

Free-Kick Coverage

Plays with free kicks expose players to some of the hardest collisions of any football play. The speed of closure between kicking and receiving team players needs to be a focus of each free kick, and emphasis on legal blocking is crucial to help enhance both player safety and fair play.

To provide comprehensive coverage of players during a free kick, game officials should divide the players up on each side of the kicker and key on the action of those players. The widest two players on each side of the kicking team formation are the responsibility of the deepest sideline official. These game officials should remain stationary unless forced to move until the kick is possessed, observing their players as they progress down the field.

The other kicking team players (excluding the two widest players on each side of the kicking team formation) are the responsibility of the game officials on the kicking team restraining line and the receiving team restraining line. Each of those game officials should observe those players on their side of the field in that formation as the players progress down the field. Additionally, the game official on the kicking team's restraining line is responsible for action against the kicker.

The referee is responsible for ensuring at least four players are on each side of the kicker when the ball is kicked. The referee is also responsible for determining momentum or safety on kicks possessed inside of the 5-yard line. When in doubt, the kick should be ruled as a touchback.

Definition of Terms

Balanced formation — An offensive formation in which the same number of eligible receivers are outside the tackles on both sides of the snapper.

Blitz — A defensive strategy in which several players commit to rushing the passer. See "Showing blitz."

Cleaning up after the play — Mechanic in which the game official not responsible for the ballcarrier observes action behind and around the ballcarrier.

Dead-ball officiating — Activity during the time immediately after the ball becomes dead.

Digger — Game official who burrows into a pile and determines which team has recovered a fumble.

Downfield — Refers to the direction the offensive team is moving with the ball. On a scrimmage down, it is the area beyond the neutral zone. Opposite of "Upfield."

Down indicator — Apparatus used by the line-to-gain crew to show ball position and the current down.

Echoing a signal — Giving the same signal as a crewmate (i.e., stop the clock, touchdown).

Eye contact — Gaining the visual attention of another game official before making a ruling. By doing so, game officials can avoid conflicting calls.

Flat — The area behind the offensive linemen and in a side zone where backs go to receive short passes. A pass to a back in the flat is thrown shortly after the snap, thus making it different from a screen pass.

Give up — Turning attention from a specific player (usually the runner) because the player has entered another game official's coverage area.

Halo principle — Technique involving imaginary circles around players that help define coverage areas for game officials.

Hash marks (or hashes) — Also known as the inbounds marks, the lines on the field from which the ball is snapped if it becomes dead in a side zone or out-of-bounds.

Head Line Judge — The Head Linesman position is now referred to as Head Line Judge.

Inside-out look — Pivot that turns a game official's back toward the middle of the field, allowing him an angle to action in a side zone or on the sideline.

SIGNAL CHART



11

Legal touching of forward pass
or scrimmage kick



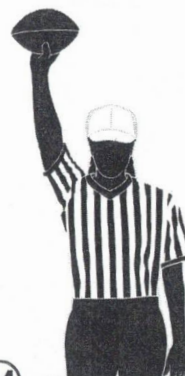
12

Inadvertent
whistle



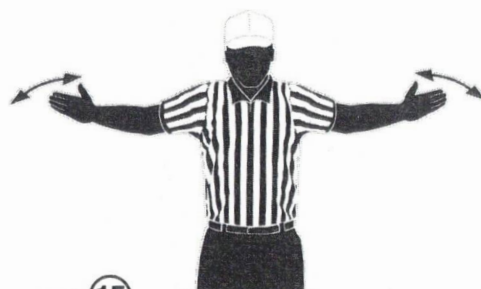
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Disregard flag



14

End of period



15

Sideline warning



16

First touching
Illegal touching

SIGNAL CHART



17

Reset play clock
to 25 seconds
(Use both hands to have play
clock reset to 40 seconds)



18

Encroachment



19

False start
Illegal formation
Free kick infraction



20

Illegal shift (2 hands)
Illegal motion (1 hand)



21

Delay of game



22

Substitution
infraction

4.7 Positioning

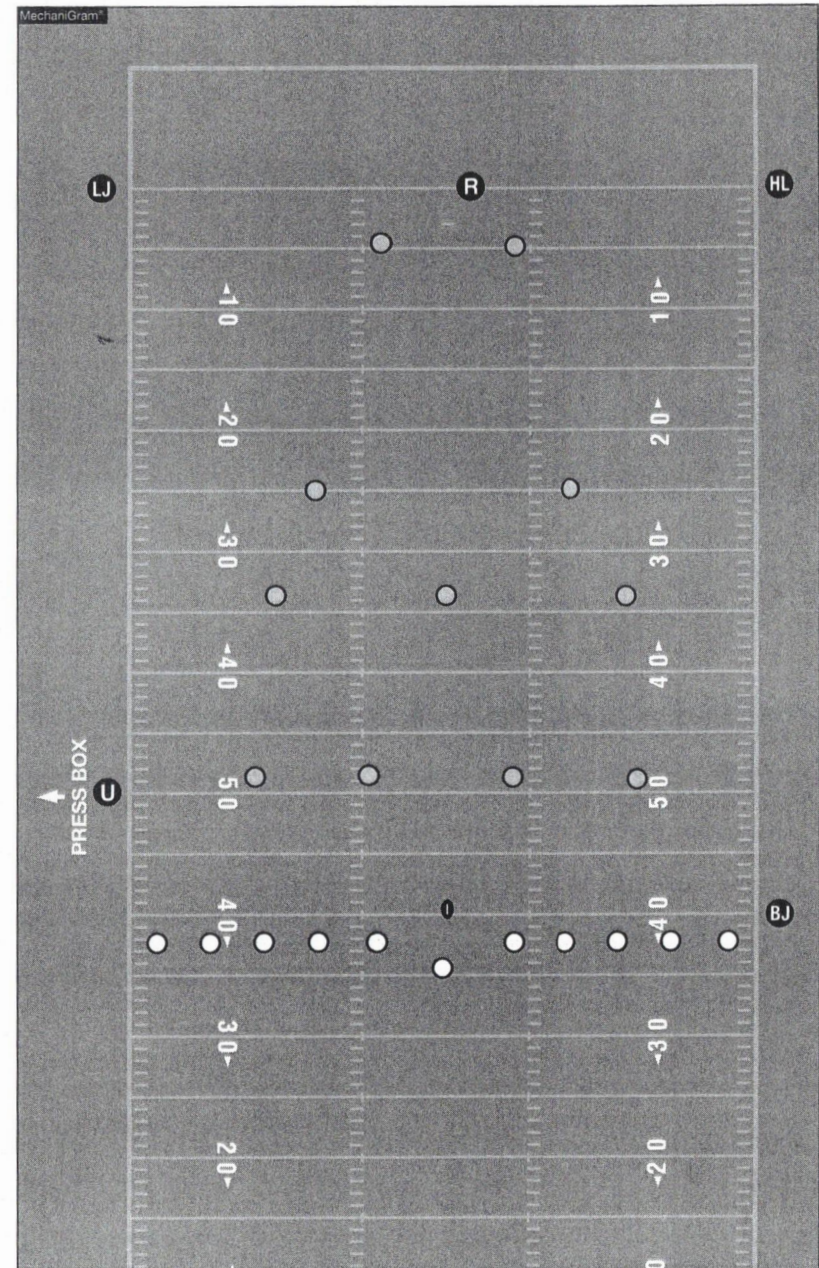
Referee: Starting position is on the goal line between the hash marks on the side of the field where the chains are located and in the center of the field. The referee is responsible for noting whether Team K has at least four players on either side of the kicker. Once he sees a ready signal from each game official, the referee blows the whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal.

Umpire: Ensures sideline personnel on their side are properly positioned. Moves to the numbers on their side of the field once the players are on the field. Starting position is outside the sideline on the side opposite the chains, on Team R's free-kick line. When in position and ready for the kick, the umpire should raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee.

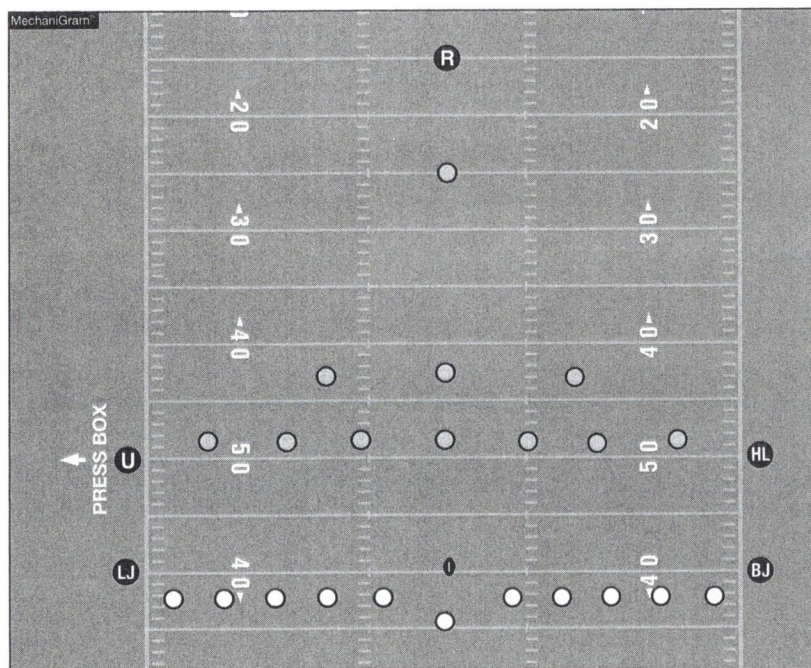
Head line judge and line judge: Starting position is on Team R's goal line extended but can be adjusted based on the deepest receiver. If starting position is adjusted, both line of scrimmage officials must be on the same yard line and deeper than the deepest receiver. When in position and ready for the kick, raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee.

Back judge: Moves on the field toward the kicker after checking legality of kicking tee. Do not give the ball to the kicker until Team K has 11 players on the field, remind the kicker not to kick the ball until the referee has sounded their whistle and note whether no Team K player other than the kicker is more than 5 yards from Team K's free-kick line. Identifies Team K's free-kick line and jogs off to the sidelines. Starting position is outside the sideline on Team K's free-kick line. When in position and ready for the kick, raise an arm as a ready signal for the referee. If the football falls or blows off tee just prior to free kick, sound the whistle to prevent action and move to the kicker to give instructions.

FREE KICK



ONSIDE KICK



Referee: Starting position is in the middle of the field, deeper than the deepest receiver.

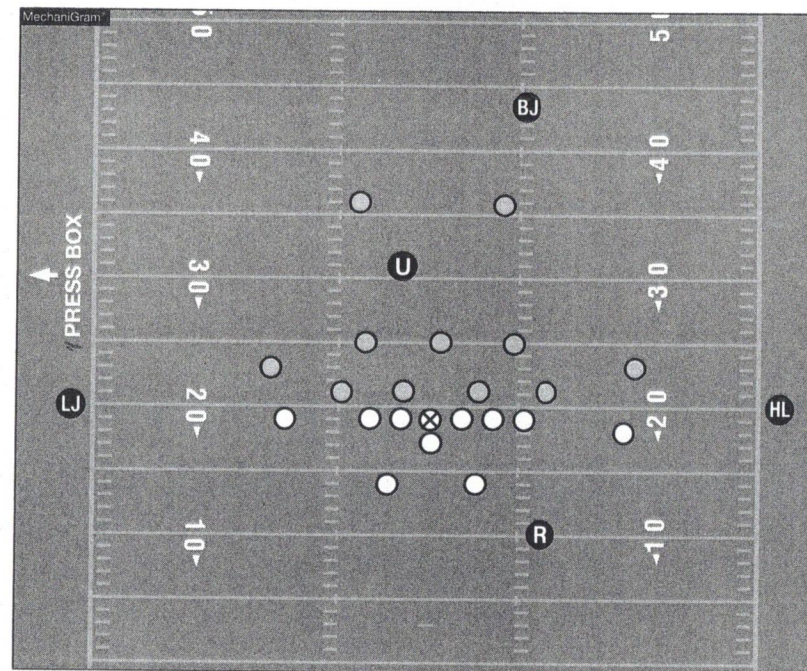
Umpire: Starting position is on the same side of the field as the line judge, on Team R's free-kick line. The umpire should have his beanbag in hand to mark the spot if Team K first touches the kick and should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

Head line judge: Starting position is on Team R's free-kick line. The head line judge should have his beanbag in hand to mark the spot if Team K first touches the kick and should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

Line judge: Starting position is on Team K's free-kick line. The line judge should have his beanbag in hand to mark the spot if Team K first touches the kick and should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

Back judge: Starting position is on the head line judge's side of the field and on Team K's free-kick line. The back judge should be prepared to blow the ball dead if a prone player from either team recovers the kick regardless of whether it has traveled 10 yards.

SCRIMMAGE PLAY



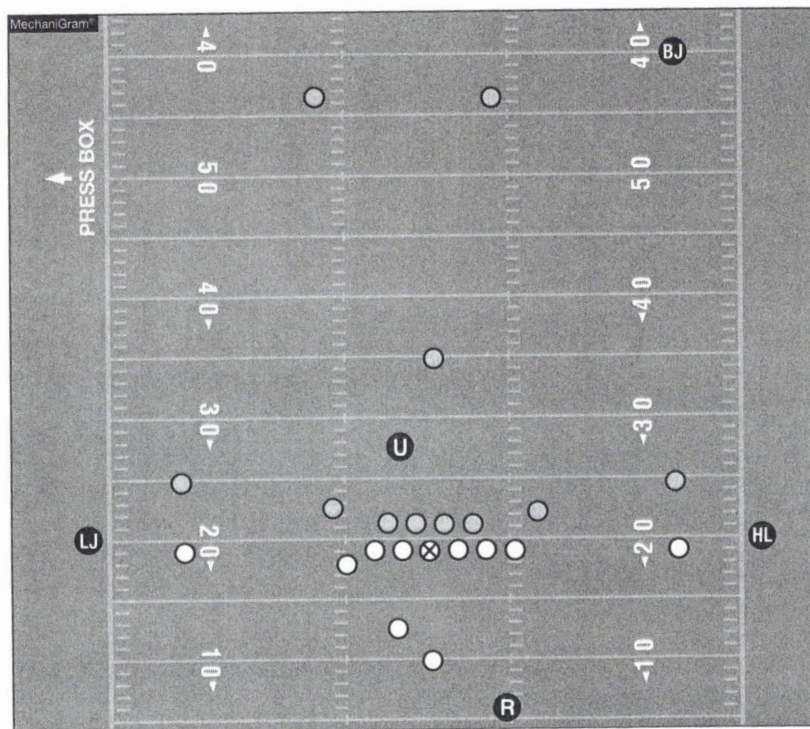
Referee: While Team A is in the huddle, take a position approximately 10-15 yards from the line of scrimmage and 5 yards wide of the huddle to be more visible to the clock operator. Once Team A is at the line, starting position is on the passing-arm side of the quarterback, approximately 10 to 12 yards deep and at least as wide as the tight end.

Umpire: Starting position is 5 to 10 yards behind Team B's line and between the defensive ends. The umpire must be able to see the ball from the time the snapper handles the ball until the time it is snapped.

Head line judge and line judge: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage and on the sideline.

Back judge: Starting position is favoring the strong side of the formation, approximately 20 to 25 yards beyond the line of scrimmage and deeper than the deepest defender.

SCRIMMAGE KICK



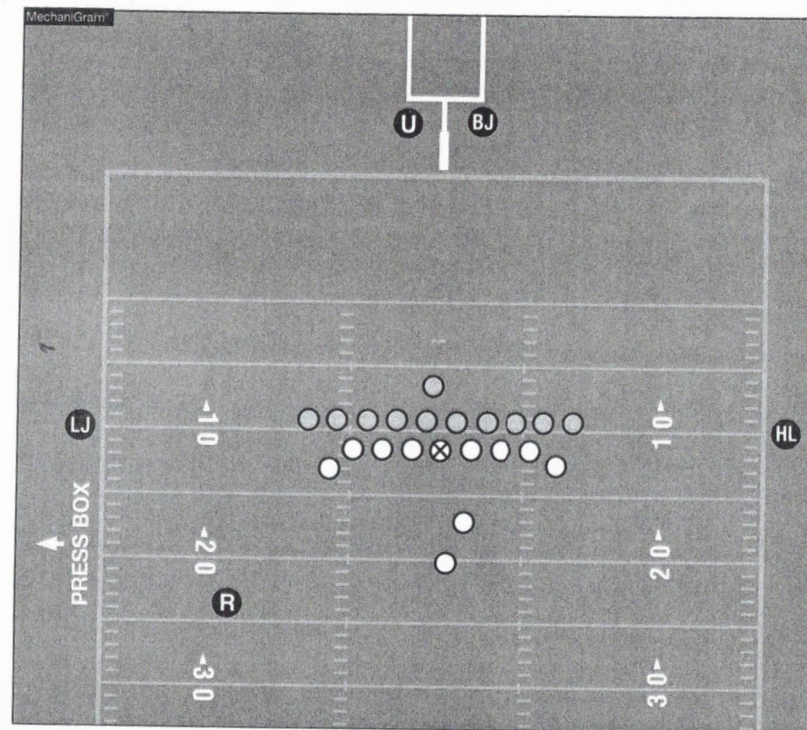
Referee: The referee's position is 3 to 5 yards outside the tight end and 2 to 3 yards behind the kicker, on kicking-leg side. That position allows the referee to view the snap as well as the action around the kicker before, during and after the kick. The referee must be ready to move in the appropriate direction if an errant snap leads to a loose ball in the offensive backfield.

Umpire: The umpire sets up 4 to 7 yards deep and favoring the line judge's sideline. Favoring the line judge's side compensates for the line judge moving downfield immediately at the snap. Say, "Don't charge directly into the snapper," to remind Team R players about rules regarding to contact on the snapper.

Head line judge and line judge: The wing officials' starting position on scrimmage kicks is the same as for other plays from scrimmage.

Back judge: The back judge begins the play 10 to 12 yards wider than and 2 to 3 yards behind the deepest receiver on the head line judge's side of the field. The back judge must be prepared to move upfield if the kick is short or downfield if the receiver has to retreat.

SCORING KICK



Referee: Starting position is 2 to 3 yards to rear and 3 to 5 yards to side of potential kicker, facing holder.

Umpire: Starting position is beyond the end line and behind the upright.

Wing officials: Starting position is straddling the line of scrimmage.

Back judge: Starting position is beyond the end line and behind the upright.

NOTE: On a field-goal attempt by free kick, the chains are set to establish the 10-yard neutral zone. Referee is behind the upright. Umpire is behind the upright and rules on crossbar. Both game officials determine whether kick is successful. All other game officials' mechanics are the same as for a kickoff.

4.8 Coverage

Free Kick

Since the play clock for a free kick does not start until the Referee's ready-for-play signal and whistle, a kick should never be permitted without the proper number of players on the field for both teams.

Referee:

Play Coverage

- The Referee will ensure that Team K has at least four players on either side of the kicker at the time of the kick – if not, he will flag the play and shut it down immediately.
- Once the ball is kicked, the Referee may move up into a position using proper angle to see in front of the receiver (while remaining behind him) based on where the ball is kicked.
- If the kick will threaten the goal line, he should hold his position to make decisions on whether a touchback has occurred or whether the momentum exception should be applied on a caught or recovered ball.
- If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Referee will wind the game clock.
- If the receiver advances with the ball, the Referee will continue up field while observing blocks in front of the ball carrier and in the middle of the field until the ball reaches the R-30. As the ball carrier reaches the R-30, the Referee should move his focus to players trailing the play and continue up field behind the deepest combination of Team R and Team K players.
- When the play ends, the Referee may assist with retrieving the proper ball to be put in play for the new series or try.

Umpire:

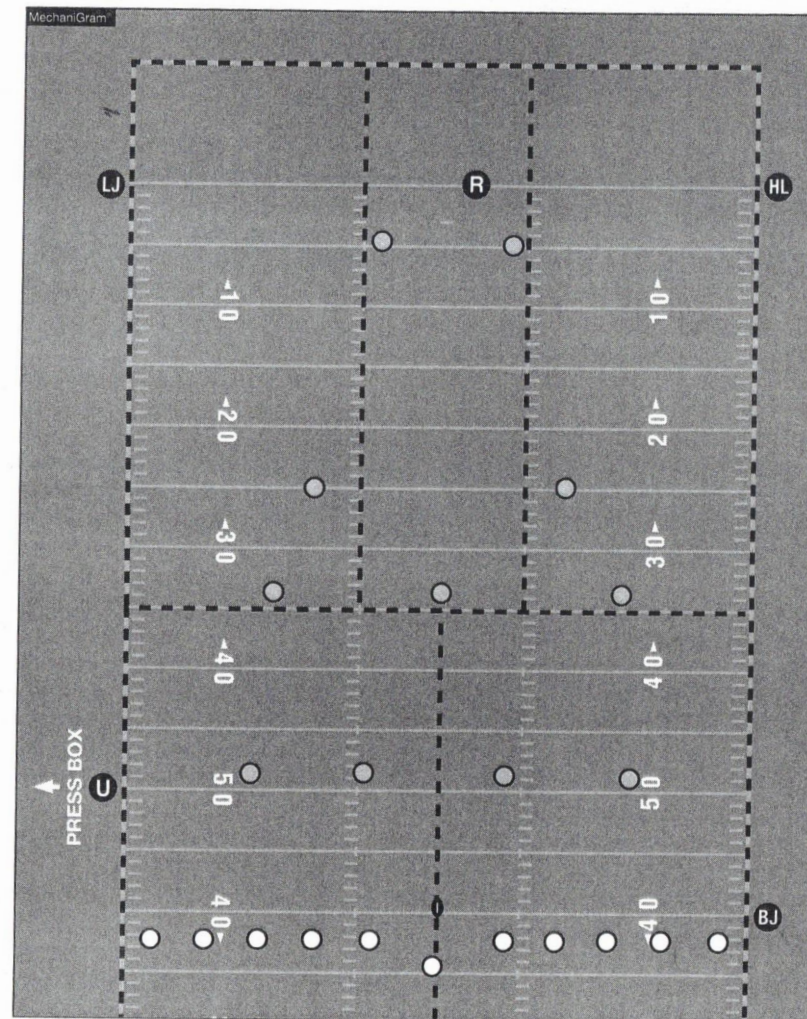
Play Coverage

- After the kick occurs without foul, the Umpire will direct his attention on the initial blocks made by/on the second-inside blocker nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.
- Once the Team K players pass his position, the Umpire will move into the field of play, approximately 8-10 yards downfield and at the near-side hash marks.
- As the ball is being returned, the Umpire will observe action in the middle of the field in front of the runner. He should be especially alert to Team R players moving back toward team R's own goal line.

- The Umpire will allow the play to come to his position and continue to officiate the play using an inside-out technique, particularly looking for fouls away from the ball as he moves up field behind the play.

- When the play ends, the Umpire will move to the ball and replace it with the proper ball for the next series or try.

FREE KICK COVERAGE ZONES



Head Line Judge:**Play Coverage**

- a. After the kick, the Head Line Judge will direct his attention on the blocks made by/on the farthest outside blocker nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.
- b. If the ball is kicked behind him on his half of the field or threatens the pylon in his primary coverage area, the Head Line Judge will retreat to cover the ball.
- c. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Head Line Judge will wind the game clock.
- d. For returns on his half of the field, the Head Line Judge is responsible for the spot for kicks out of bounds, blocks at the point of attack and forward progress all the way to the goal line.
- e. For returns on the opposite side of the field, the Head Line Judge is responsible for blocks in the middle of the field away from the ball.
- f. When the play ends, the Head Line Judge will mark forward progress on his side of the field. He will mirror the progress spot and clean up around the runner if the ball is on the opposite side of the field.

Line Judge:**Play Coverage**

- a. After the kick, the Line Judge will direct his attention on the blocks made by/on the farthest outside blocker nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.
- b. If the ball is kicked behind him on his half of the field or threatens the pylon in his primary coverage area, the Line Judge will retreat to cover the ball.
- c. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Line Judge will wind the game clock.
- d. For returns on his half of the field, the Line Judge is responsible for the spot for kicks out of bounds, blocks at the point of attack and forward progress all the way to the goal line.
- e. For returns on the opposite side of the field, the Line Judge is responsible for blocks in the middle of the field away from the ball.
- f. When the play ends, the Line Judge will mark forward progress on his side of the field. He will mirror the progress spot and clean up around the runner if the ball is on the opposite side of the field.

Back Judge:**Play Coverage**

- a. After the kick occurs without foul, the Back Judge will direct his attention on the initial

blocks made by/on the second- and third-inside blockers nearest Team R's restraining line on his side of the field.

- b. Once the Team K players have moved downfield, the Back Judge will move into the field of play, approximately 8-10 yards downfield and at the near-side hash marks.
- c. As the ball is being returned, the Back Judge will observe action in the middle of the field in front of the runner. He should be especially alert to Team R players moving back toward team R's own goal line.
- d. The Back Judge should remain at least 20 yards in advance of the ball carrier as the play advances. He has the primary responsibility for coverage at the goal line and should be straddling the goal line in advance of the runner crossing it.
- e. If the play ends at the goal line, the Back Judge will rule on forward progress.
- f. When the play ends prior to reaching the goal line, the Back Judge may assist with retrieving the proper ball to be put in play for the new series or try.

Free Kicks After a Safety

The coverage areas and mechanics are the same for the free kick that follows a safety.

The back judge should be at Team K's 20-yard line, the umpire and head line judge at Team K's 30-yard line and the position of the remaining game officials is adjusted accordingly.

Field-Goal Attempt by Free Kick After a Fair Catch

If Team K attempts a field goal by free kick after a fair catch (or awarded fair catch), the referee and umpire move behind the upright. The umpire rules whether or not the kick cleared the crossbar while the referee determines if the kick was between the uprights. The remaining game officials assume their normal positions for a free kick.

Scrimmage Plays

On a running play, the referee focuses on the ball, the runner and the blocking around the runner. If the play goes to the opposite side, the referee should move toward or parallel to the line of the scrimmage. Overaggressiveness is to be avoided in case the play is a reverse. If the play is to the referee's side, the referee moves behind the play and is responsible for the runner until the runner crosses the neutral zone or turns upfield. The referee should watch the handoff or the pitchout, see the runner head outside the free-blocking zone, and watch to see that no one contacts the quarterback before drifting along to follow the play.

On passing plays, the referee observes blocking by his keys and is alert for defenders who threaten the quarterback. The referee should be wide and deep enough so he does not have to move if the quarterback drops back into the pocket. If the quarterback rolls to either direction, the referee must move with him, keeping at least a 10-yard buffer.

If the quarterback scrambles away from the referee, the referee needs to keep pace to

When the pass is in flight, the back judge must quickly determine the intended receiver and get into the best possible position to observe the play. Both the offensive and defensive players must be observed for possible interference.

When a play ends inbounds near a sideline but a first down has been achieved, the covering game official should give the stop-the-clock signal. It is not appropriate to give the wind-the-clock signal before the stop-the-clock signal if the play ended inbounds but a first down was achieved.

If the clock is to start on the ready-for-play signal, the covering game official should indicate that to the referee by twirling the index finger. If the clock starts on the snap, the covering game official crosses the wrists at waist level.

Goal Line Plays

When the ball is snapped between Team B's 10 and 5-yard lines, the wing officials release slowly downfield at the snap, staying ahead of the runner all the way to the goal line.

The touchdown signal is given only by a game official who actually sees the ball in possession of a runner break the plane of the goal line. Mirroring the signal can cause problems; if the covering game official is incorrect, the crew will find it difficult to overcome two game officials making a mistake. If the covering game official is correct, there is no need for a second signal.

There are very few circumstances under which the referee or umpire would declare a touchdown. Under most circumstances, the wing official will be in a much better position to rule if the ball has broken the plane of the goal line.

When Team A snaps the ball at or inside its own 5-yard line, the wings move quickly to the goal line in order to see if the runner advanced the ball completely beyond the goal line. If so, they cover the play and mark forward progress as usual.

Scrimmage Kicks

The referee must be ready to move in the appropriate direction in case of an errant snap or blocked kick. Once the kick is away, the referee takes a quick look to see the flight of the ball. If the kick is short and toward a sideline, the covering sideline game official should be prepared to determine the spot the ball went out-of-bounds. If the kick is long and goes out-of-bounds, the covering game official moves past where he thinks it flew out before walking toward the referee with his hand up — along the sideline — until the referee chops downward, telling him to halt.

If the receivers begin a return, the referee should move slowly downfield; if the runner breaks a long return, the referee may assume responsibility for the runner. The referee will get an inside-out look regardless of which sideline is involved since the appropriate wing official has sideline responsibility from end line to end line.

On blocked kicks, the referee should be ready to rule on the recovery and observe the advance of any player who runs with a recovered ball.

The umpire should move toward the line at the snap. Once the ball has been kicked and players from both teams have run past, the umpire pivots to the line judge's side. After the pivot, the umpire should move slowly downfield and observe action in front of the runner.

On a return to the middle of the field, the back judge has responsibility for the runner until the umpire takes the coverage; the point at which the transfer occurs depends on how far downfield the umpire has drifted after the kick.

At the snap, the head line judge observes the initial line charge and remains on the line until the kick crosses the neutral zone while the line judge releases on the snap and observes action on his side of the field between the neutral zone and the receivers.

On the vast majority of punts, however, both wing officials are responsible for their sideline from end line to end line and for covering the runner when the return is to their area. If the run is to the opposite sideline, clean up behind the play.

All deep receivers are the responsibility of the back judge. Once the ball is kicked, he judges the validity of any fair catch signal. The back judge has coverage responsibilities until the runner breaks into a side zone, when coverage transfers to the appropriate wing official.

The covering game official, regardless of position, must beanbag the spot where the kick ends. That spot may be used for post-scrimmage kick penalty enforcement.

Scoring Kicks

After the snap, the referee observes the actions of the kicker and holder. If the holder has to leave a kneeling position to catch or recover a poor snap, the referee must know whether the rules allow the holder to return to a kneeling position. After the kick, the referee is responsible for ruling on contact on the kicker and holder. If a kick try is blocked, the referee should blow his whistle immediately; a blocked field goal remains live, however.

In cases of a fake or a broken play, the referee assists on sideline coverage on the open side of the field. Once he is confident the kicker and holder are in no danger of being roughed, the referee looks to the deep officials to learn the result of the kick. The signal should then be relayed to the press box.

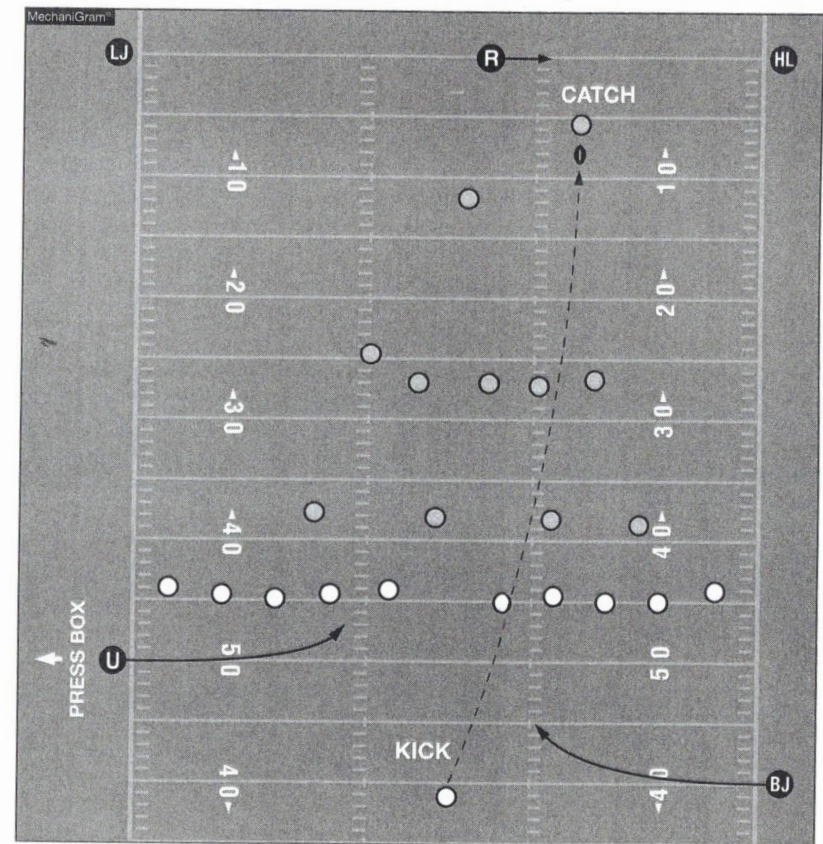
If a blocked kick or fake results in a play toward the goal line on the line judge's side of the field, the umpire moves toward the goal line to assist on coverage of the runner. The umpire also helps rule whether or not a blocked kick crossed the neutral zone on his side of the field.

The wing officials on the line of scrimmage will rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone. They can also help rule on ineligible downfield on fake kicks that lead to passes.

The umpire and back judge stand beyond the end zone and behind the upright on their side of the field. The positioning can be adjusted once the ball is kicked to provide the best look possible. The umpire is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side; the back judge is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side as well as whether the ball cleared the crossbar.

When a successful kick passes the upright or when the ball breaks the goal line plane and it is obvious it will not score, the back judge sounds his whistle and gives the appropriate signals. If the kick is blocked, is obviously short or the play turns out not to be a kick (fake or busted play), the deep officials should move along the end line and toward the nearest sideline.

FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE PART 1



Action on the field: Receiver catches kick.

Referee: Observes catch. Signals clock to start when ball is touched. Moves to trail receiver and observes action of runner during return.

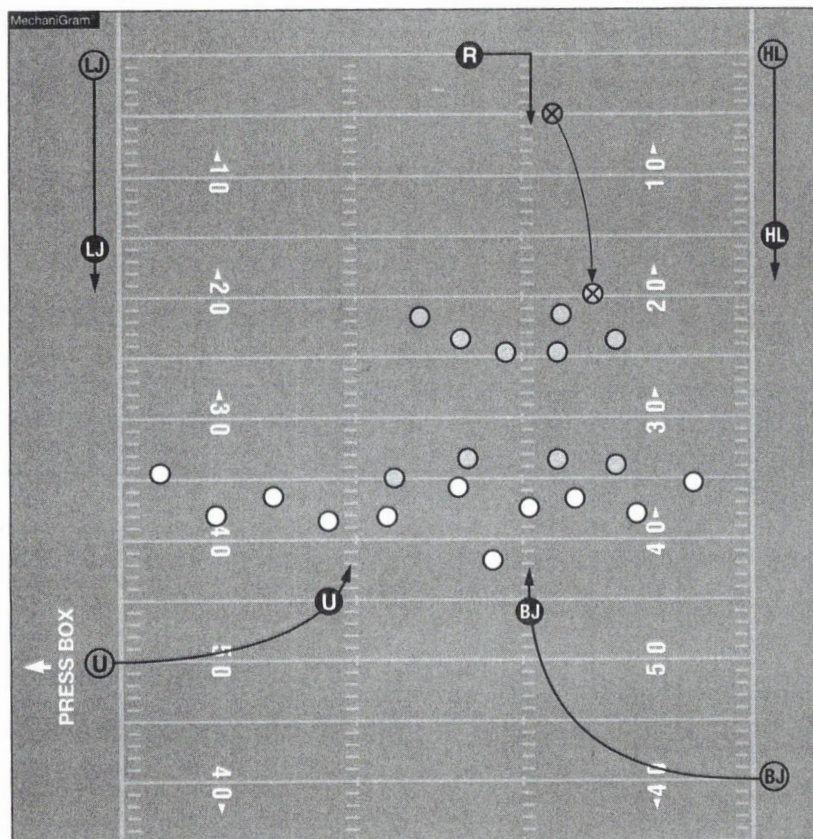
Umpire: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him while moving downfield no farther than Team R's 35-yard line.

Head line judge: Observes action in his area. Signals clock to start when ball is touched.

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Signals clock to start when ball is touched.

Back judge: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him including kicker. Moves into field.

FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE PART 2



Action on the field: Runner advances.

Referee: Gives up coverage of runner to head line judge. Observes action in front of runner (halo principle).

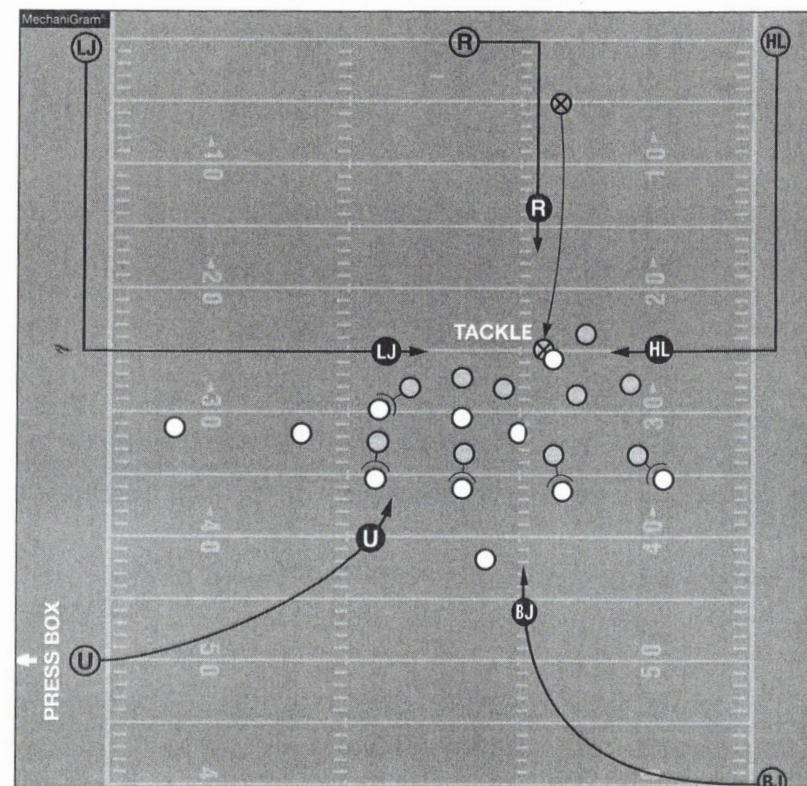
Umpire: Observes action in front of runner.

Head line judge: Takes coverage of runner when runner enters area.

Line judge: Moves with runner. Observes action in front of runner.

Back judge: Observes action in front of runner. Goes no farther than Team R's 45-yard line.

FREE KICK TO SIDE ZONE PART 3



Action on the field: Runner continues advance and is downed.

Referee: Moves slowly upfield trailing runner. Observes players. When certain no penalty flags are down, signals new series for Team R.

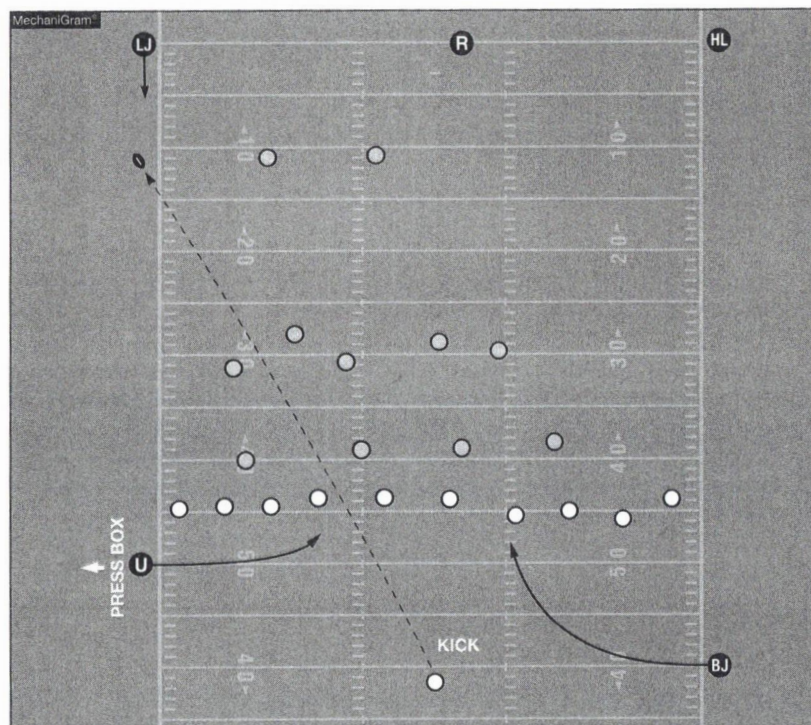
Umpire: Observes players and hustles to spot. Moves to middle of the field and spots ball for next down.

Head line judge: Observes players. Blows whistle and gives stop-the-clock signal when runner is downed. Squares off and holds spot. When referee signals possession for Team R, instructs line-to-gain crew to set chains for new series.

Line judge: Observes players. Mirrors spot until head line judge marks progress.

Back judge: Observes players. Retrieves game ball from ball helper and relays to umpire. When referee signals possession for Team R, moves into position for next down.

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 1



Action on the field: Ball kicked out-of-bounds in line judge's side zone.

Referee: Observes action in his area.

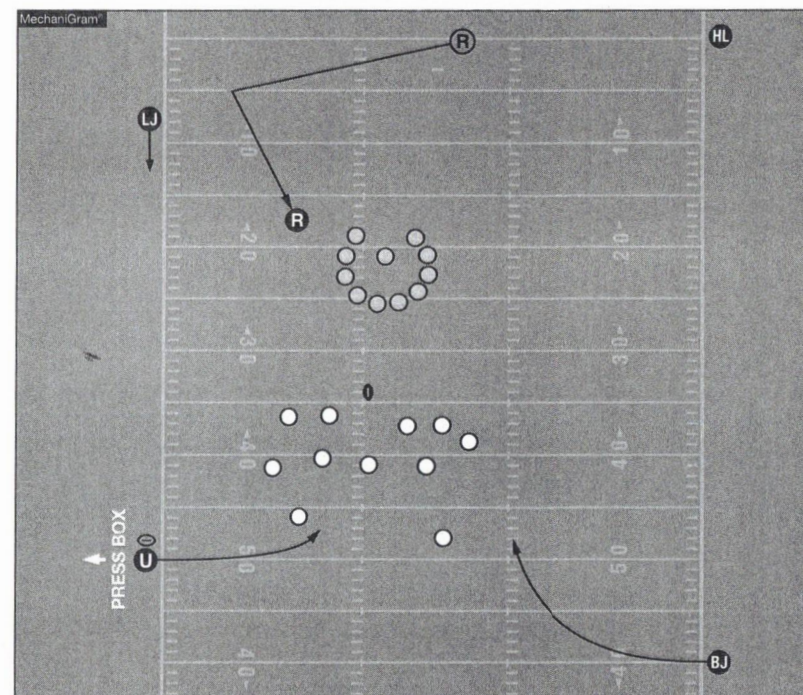
Umpire: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him.

Head line judge: Observes action in his area.

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Moves into position to judge which team caused kick to go out-of-bounds. Gives stop-the-clock signal when ball is out-of-bounds.

Back judge: Watches for infractions involving free-kick line and contact involving players nearest him including kicker.

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 2



Action on the field: Team R chooses to take ball at its own 35-yard line (25 yards from the previous spot).

Referee: Observes action in his area. Communicates with line judge to determine result of play. Obtains choice from Team R. Signals Team K's foul and points toward Team R's 35-yard line, where ball will next be put in play. (If Team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

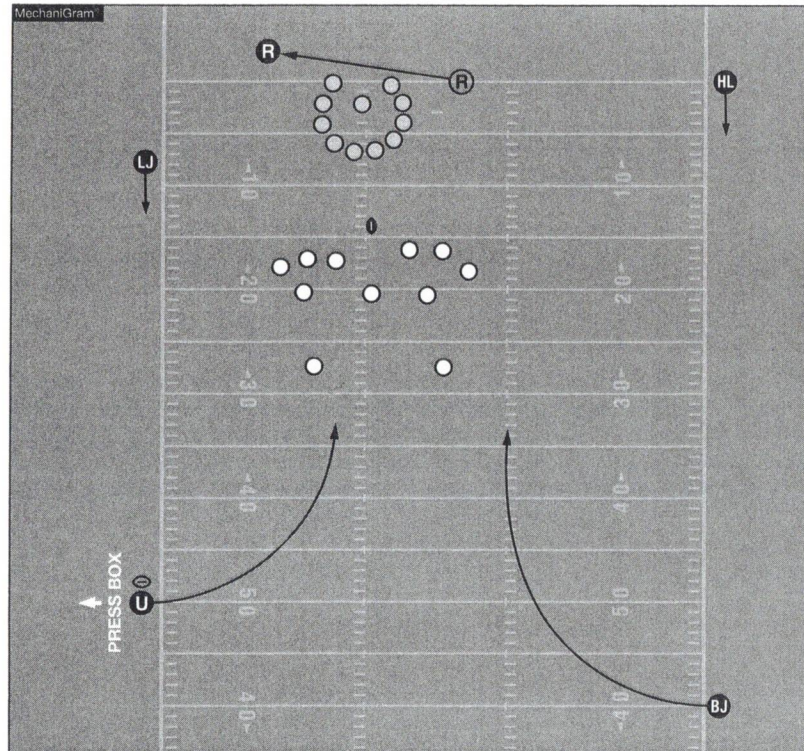
Umpire: Observes action in his area. Moves to hash mark at Team R's 35-yard line to set ball for new series. (If Team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

Head line judge: Observes action in his area. Moves to Team R's 35-yard line, where Team R will begin new series, assists line-to-gain crew in setting chairs. (If Team R chooses a rekick, returns to position for rekick.)

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play to referee.

Back judge: Observes action in his area. Moves to position for start of new series. (If Team R chooses a rekick, signals Team K's foul, walks off penalty and returns to position for rekick.)

FREE KICK OUT-OF-BOUNDS PART 3



Action on the field: Team R caused the ball to go out-of-bounds.

Referee: Observes action in his area. Communicates with line judge to determine result of play. Signals new series will begin at spot where kick went out-of-bounds.

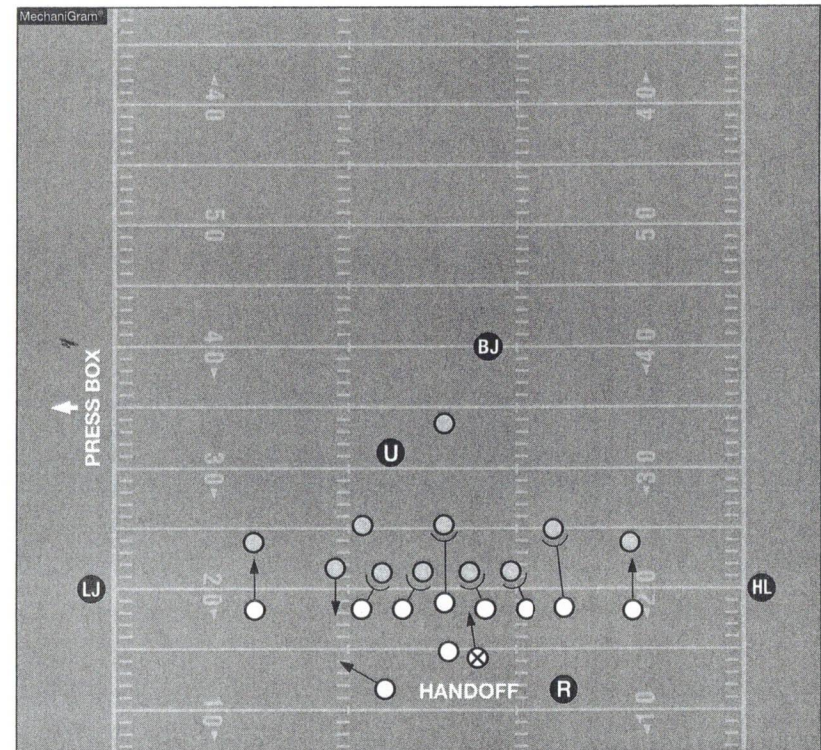
Umpire: Observes action in his area. Moves to spot where new series will begin. Moves to hash mark where new series will begin and sets ball.

Head line judge: Observes action in his area. Moves to spot where new series will begin and assists line-to-gain crew in setting chains.

Line judge: Observes action in his area. Communicates result of play to referee.

Back judge: Observes action in his area. Moves to position for start of new series.

RUN UP THE MIDDLE PART 1



Action on the field: Handoff to a back.

Referee: Reads blocking of opposite side tackle and reads run. Observes handoff and action around quarterback after handoff.

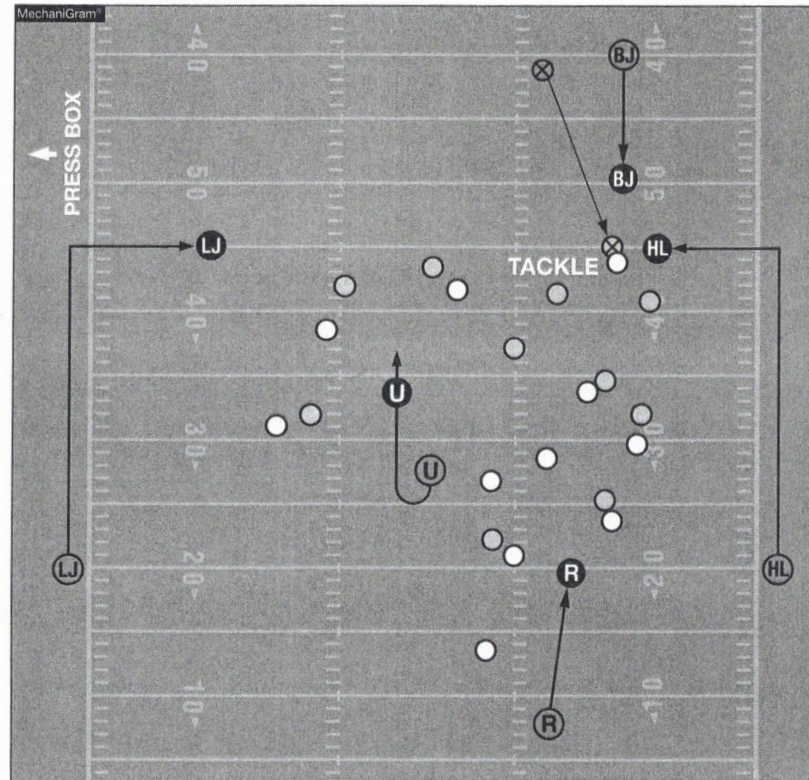
Umpire: Reads blocking of center and opposite side guard and reads run. Determines point of attack and observes blocking there.

Head line judge: Reads blocking of tight end and reads run. Observes blocking.

Line judge: Reads blocking of left tackle and reads run. Observes blocking.

Back judge: Reads blocking of tackle and reads run. Observes blocking.

SCRIMMAGE KICK TO BACK JUDGE'S SIDE ZONE PART 3



Action on the field: Runner advances and is downed.

Referee: Observes action of players. When certain there are no penalty markers down, signals head line judge to move line-to-gain crew.

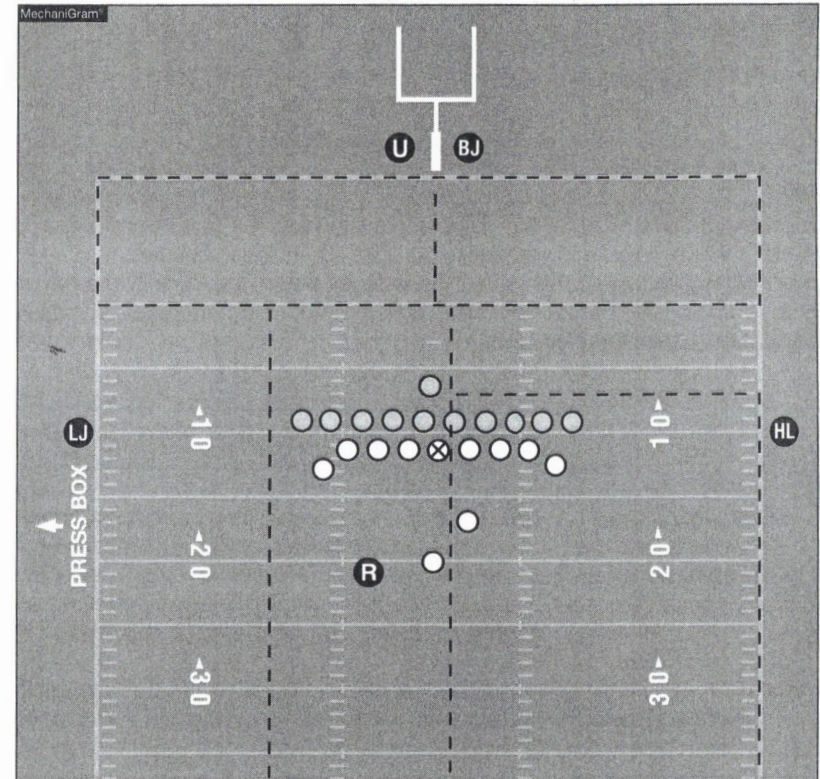
Umpire: Observes action of players. Moves to spot to set ball for new series.

Head line judge: Takes coverage of runner when runner enters coverage area. When runner is downed, squares off to spot and stops the clock. Upon signal from referee, instructs line-to-gain crew to move to spot.

Line judge: Observes action of players. Squares off to mirror head line judge's spot.

Back judge: Gives up coverage of runner when runner enters head line judge's coverage area (halo principle). Observes action of players.

SCORING KICK



After the snap, the referee observes the actions of the kicker and holder. If the holder has to leave a kneeling position to catch or recover a poor snap, the referee must rule on the holder's ability to return to a kneeling position.

Once he is confident the kicker and holder are in no danger of being roughed, the referee looks to the deep officials to learn the result of the kick. The signal should then be relayed to the press box.

On a blocked field-goal attempt, the wings will rule whether or not the kick crossed the neutral zone.

If a pass is used on the fake, the wings must know if the passer was beyond the line. They can also help rule on ineligible downfield on fake kicks that lead to passes. When a runner approaches the goal line, the wing must be at the goal line to rule on the potential score. The wing can move toward the offensive and defensive linemen after the kick and use his voice to encourage players to unpile.

The back judge and umpire should confirm their ruling verbally before signaling, using "good" or "no, no, no."

The umpire is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side; the back judge is responsible for ruling whether the ball passed inside or outside the upright on his side as well as whether the ball cleared the crossbar.

When a successful kick passes the upright or when the ball breaks the goal line plane and it is obvious it will not score, the back judge sounds his whistle and gives the appropriate signals. If the kick is blocked, is obviously short or the play turns out not to be a kick (fake or busted play), the deep officials should move along the end line and toward the nearest sideline. Once the sideline has been reached, the deep official can move toward the goal line to assist on coverage of the runner.

Part 5

Crew of Seven

5.1 Philosophy

Movement and compromise are the characteristics of football officiating. Twenty-two players are moving around, competing for space and position; the game officials must utilize hustle, angles, distance and planned compromises to observe and control the action.

Hustle

Hustle is an overused word today. Everyone knows it's needed to succeed, but what does it really mean when relating it to football officiating? Hustle to cover plays and to get into position is important regardless of how many game officials work a game. Using seven game officials provides significant coverage and attention to players well downfield, such as those running pass routes or blockin ahead of the runner.

Significant movement by all game officials is critical for proper field coverage. Hustle gives you a chance. That equates to more running and a well-placed concern for angles.

Movements

All game officials must work hard at understanding then obtaining proper angles. Your line of sight must provide you with an opportunity to view a developing play or part of a play. You must be able to see completely through the play, which means your vision must be unobstructed by the players directly involved in the play and others near the play.

When the ball is snapped, all 22 players are in motion. A game official's angle and distance adjustments are constant as play is in motion. A step or two in the right direction may open up a whole new viewing experience, free from obstruction; a step in the wrong direction will screen you from the critical game action.

Movement allows the non-covering game officials to watch players away from the ball, the critical component to combating physical play. When a wing official moves off the sideline, he can watch the areas behind the run, where rough play often occurs.

The covering wing official also moves along the sideline to improve angles. There's usually at least three and sometimes six or seven players around the ball, either trying to throw blocks or attempting to make the tackle. Movement is critical to watching action around the ball. It's also paramount to game control.