are not restricted. Watch for this on punts and shot gun formations.

### **Following And Helping As The Play Develops:**

1. Be prepared to shift your eyes from original line play to action around runner on sweeps and QB pitch outs.
2. Be alert for illegal crack back blocks and clips.
3. Observe the fringe area behind and in front of runner.
4. Know where the line of scrimmage is if option pass occurs. If down box is behind you on the opposite side, turn around and locate where it is.
5. Spot the ball on most all plays during the game.
6. If you move into a side zone become the relay for the **R** to spot the ball.
7. Make sure the **Flanks** don't move until you get their forward progress.

### **Retrieving The Ball – Your Job As Relay Man**

1. Either you or the **R** will always spot the ball. Key off the **R**.
2. **IN A 'HURRY UP' OFFENSE, WHEN THE BALL BECOMES DEAD IN THE SIDE ZONE, TAKE THE PROGRESS FROM THE CROSS FIELD OFFICIAL SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO TURN AROUND TO SPOT THE BALL.**
3. You are solely responsible in a hurry up offense for spotting the ball.
4. In getting the ball from the **Flank** officials, it is not always best to get the ball in a straight line, step into either team's backfield so you can be seen.
5. If the **R** goes into the side zone you should be at the hash mark to receive the ball, if he stays at the hash you should be in side zone.
6. Acknowledge all **Flank** signals to start or not start the clock to the **R**. Keep the **R** informed.

### **Measurement Procedures**

1. You are responsible for front stake. Make sure the rest of their crew has done their job regarding measurement procedures
2. On the **R** command pull the front stake to football.

### **Foul Procedures**

1. In Pre-Game, discuss how the **R** wants you to enforce penalty yardage on fouls.
2. Stand with the **R** to be sure the penalty options are given correctly.

### **Between Quarters**

1. Record the down and distance, position of ball and the team in possession.
2. Make sure the ball is spotted correctly to start the new quarter.

### Scrimmage Kick

1. Count the kickers and verify with the R.
2. **Your position will be in the kickers back field – opposite the referee.**
3. **You will line up approx. 10-yds from the LOS – even with the farthest lineman/tight end on your side.** It is important that you are aware of the punters position as not to impede his actions.
4. View the lineman and know numbering exceptions. Tell the receiving team lineman **“DO NOT HIT THE SNAPPER.”**
5. You must be in a good position to see the football entirely. Watch action of and on the **SNAPPER.**
6. Your responsibility is for line play from snap, until the ball is punted and linemen release downfield. Under **normal** circumstances, you have **NO** responsibility for the Punter – line play is your priority.
7. Should there be a “bad” snap, you will follow the punter/ball into the backfield and bracket the play with the **R.**
8. Once the linemen have released down field, you must follow and trail the play. Once it is clear there will be a return, find a place to come set and officiate the play as it comes toward you. You do not have responsibility for the goal-line.
9. Keep a wide “inside out” view. Watch for illegal acts by both the receiving and kicking teams.
10. **Be very aware of safety fouls.**
11. When the ball becomes dead, move in that direction to clean-up and after all is clear, get a new ball from the **BJ** or **Flank** official.
12. Once you have placed the ball at the spot, remain with it until released by the **R.**
13. Looking for a new ball is the last thing you should be concerned with; **Dead Ball Officiating is a Must.**

### Field Goal and TRY

1. Verify count with the **R.**
2. At the snap you watch the snapper and any infractions that are committed.
3. In case of a fake/broken play if there is a running play to the open side of the field try to get to the goal line to help rule on a potential score.
4. **IF A TEAM IS GOING FOR A TWO POINT TRY, LINE UP IN YOUR NORMAL POSITION.**

### Swinging Gate:

1. As the formation changes, you will move from the ball out to the “gate” and observe line play.
2. **Should the formation return for a kick, you will fall back and assist under the goal post. Keep a strong eye on the ball and players.**

### Additional Items

1. Officiate at the point of attack and be sure that the foul has an effect on the play.
2. There is a lot of judgment involved in the calls that you have to make. Many times, your best call will be a no call.

3. It is important that you pick up and signal all - Out of Bounds, Incomplete Passes, etc. Often your signals in the middle are the only one seen, especially by the **R** who is not looking downfield on passes. Also communicate results of plays to the **R**.