

# **Mechanics for a Crew of Six Officials**

## **Pregame Responsibilities**

### **Meeting With the Chain Crew**

The official chains and down box remain on the side of the field opposite the press box throughout the game.

The Head Linesman and Line Judge shall meet with the chain crew before the game. The box holder and chain crew should be instructed to place markers, rods and the clip where indicated by the Head Linesman and Line Judge. When a new series begins, the chains should be positioned adjacent to the sideline. The box holder sets up on the sideline and the clip is attached to the chain on the side of the yardline closest to the rear chain rod. When the chains are set, the box holder retreats six feet and establishes the spot where the chains are to be reset after the clip has been attached.

The chains must not be moved or the number on the box changed until the Head Linesman or Line Judge instructs the appropriate personnel to do so. Once instructed to move, the chain crew must move quickly. Chain personnel are to make no remarks to players nor express opinions concerning any ruling.

On free kicks, the chain crew should remove themselves and all equipment outside the limit line. The chains are to be laid down outside the limit line and only the down box is to be used when Team A has a first down inside Team B's 10 yardline, or when Team A attempts an extra point.

### **Meeting With the Ball Personnel**

Coordination with the ball personnel is a critical component to having good ball mechanics during a game. An appropriate pre-game meeting is therefore important. The pre-game conversation is led by the Side Judge and Field Judge. If possible, it is a single meeting with all ball personnel from each team. It is important to remind the ball personnel that they are a part of the officiating crew, and that their behavior must reflect a neutral demeanor.

Additionally, all ball personnel should refrain from "chasing" or "running with" a ball carrier on a long breakaway play and stay at least 2 yards off the sideline during all plays.

There should be a minimum of two ball personnel for each sideline. They should both be aligned halfway between the line of scrimmage and the Referee in the offensive backfield.

A new ball will normally enter through the Side Judge or Field Judge, depending on which side of the field the play ends. If an incomplete pass is thrown down the field, the new ball will enter through the Head Linesman or Line Judge on that side of the field. A new ball enters only when requested by the on-field official. Ball personnel should have a ball available on every play, however, not every play will require replacing the ball. The ball personnel will retrieve the ball on incomplete passes, down outside the hashmarks, punts, or any other situation when the ball is declared dead beyond the line of scrimmage.

## The Coin Toss

Five minutes before the scheduled game time, the Referee and Umpire should move to the center of the field. Upon a signal from the Referee, the Head Linesman & Line Judge escort the team captains to the top of the numbers, then remain there as the captains go to the middle of the field. The Side Judge & Field Judge remain at the sideline keeping the rest of the players off the field, before & after the toss, then meet the other officials in the middle of the field.

The captains should face each other with their backs to their sidelines. Referee introduces himself & the Umpire to the captains and has them shake hands with each other. The Referee should then turn on their field microphone for the rest of the toss. The visiting captain calls the toss, telling the Referee the choice before the Referee flips the coin. The Umpire should audibly repeat the captain's choice before the flip. The Referee can either let the coin hit the ground or catch it.

If the winner of the toss opts to defer their choice until the second half, the Referee stands toward the pressbox clear of the captains, indicates the toss winner by placing their hand on the shoulder of the appropriate captain and gives the choice declined signal.

The Referee then obtains the choice of the other captain by stating, "You want the ball" and waiting for an affirmative reply. The Referee instructs the captain of the team that will receive the kickoff to face the opponent's goal line. The other captain faces their opponent's goal line. The Referee then gives the appropriate signal while standing next to the team that originally won the toss. A catching motion to indicate that the team will receive, or a kicking motion to indicate that they will be kicking off. The officials make a written record of the results of the toss and move to their kickoff positions simultaneously.

If we are using 3-ball rotation mechanics, once it has been determined which team will kick off, the Side Judge (1<sup>st</sup> Half) should take the appropriate game ball to the center of the field and hand the ball to the kicker. For subsequent free kick situations using the 3-ball rotation system the ball person should place the appropriate ball behind the base of the goal post during the try after a touchdown making it easily accessible to the Side Judge, who will stay with the kicking team responsibilities throughout the game. Otherwise, either the Field Judge or Side Judge will bring in the appropriate ball from their sideline.

## Timeout

To indicate which team took the timeout, the Referee "chucks" their hands in the direction of the team. Optionally, the Referee may point to that team. The Referee should use the microphone to announce which team took the timeout and how many it has used for the half.

All officials should record the team requesting the timeout, the quarter and the time remaining on the game clock. The calling official also records the player's number or that the coach called the timeout. Should a coach request a Coach/Referee conference, another official accompanies the Referee to act as a witness in case a dispute arises.

Referee: Stand away from other officials and the players. On the Side Judge's signal, which comes with 15 seconds remaining in the timeout, point to the appropriate sideline officials so they may tell the teams the timeout is over. On the Side Judge's subsequent signal that the timeout has expired, or if both teams return to the field before the time expires, blow your whistle, and give the ready-for-play signal. If a team has used its last timeout of a half, the referee shall inform the head coach.

Umpire: Stand in position to prevent the snap until the Referee moves you off the ball and gives the ready-for-play signal.

Head Linesman & Line Judge: Stay near your respective teams. Inform your coach of the team timeouts remaining for each team. When notified by the Referee, encourage your team to take the field immediately.

Side Judge and Field Judge: Observe team on your side of the field and be ready to assist Head Linesman and Line Judge in getting teams back to the field promptly once the timeout expires. If a team huddles near the sideline, all players and coaches must remain outside the numbers and in front of the team area.

## **Working With the Timers**

The electric game clock and play clock operators are integral members of the officiating crew and game administration. Unfair advantages occur when the clocks are not started or stopped promptly. Great care must be exercised to see that no time lag occurs in starting or stopping the clocks.

### **Game Clock**

***Some of the following procedures may be altered at the state semi-final and final games. Make sure site management provides any changes to the crew well before the game starts.***

The game clock operator will meet with the Side Judge prior to the game. (This is unnecessary if the game is being played at the Dome in Syracuse). The clock operator is to inform them if they will be located in the press box or on the sideline, and to confirm the procedure the officials should use for communicating with the timer during the game.

All pregame and halftime activities will be synchronized with the official game clock. The clock operator should start the game clock 60 minutes before game time. The halftime intermission will be timed on the game clock. The game clock starts when the Referee gives the start-the-clock signal.

The electric clock operator must have an extra stopwatch available in case the game clock malfunctions. The clock operator must immediately contact the officials by whatever means possible, giving them the correct data regarding the official time. The Side Judge will then pick up the correct game time on their stopwatch.

Should the game clock become inoperative, the public address announcer will indicate to the crowd that the game clock will not be official until the malfunction is corrected and subsequent announcement made over the P.A. system. The appropriate official will alert the Referee, who announces the remaining time as often as possible.

The game clock should be stopped whenever a team or an official's timeout is charged, after any score, when a live ball goes out of bounds, on a penalty, when Team A is awarded a first down, when Team B is awarded a first down, or following an incomplete pass. Officials are required to glance at the clock in those situations to ensure that the clock is stopped.

On scrimmage downs, if the game clock has been stopped, it will be restarted on the next snap or when the Referee gives the start-the-clock signal according to rule.

The ball is ready for play when the Umpire places the ball down, steps away to their position and is in a position to officiate. The Referee may ask the Umpire to "stay on the ball" in certain situations and then release them.

Following a loose ball, when the covering official is unsure of the result of the play, give the stop-the-clock signal, sort out the action and then give the appropriate signal.

When the 40-second interval applies, and the game clock is to start when the ball is spotted, the Referee gives the start-the-clock signal.

When the 25-second clock is in force, the Referee will give the traditional ready-for-play signal and blow their whistle.

On all free kicks, the clock starts when the ball is legally touched in the field of play, unless the ball is caught or recovered by a player who is legally down.

The timer should be reminded that the clock is not to be stopped on plays near a boundary line unless an official signals the clock to stop. Many times the ball goes out of bounds after having been declared dead in the field of play and no timeout legally occurs. If a pass is touched or caught out of bounds, the incompleteness signal will stop the clock. On plays that end near the sideline inbounds (within 2 yards of the sideline) in advance of the line to gain, the covering official should give the wind the clock signal and then the stop the clock signal. If this occurs during the last 2 minutes of a half, when time may be crucial, the official will just stop the clock to save time. If this happens, the crew must inform both coaches of the game clock status – the game clock will start on the Referee's ready-for-play signal.

Remind the timer that the official who declares the ball dead will be the first official to signal a timeout when the team in possession of the ball meets the requirements for first down. It is important for the clock operator to key on that official, since the clock will usually stop on long gainers.

Other reminders:

Any official may signal a team timeout, so be alert to stop the clock.

In case of a pile-up anywhere on the field, be alert for an official's signal to stop the clock. Once the congestion has cleared, the Referee will start the clock again before the ready-for-play signal.

The game clock should not be stopped if the play clock is started in error (Example: Clock running with less than 40 seconds in any quarter).

Remind the timer that if the game clock is stopped with two seconds or less in any period and will start on the Referee's signal, run the game clock to zero if the ball is legally snapped, even if the QB spikes the ball.

When the period officially ends, the Referee holds the ball above their head.

## Play Clock

When play clocks are available, they are the official delay-of-game timepiece. The play clock operator will report to the Field Judge prior to the game. (This is unnecessary if the game is being played at the Dome in Syracuse). They should be instructed to set the displays to either 25 or 40 seconds and to start the clocks at the proper time. The following game scenarios, including official's signals and resultant play clock operation, should be reviewed by the Field Judge with the play clock operator:

- Scrimmage down ends with a running game clock (40 second clock starts on covering official's signal)
- Scrimmage down ends with a stopped game clock (40 second clock starts on covering official's signal)
- Touchdown and try (25 second clock starts on Referee's signal)
- Free kick (25 second clock starts on Referee's signal)
- Game clock stopped for injury/helmet off:
  - (offense – 25 second clock starts on Referee's signal)
  - (defense – 40 second clock starts on Referee's signal)
  - (both – 40 second clock starts on Referee's signal)

If the play clock has run down to less than 25 seconds and the ball is not ready for play, the Referee should use signal 07 (alternately raising and lowering their arm in a pumping motion with their palm flat and facing up) to have the play clock operator reset the play clock to 25 seconds.

If there is a delay in getting the play clock operator to reset the play clock or there is an unusual situation, the Referee shall declare a timeout and announce that the play clock should be reset to 25 seconds. The Referee shall then signal the ball ready for play. If the Referee must reset the clock to 40 seconds, the signal is made with both arms.

Play clock operators should be instructed that they are to react to those signals only from the Referee. Another official (Field Judge) may communicate a play clock problem to the Referee by using one of those signals, but only the Referee's signal should result in the play clock being reset.

When the play clock expires and there is a delay of game penalty, the display should be left at zero until the penalty is enforced. When the ball is put in play and there is no delay foul, or if the Referee interrupts the 25/40-second count, the displays should be immediately reset.

At the end of a period, the play clock should be reset to 40 and will not be started when there is less time on the running game clock than the proper time on the play clock.

If there is a malfunction, the play clocks will be turned off until the problem is corrected. Both coaches will be notified if the field play clock is no longer official. The 25/40-second count will then be restarted at 25 seconds with the Field Judge manually timing the count on their watch.

The Field Judge should raise one arm straight overhead when the play clock reaches 10 seconds. When the play clock reaches 6 seconds, the official will count off the last 5 seconds much the same as a basketball official does with a player trying to inbound the ball.

When the ball becomes dead inbounds, the covering official uses the same one arm straight overhead signal to denote the end of the play. That is a signal to the timer that the 40 second play clock should be started after a 2-3 second delay by the clock operator. Note: That signal does not kill the ball. It is to be given after the ball is already dead.

The Referee may employ the 5/5 axiom: In order to adjust the game clock when it has been running, there must be more than a five-second differential if there is more than five minutes remaining in either half. When any time is lost due to the game clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead-ball foul is called, the game clock must be adjusted. Many times the game clock operator will do this on their own – if there is a delay in this happening, the Referee should use their field mic to request the reset by the clock operator. The Side Judge should be noting the time on the game clock after every stoppage so they can provide the correct information to the Referee.

When there is an official's timeout for an injured player or a helmet coming completely off a player, the play clock will be set at 40 seconds for a player of Team B, at 25 seconds for a player of Team A or 40 seconds if players from both teams are involved.

## Free Kicks

***NOTE: The Line Judge and Field Judge will be positioned opposite the press box in the first half and the Line Judge will be responsible for the chains. In the second half the Head Linesman and Side Judge will be opposite the press box and the Head Linesman will be responsible for the chains.***

Mechanics and keys do not change regardless of which side of the field the officials are working, other than responsibility for the chains. The chains must always be set up on the side of the field across from the press box, no matter which team is on that side.

### **Positioning**

**Referee:** Starting position is on the visitor's sideline opposite the press box on Team R's goal line. Count the players on the receiving team and confirm a good count with the Head Linesman who is also positioned on the goal line. Any photographers, stats people etc. need to be positioned outside the limit lines. When players and officials are ready and after the Side Judge has handed the ball to the kicker and retreated to the sideline, sound your whistle, and give the ready for play signal to the kicking team. Be alert for a touchback or a kick beyond the endline. You are responsible for knowing if Team A had at least four players on either side of the kicker.

**Umpire:** Starting position is on the press box sideline on Team R's goal line. Count the players on the receiving team and confirm a good count with the Referee who is also positioned on the goal line. Any photographers, stats people etc. need to be positioned outside the limit lines.

**Head Linesman:** Starting position is on the press box side of the field at the 25 yard line. You have secondary responsibility for counting Team R players. Make sure your sideline is clear of anyone in the 2 yard restricted area near the team box. Anyone else positioned outside the team box area must be outside the limit lines. Be alert for pooch or squib kicks and remind yourself of the rules related to Fair Catch and Kick Catching Interference.

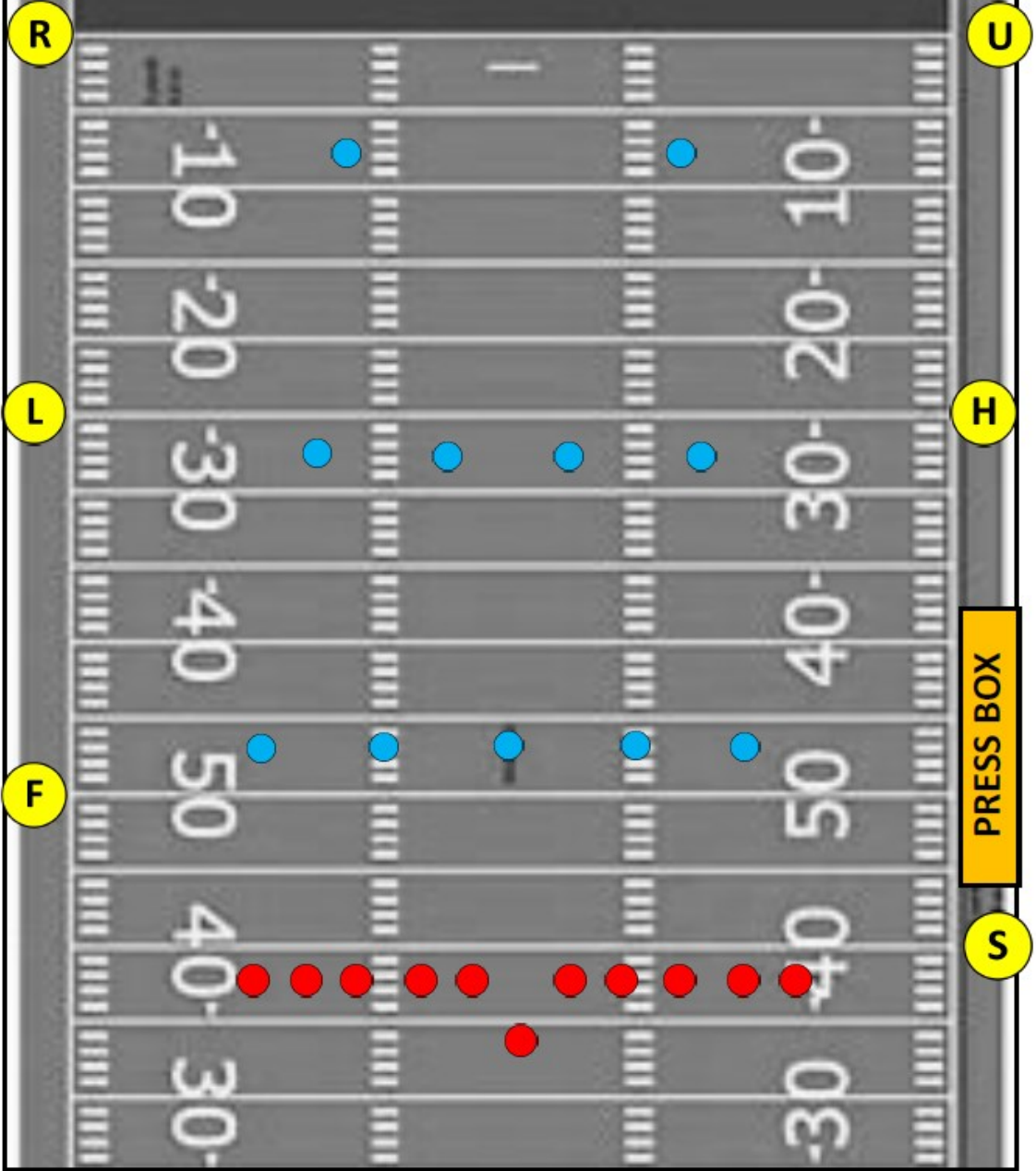
**Line Judge:** Starting position is on the visitors side of the field opposite the press box at the 25 yard line. You have secondary responsibility for counting Team R players. Make sure your sideline is clear of anyone in the 2 yard restricted area near the team box. Anyone else positioned outside the team box area must be outside the limit lines. Be alert for pooch or squib kicks and remind yourself of the rules related to Fair Catch and Kick Catching Interference.

**Side Judge:** You will retrieve a kicking ball from behind the goal post after the try. Move up the press box sideline, clearing the area. (In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half you will move up the visitors sideline). Count the players on the kicking team. Never allow the Referee to blow the ready-for-play signal if the kicking team has anything other than 11 players in formation. Tell the players to count. You have secondary responsibility for the kicking team having at least 4 players on each side of the kicker. Be especially aware of this when a holder is required on a windy day. Move to the center of the field on the 40 yard line and hand the ball to the kicker. Point out the location of the Referee. Your starting position is on the press box sideline on Team K's restraining line at the 40 yard line. In the second half you will line up on the visitor's sideline.

**Field Judge:** Move up the visitor's sideline, clearing the area. (In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half you will move up the press box sideline). Count the players on both teams. Come onto the field of play to the top of the numbers and then retreat to your starting position at the 50 yard line.

1st HALF

# Free Kick Positions





## Free Kicks

### Coverage

*During the pregame warm-up on the field, observe the kickers to determine how far they can kick the ball. You can then adjust your position accordingly during the game.*

**Referee:** Wind the clock when the ball is legally touched in the field of play, unless the ball is caught or recovered by a player who is legally down. The kick is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line either touched or untouched by the receivers. Be aware of momentum. If the kick is fielded toward your sideline, stay on the sideline, and move up the field observing action around the runner. You are responsible for the sideline from Team R's endline to Team R's 25-yard line. If the kick is fielded between the numbers, angle onto the field and cover the runback from behind. Watch for illegal blocks and other fouls.

**Umpire:** Wind the clock when the ball is legally touched in the field of play, unless the ball is caught or recovered by a player who is legally down. The kick is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line either touched or untouched by the receivers. Be aware of momentum. If the kick is fielded toward your sideline, stay on the sideline, and move up the field observing action around the runner. You are responsible for the sideline from Team R's endline to Team R's 25-yard line. If the kick is fielded between the numbers, angle onto the field and cover the runback from behind. Watch for illegal blocks and other fouls.

**Head Linesman:** When the ball is fielded between the numbers, observe the action in front of the runner and officiate from the outside in. Wind the clock when the ball is legally touched in the field of play, unless the ball is caught or recovered by a player who is legally down. If the runner moves downfield into the Side Judge's area, clean up behind the runner. If the runner moves outside the numbers on your side, you are responsible for the sideline from Team R's 25 yard line to Team K's 40-yard line. Watch for illegal blocks and other fouls. After the play, hustle down to get the new ball relay from the appropriate sideline.

**Line Judge:** When the ball is fielded between the numbers, observe the action in front of the runner and officiate from the outside in. Wind the clock when the ball is legally touched in the field of play, unless the ball is caught or recovered by a player who is legally down. If the runner moves downfield into the Field Judge's area, clean up behind the runner. If the runner moves outside the numbers on your side, you are responsible for the sideline from Team R's 25 yard line to Team K's 40-yard line. Watch for illegal blocks and other fouls.

**Side Judge:** Watch for encroachment by Team K. After the kick, watch for illegal action on the kicker, illegal blocks, and illegal touching. Move very slowly downfield and officiate from the outside in when the runner is in your area. If the runner moves outside the hash toward your sideline, you are responsible for the sideline from Team K's 40-yard line to Team K's endline. Keep your cushion - if the runner breaks off a long run, you have the goal line.

**Field Judge:** Watch for encroachment by Team R. You are responsible for knowing if the kicker has executed a "pop-up" kick, and should kill the play immediately if this happens. After the kick, watch for illegal blocks, and illegal touching. Move very slowly downfield and officiate from the outside in when the runner is in your area. If the runner moves outside the hash toward your sideline, you are responsible for the sideline from Team K's 40-yard line to Team K's endline. Keep your cushion - if the runner breaks off a long run, you have the goal line.

## Onside Kick Positioning and Zones

**Referee:** Starting position is in the center of the field at Team R's 5-yard line. When players and officials are ready and after the Side Judge has handed the ball to the kicker, sound your whistle, and give the ready for play signal to the kicking team. Be alert for a deep kick.

**Umpire:** Starting position is on the 25 yard line on the press box side of the field. Be alert for deep kicks, as well as pooch kicks or squib kicks. Wind the clock on a legal touch. If the ball is kicked to the opposite side of the field you can come onto the field to officiate, but stay outside the near hash in case the reverses field.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge:** Starting position is at the sideline on the 50-yard line. If the kick is to your side, watch for 1st touching & illegal blocks. If the kick is away from you, watch for illegal blocks. Wind the clock when appropriate. If the ball is kicked deep, come back towards the receivers' goal line, but don't go past the 40 yard line. Stay off the field. Watch for illegal blocks and other fouls.

**Side Judge and Field Judge:** Starting position is on the sideline at Team K's 40-yard line. Ensure that Team K has the proper number of players on either side of the kicker. If the kick is to your side, watch for 1st touching & illegal blocks. If the kick is away from you, watch for illegal blocks. Wind the clock when appropriate. On the runback, watch for illegal blocks and other fouls. Be ready to cover the runner to the goal line if they break off a long return.

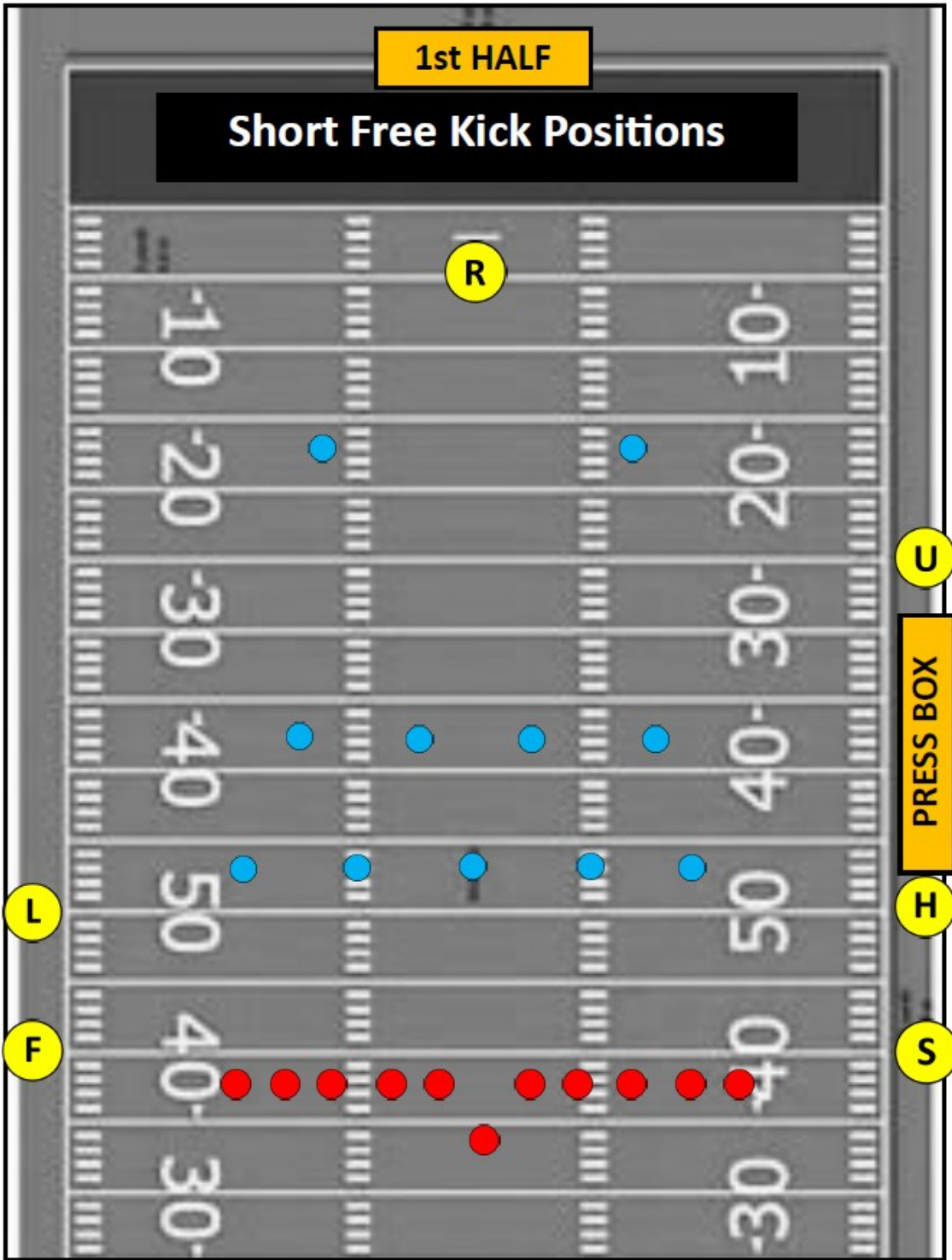
## Onside Kick Coverage

Kickers have developed a strategy in which they kick the ball in such a way that it hops crazily, making it difficult for Team R to recover it. As a result, officials must be prepared to follow the bouncing ball and the action around it. Also be on the alert for the kick that is intended to land behind the Team R players on or near its free-kick line.

Not all onside kick situations result in short kicks. Teams may attempt to trick the receiving team by kicking the ball deep. In that instance, the Referee must be prepared to take primary coverage of the runner for a greater distance than normal. The Umpire will have primary responsible for the runner on pooch and squib kicks that go past the receiving team's free kick line. The Line Judge and Head Linesman must move quickly downfield to observe the inevitable rush of players downfield or cover the runner if they are in their area. The Field Judge & Side Judge must take the runner if they break off a long run, and watch for illegal acts in front of the runner.

1st HALF

# Short Free Kick Positions



# Scrimmage Plays

## Positioning and Zones

**Referee** — Always work on the throwing-arm side of the quarterback, at least as wide as the tight end and 12 to 14 yards deep. Get into a position deep and wide where you may comfortably see the ball and backs and the tackle on the far side, except the flankers or a man in motion toward you.

**Umpire** — The starting position is on the side opposite the tight end, generally five to seven yards off the ball, but is variable according to the formations of both teams. Always avoid a position that will interfere with linebackers and adjust your distance behind the defensive line according to the width of Team A's formation. Whenever possible, coordinate your position with the Referee for the best coverage of interior line play.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge** — The starting position on all plays is in the white off the sideline and on the line of scrimmage.

**Field Judge and Side Judge** — The basic starting position is in the white off the sideline and approximately 20 to 25 yards deep or deeper than the deepest defensive back.

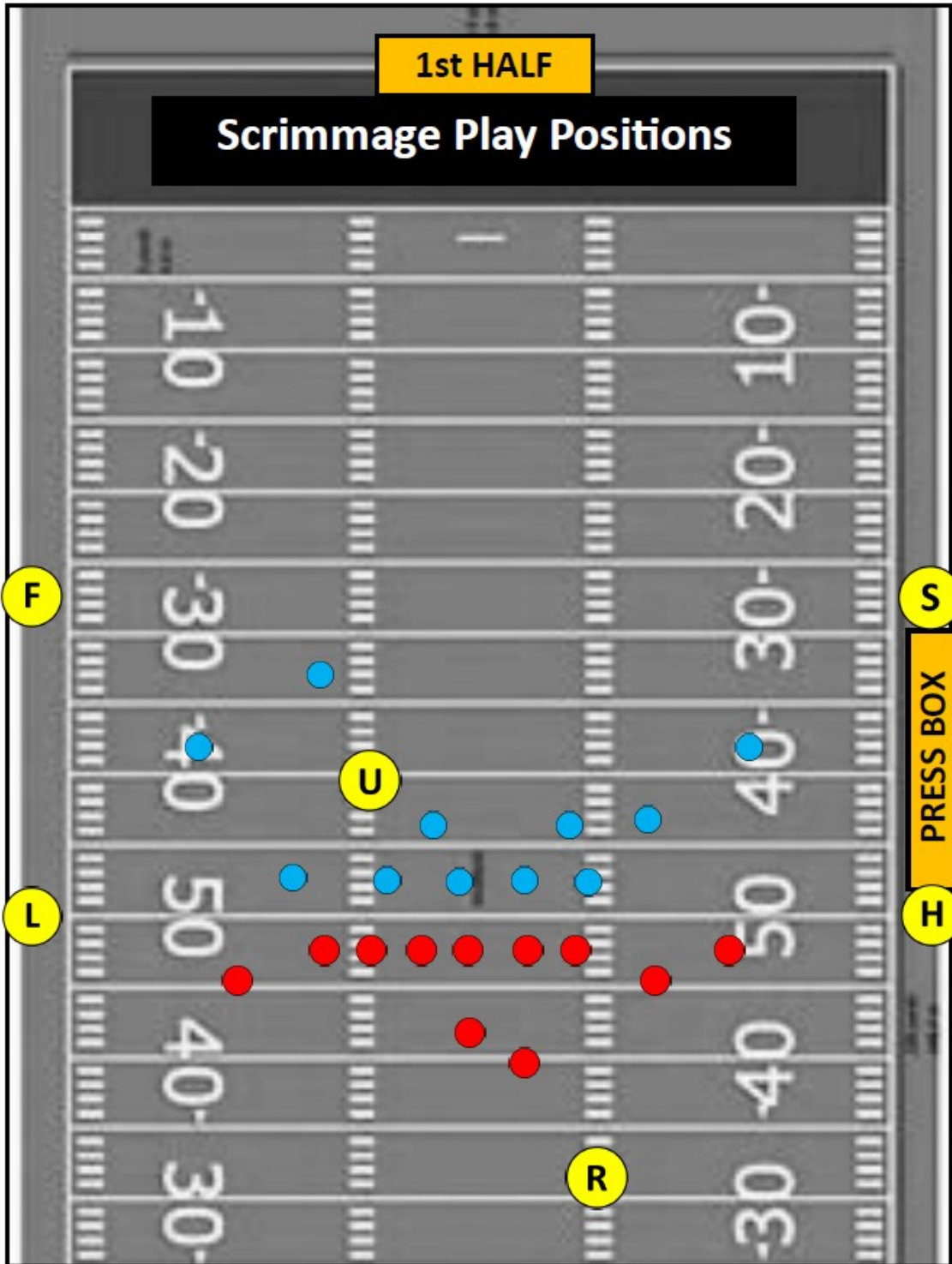
## Running Play Coverage

**Referee** — After the snap, observe the action behind the line and the runner to the neutral zone, as well as action on the ball and the quarterback on handoffs and backward passes. If the play is not run in the direction of your original position, move toward or parallel to the scrimmage line, maintaining position approximately in line with the runner's progress. If the play is run in the direction of your position, stay deep enough so you do not have to step back to allow necessary clearance. As the play develops, move toward, or parallel to the scrimmage line and maintain a position approximately in line with the runner's progress.

Close in on the ball when it becomes dead and there is no threat of a foul. On plays into the line, if the runner is driven back after forward progress is stopped, retrieve the ball from the runner and relay it to the official who is covering the spot. On option plays, if the quarterback keeps the ball and turns upfield, assume responsibility for the trailing back until there is no longer a threat of a foul. After any change of possession, be alert for action on the quarterback, who is a defenseless player. Specifically, be alert for targeting fouls at all times and illegal blocks when the quarterback is clearly out of the play.

1st HALF

# Scrimmage Play Positions



**Umpire** — After the snap, read the point of attack and the action on or by the interior linemen. When a hole opens, move away from it as nearly lateral as possible. As the play develops between the tackles, your primary responsibility is to cover the action of players at the point of attack, then behind the ball and finally around the runner. On short, quick runs through the line, between the tackles in close formation, declare the ball dead when a quick run terminates in front of you, directly beside you or when a fumble is recovered in your vicinity. You are responsible for obtaining the forward progress from the wing official who is nearest to the dead-ball spot, or the wing official who is holding the cross-field spot.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge** — Your initial position should prevent you from ever being caught in too close. After the snap, observe the initial action on or by the interior lineman nearest you and by the offensive player who is your designated responsibility. Observe the blocking in front of the runner behind the line of scrimmage or in neutral zone. Cover the runner in your side zone as far as possible beyond the line of scrimmage and out of bounds. Release the runner to the deep wing official when the runner reaches the deep wing and cover the action behind the runner. You still are responsible for the dead ball progress spot, even on very long plays. As you are coming to the spot the deep wing official should be communicating the correct yard line. On option plays toward a wing official, the covering official observes the trailing back. When you are responsible for marking forward progress, do it by extending your downfield foot. Do not run around or jump over players. Converge rapidly on the dead-ball spot when play in your area permits. When the flow of play is away from your position, move cautiously toward the flow and clean up action behind the play.

**Side Judge and Field Judge** — After the snap, observe action on or by the widest receiver on your side of the field, paying special attention to crackback blocks. Cover your sideline by keeping a cushion ahead of the runner or pass receiver. You are responsible for the goal line on these long plays – get there 1<sup>st</sup> whenever possible. The short wing on your side will be coming downfield to mark the dead ball spot. Share the correct yard line with them as they approach and continue to dead ball officiate.

## Goal Line Positioning and Zones

**Referee** — Starting position and coverage the same as for other scrimmage plays. Signal a score only if you're positive all requirements have been met. The Referee must be alert for the quarterback "walking into the snap." The quarterback may not be moving toward the line of scrimmage when taking the snap; all Team A players must be set before the ball may be legally snapped. Watch also for Team A players helping the runner.

**Umpire** — Starting position needn't be as deep as for other scrimmage plays. When the ball is snapped on or inside Team B's 10-yard line, you are responsible for determining if the passer was beyond the line of scrimmage.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge** — Starting position is the same as for any scrimmage play. When the ball is snapped from Team B's 15-yard line and in, move toward the goal line at the snap. Be alert for a pass.

### **Field Judge and Side Judge** —

When the ball is snapped at the 25 yard line going in, The Side Judge & Field Judge will position themselves on the sideline at the goal line.

When the ball is snapped at the 20 yd line going in, The Side Judge & Field Judge will position themselves on the sideline 5 yards deep in the end zone. This enables them to go to the end line on a pass play or come to the goal line on a run play.

When the ball is snapped at the 15 yd line going in, The Side Judge & Field Judge will position themselves on the sideline 5 yards deep in the end zone. This enables them to go to the end line on a pass play or come to the goal line on a run play.

When the ball is snapped at the 10 yd line, The Side Judge & Field Judge will position themselves on the end line at the hash marks. The Head Linesman and the Line Judge will have to hustle to cover the goal line.

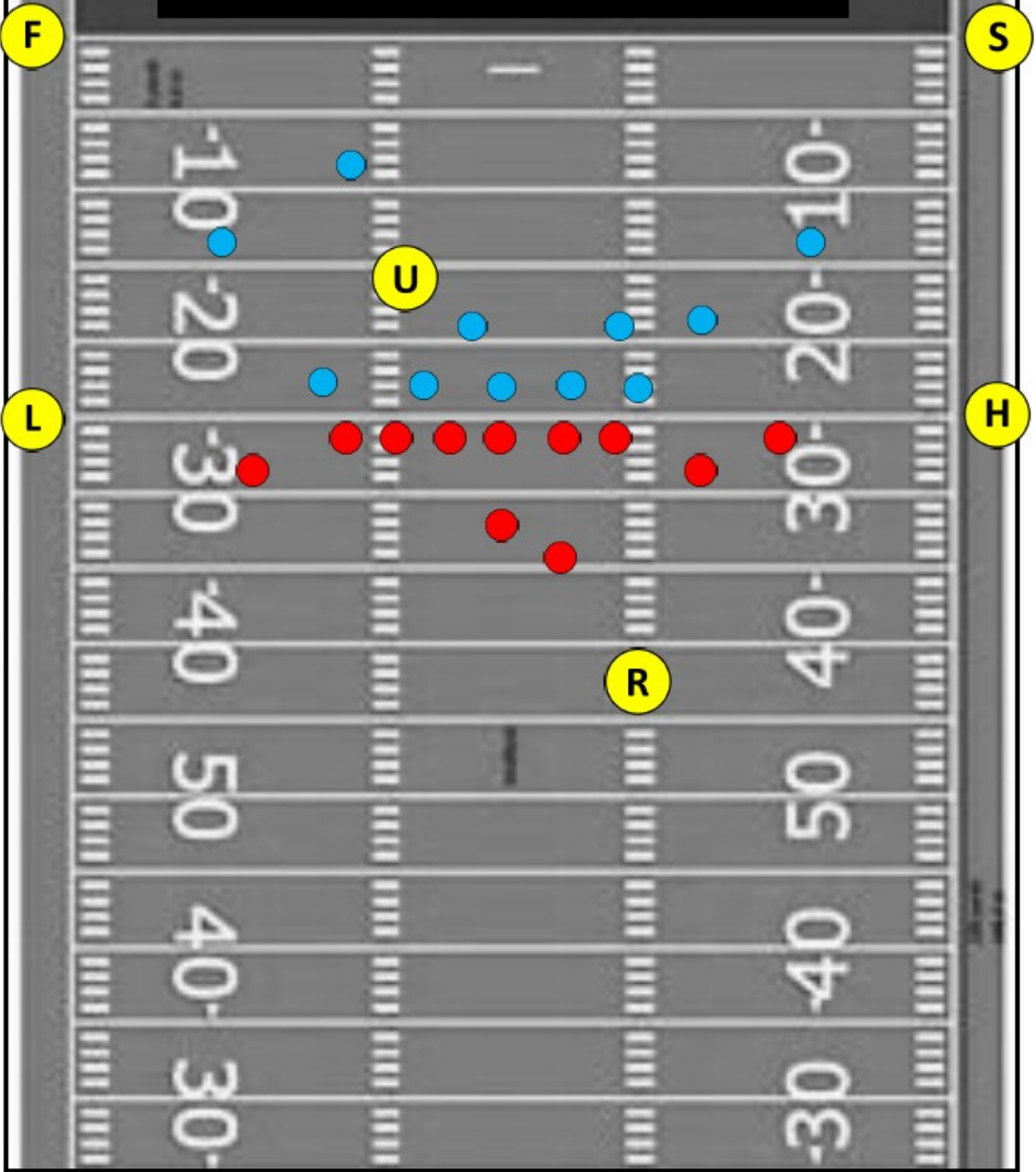
On passes to the back corners of the end zone, the Side Judge or Field Judge and covering short wing official work in tandem to rule on the catch.

### **Reverse Goal Line Mechanics**

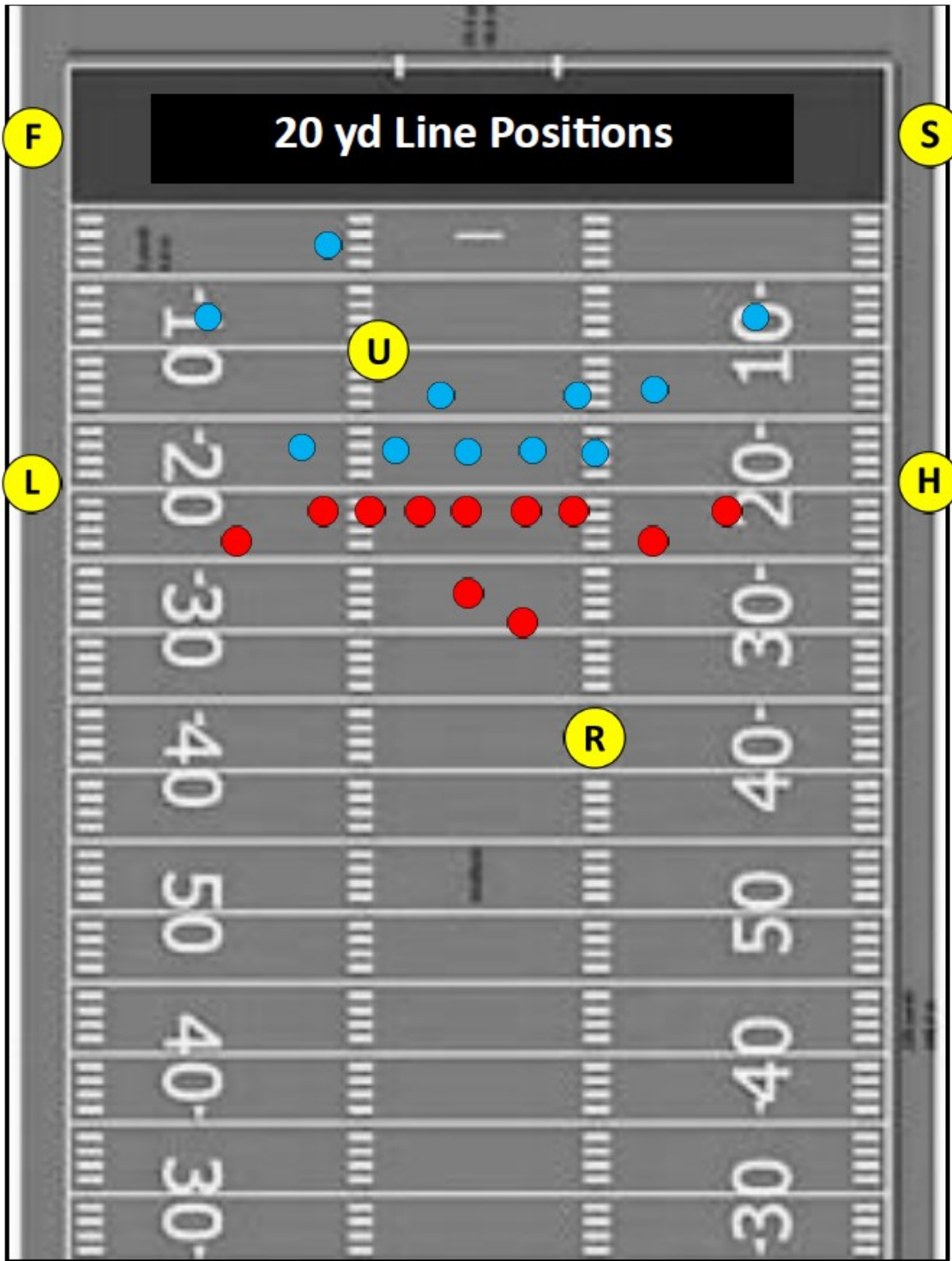
When Team A snaps the ball on or inside its own 5-yard line the Head Linesman and Line Judge must use reverse goal line mechanics. Move immediately to the goal line at the snap – you must rule on whether it is a safety when a runner is tackled at the goal line.

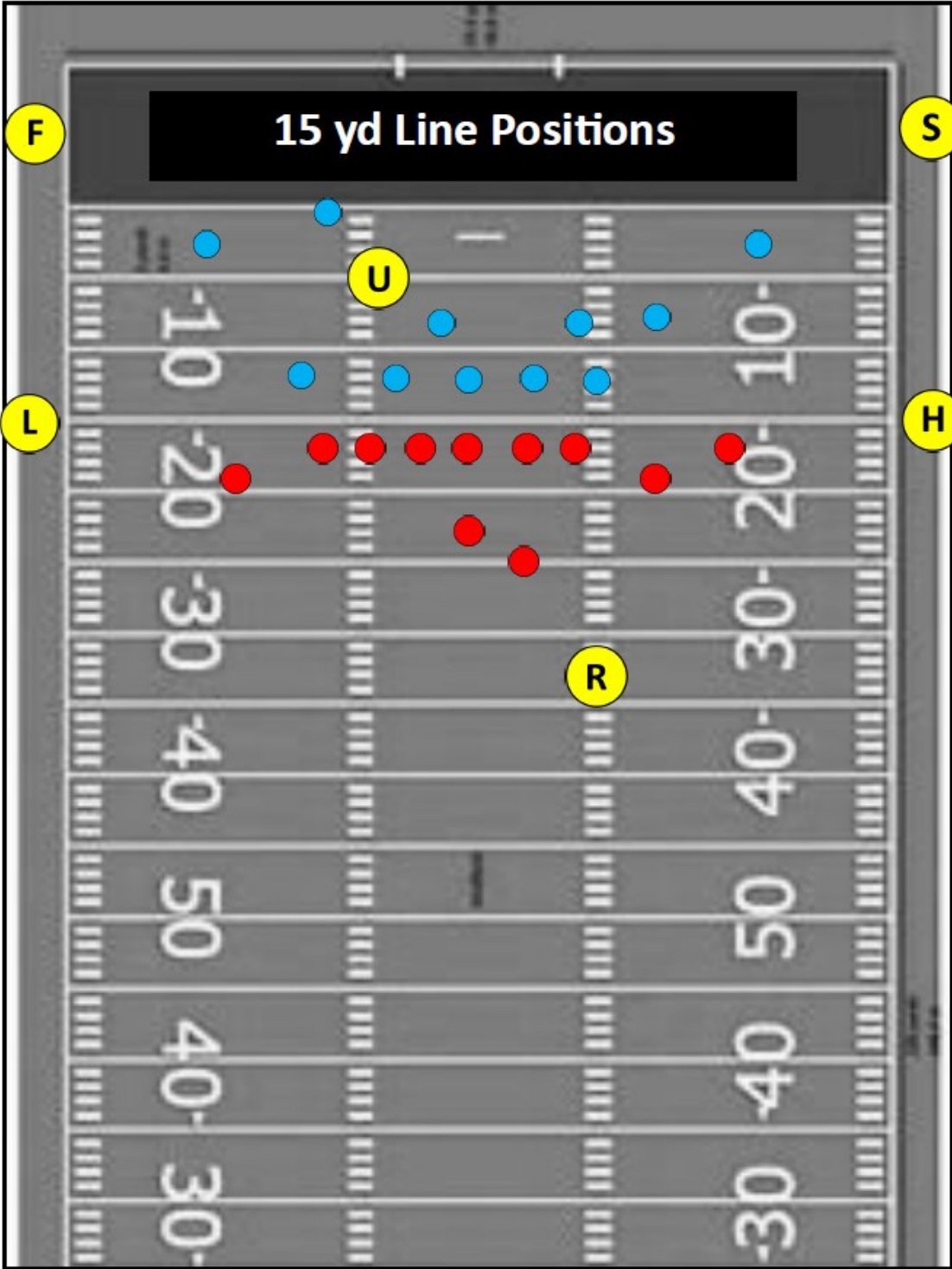
Remember that a Team A runner must advance the ball completely over the goal line to avoid a safety. Be alert for fumbles and know which team provided the impetus for a ball that goes into the end zone.

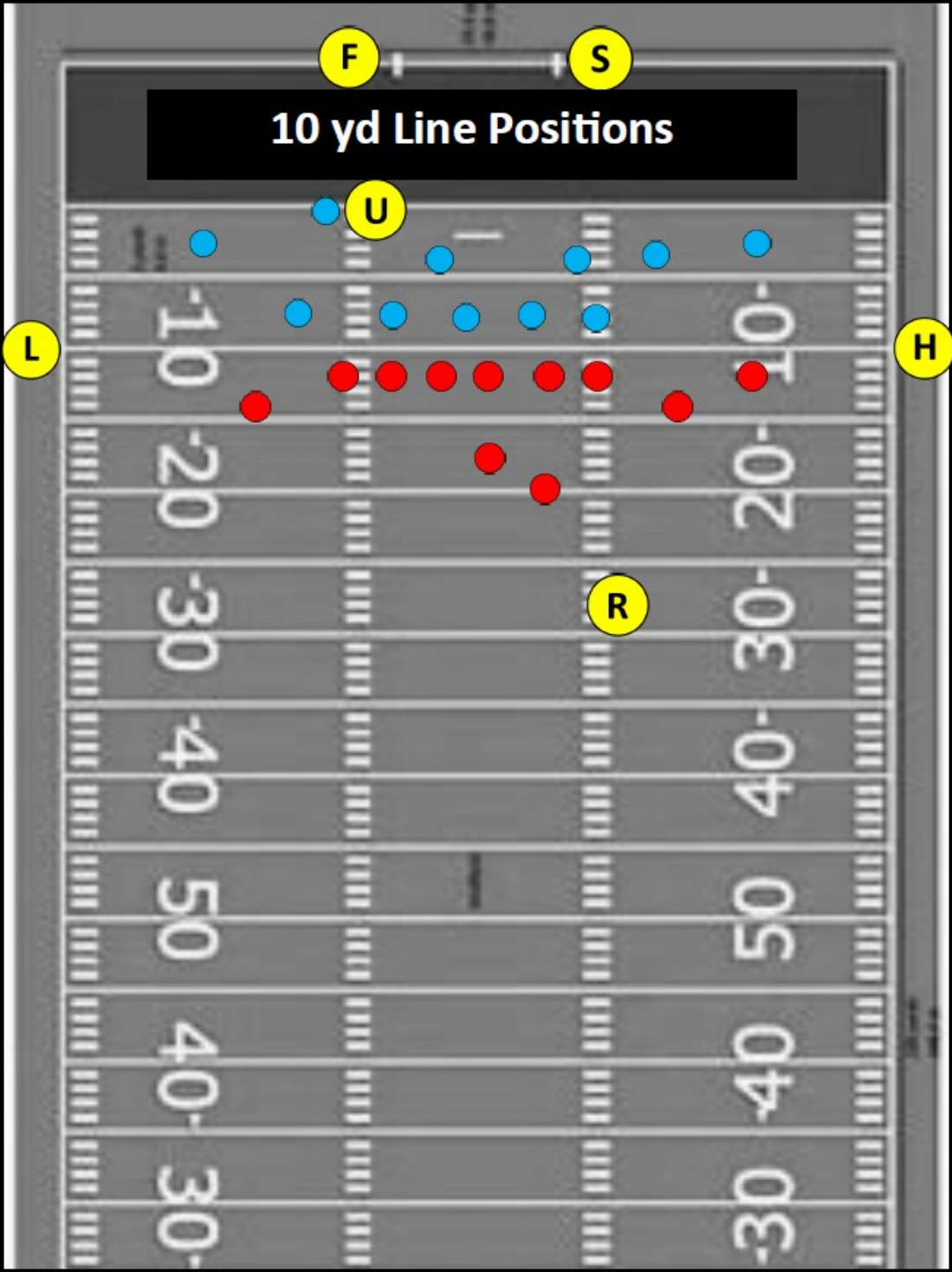
# 25 yd Line Positions









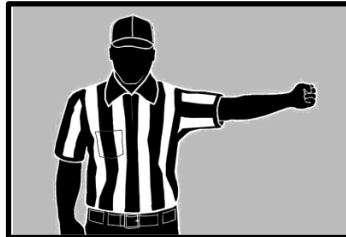


## Reading and Understanding Keys

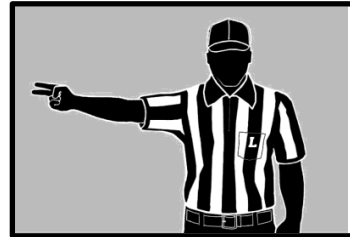
Play Pic A



Play Pic B



Play Pic C



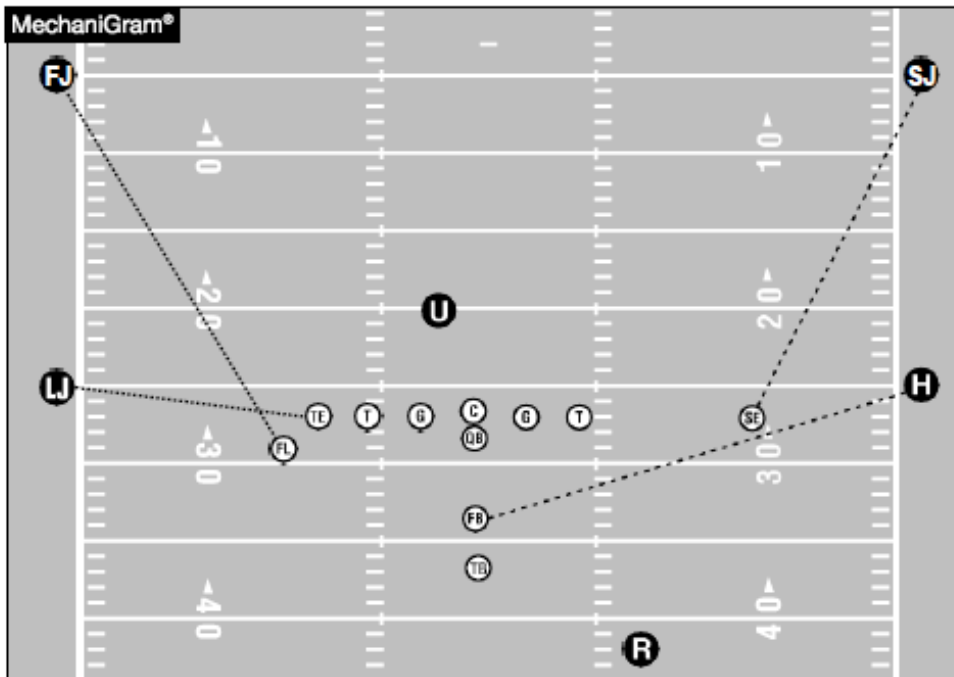
Three signals help identify keys. In (PlayPic A), the official indicates an unbalanced line to their side. The unbalanced side of the line usually has no more than two eligible receivers.

An outstretched fist (PlayPic B) helps a wing indicate the closest receiver is off the line. Use two fingers and a wave of the outstretched arm over the head and back to the side to indicate two receivers off the line (PlayPic C).

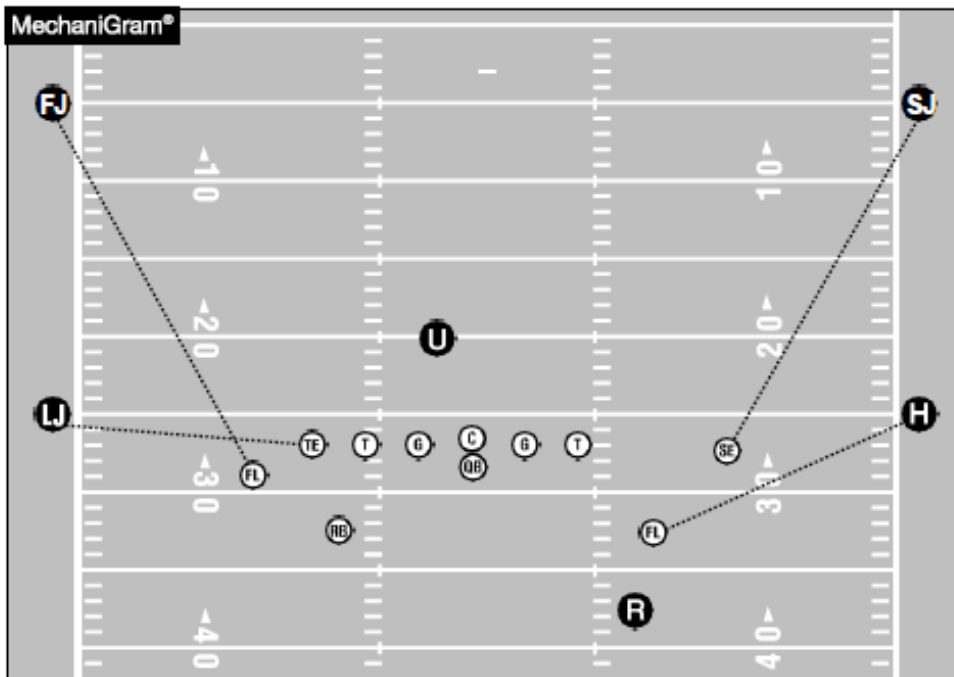
Because keys are often determined by whether a Team A player is on or off the line, the signal should be given from the moment Team A takes its initial set positions. Subsequent shifts may require the official to either drop the arm or raise it. The signal should be given until the ball is snapped.

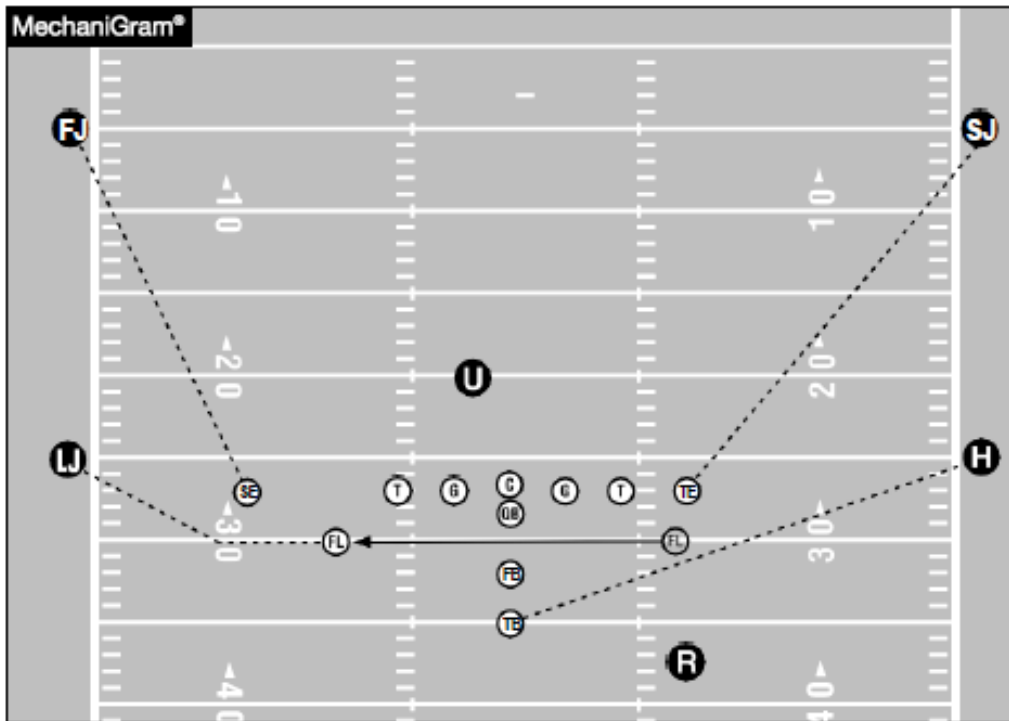
### Other important elements about keys:

- The strength of the formation is determined by the number of eligible receivers on each side of the formation. The tight end will usually (but not always) be on the strong side.
- In a balanced formation, strength is declared to the Line Judge's side.
- A tight end is the end man on the line and no more than four yards from the nearest offensive lineman.
- A back is a player in the backfield between the tackles at the snap.
- A trips formation is one in which three or more receivers are positioned outside the tackles on the same side of the ball.
- Motion may change the strength of the formation.

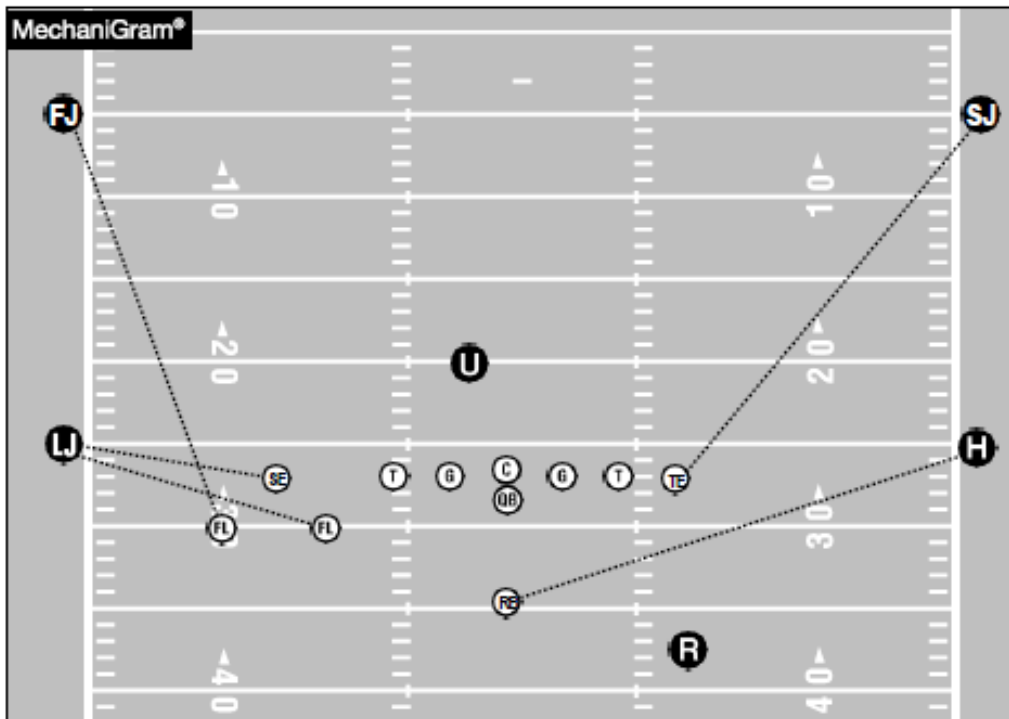


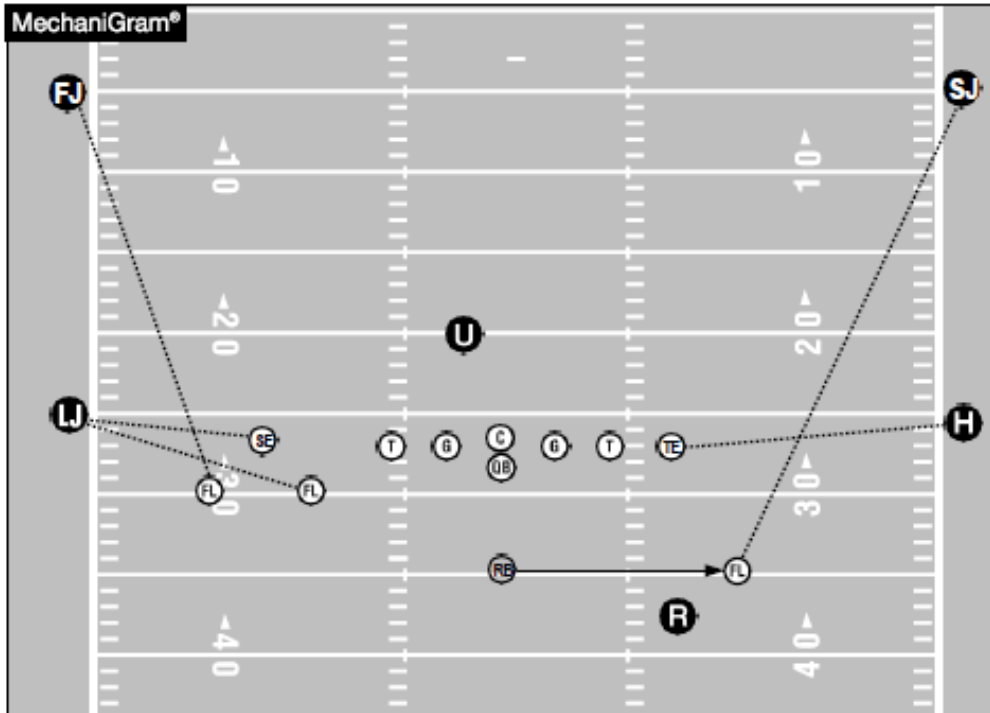
KEYS: PRO-SET WITH SPLIT BACKS



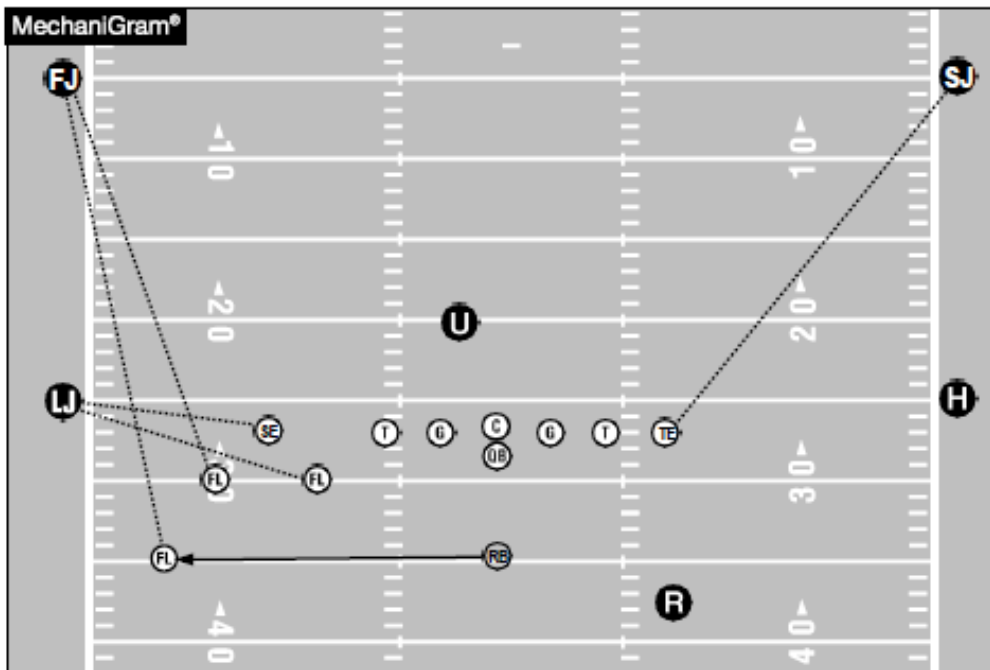


KEYS: TRIPS

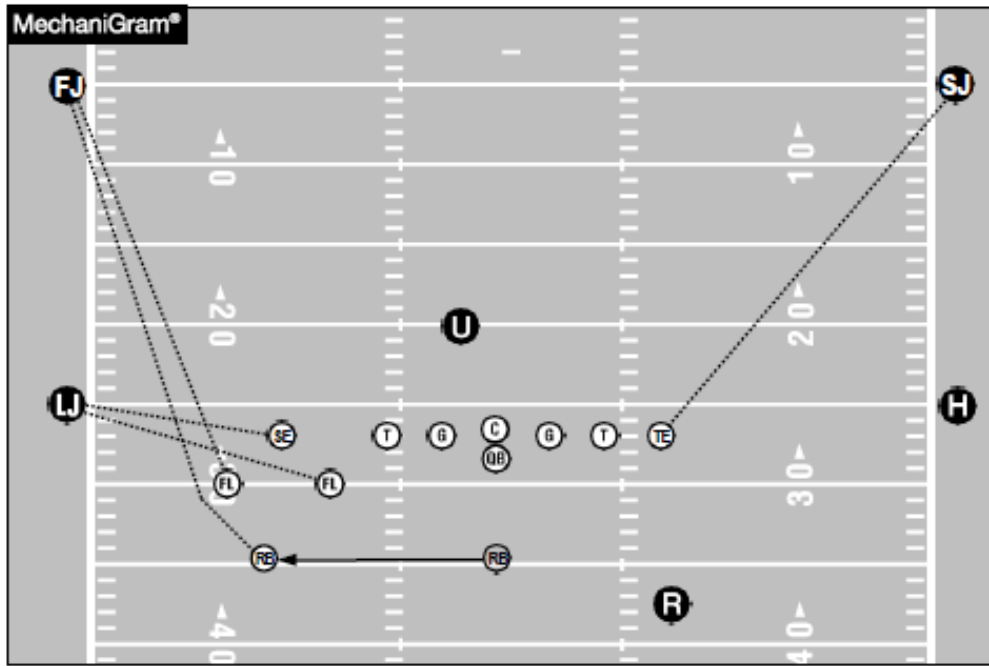




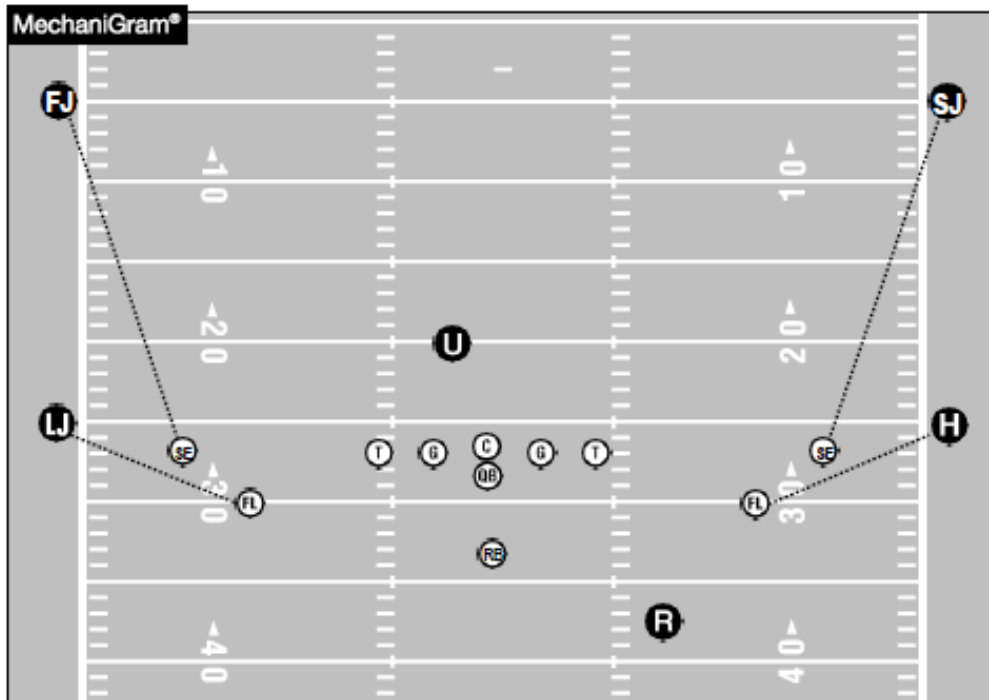
KEYS: TRIPS WITH MOTION TOWARD TRIPS;  
MOTION MAN IS WIDEST



**KEYS: TRIPS WITH MOTION TOWARD TRIPS;  
MOTION MAN IS NOT WIDEST**

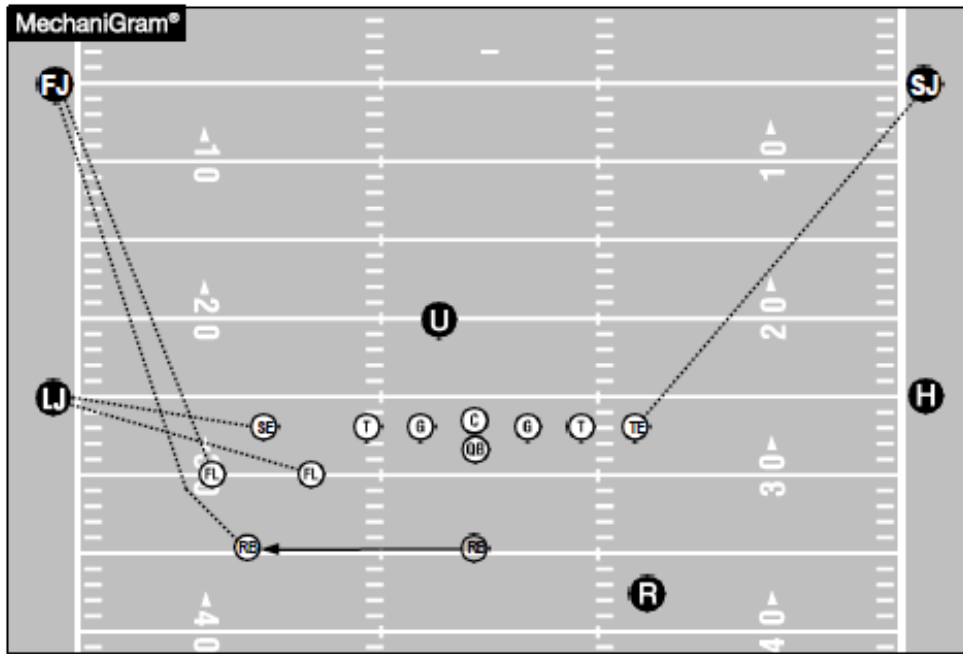


**KEYS: RUN AND SHOOT (DOUBLE WING)**

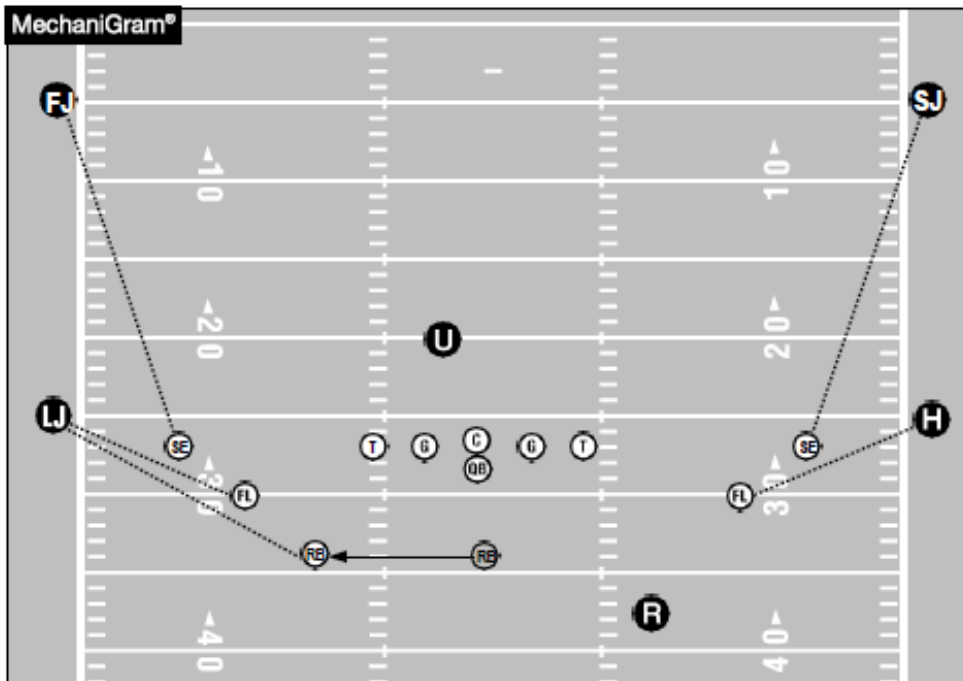




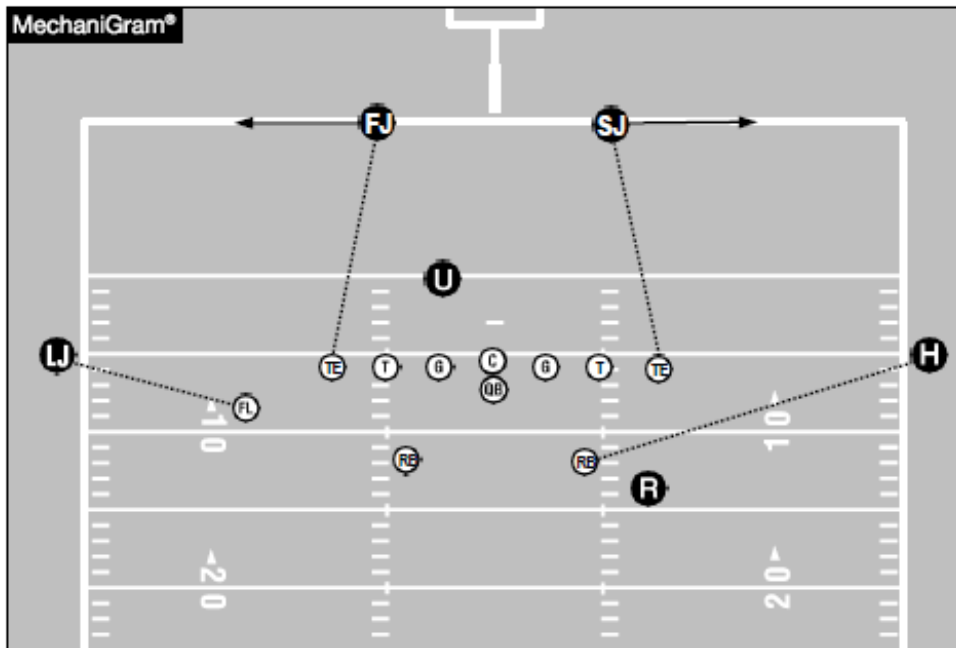
**KEYS: RUN AND SHOOT MOTION INTO TRIPS;  
MOTION MAN IS WIDEST**



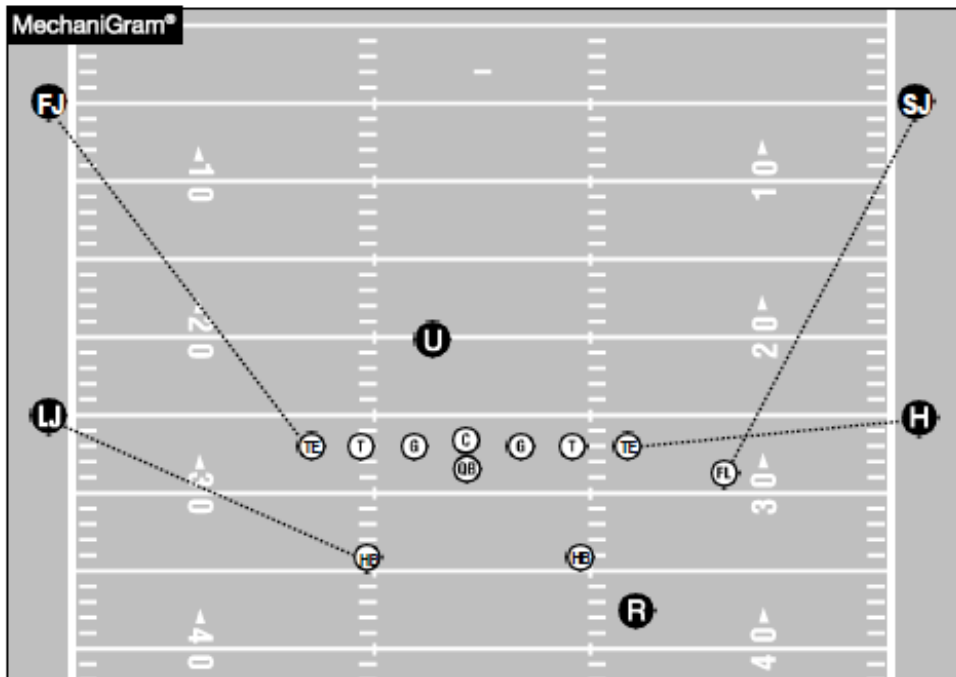
**KEYS: RUN AND SHOOT MOTION INTO TRIPS;  
MOTION MAN IS NOT WIDEST**



**KEYS: GOAL LINE (AT OR INSIDE TEAM B'S FIVE YARDLINE), TWO TIGHT ENDS**



**KEYS: OUTSIDE TEAM B'S FIVE YARDLINE, TWO TIGHT ENDS**



## Forward Pass Coverage

**Referee** — Observe dropback blockers in your vision and the passer, who is your responsibility until there is no threat of a foul. Be prepared to rule on intentional grounding; you may consult other officials on the position of an eligible receiver. When the quarterback drops back, retreat to maintain a 12- to 14-yard cushion. Observe the tackle on the far side. After any change of possession, be alert for action on the quarterback, who is a defenseless player. Specifically, be alert for targeting fouls at all times and illegal blocks when the quarterback is clearly out of the play.

**Umpire** — When you read forward pass, move toward the edge of the expanded neutral zone. You have secondary responsibility for ineligibles downfield, whether the pass is caught behind or beyond the line & whether the QB is beyond the line on a forward pass. Be prepared to pivot on low-trajectory and short passes and assist on ruling on trapped passes. Continue to observe your area of responsibility as long as there is a threat of action. Cover continuing action around the runner in the side zone. When the ball is snapped on or inside Team B's 10-yard line, your secondary responsibilities become primary.

**Head Linesman** — When you read forward pass, watch your key receiver and action in the crackback zone. Move slowly off the line five yards. You are responsible for covering pass receptions from the line to 15 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. Observe action on and by receivers in your area. If the pass is thrown out of your area, observe the action of players other than the pass receiver. Be prepared to determine whether a quick pass thrown toward you is forward or backward. You are primarily responsible for the legality of a forward pass near the line of scrimmage. On a play away, look for ineligibles downfield.

**Line Judge** — When you read forward pass, watch your key receiver and action in the crackback zone. Remain on the line of scrimmage until the ball crosses the line. Observe action on and by receivers in your area. If the pass is thrown out of your area, observe the action of players other than the pass receiver. Be prepared to determine whether a quick pass thrown toward you is forward or backward. You are primary on ruling whether or not a pass crosses the line of scrimmage. You are also primarily responsible for the legality of a forward pass thrown near the line of scrimmage, as well as for ineligibles downfield.

**Side Judge and Field Judge** — Initial movement when reading pass is about 10 to 15 yards downfield. Observe contact on your eligible receiver and the defensive back. Cover the sideline from your original position to the endline. Maintain deep positioning (cushion). Cover the play and watch the defenders' actions on the receiver when the ball is thrown in your area. If the pass is to the opposite deep wing's sideline, move into the field to cover the middle of the field, but do not come past the near hash. Be alert for eligible receivers out of bounds and for an illegal pass; observe touching or catching by an ineligible player; watch particularly for holding or illegal chucking of eligible receivers and all contact beyond the neutral zone before and after the pass is thrown.

**All** — When ruling on a reception at the sideline, give only the incomplete signal or the timeout signal if the pass is complete beyond the line to gain). You may use the "wind the clock signal" when the runner is down within 2 yards of the sideline. The "sweep" signal may be used if an airborne player receives a pass near the sideline and first returns to the ground out of bounds, or the "bobble" signal if a receiver fails to maintain control of the ball before going out of bounds or to the ground. On a tight reception at the sideline, the "catch" signal may be used after you stop the clock. Be sure the result of the play is properly communicated to the Referee.

# Punts

## Positioning

**Referee** — Take a position behind the kicker, wider than the tight end position and on the kicking-foot side. See the ball from snap to kick and observe the blockers and kicker at the same time. If the kicker is on or outside the endline, warn the kicker before the snap.

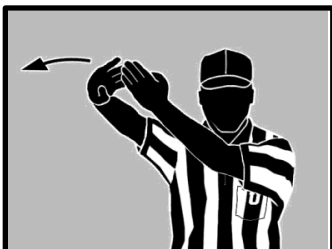
**Umpire** — On a punt, the Umpire should adjust their position to 10 yards off the line. Find a spot that allows you to observe the action on and around the snapper.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge** — Take your basic position. Be alert for the “pull and shoot”. Hold your position until the ball crosses the line. Observe blocks by the wing back on your side as well as blocks by the punt shield.

**Side Judge** — With a beanbag in hand, take a position on your sideline approximately 5-7 yards behind the deepest receiver. When the ball is snapped at or inside Team B’s 35-yard line, take an initial position at the goal line pylon so you can cover a kick going out of bounds or into the end zone. Adjust your position to the ability of the kicker.

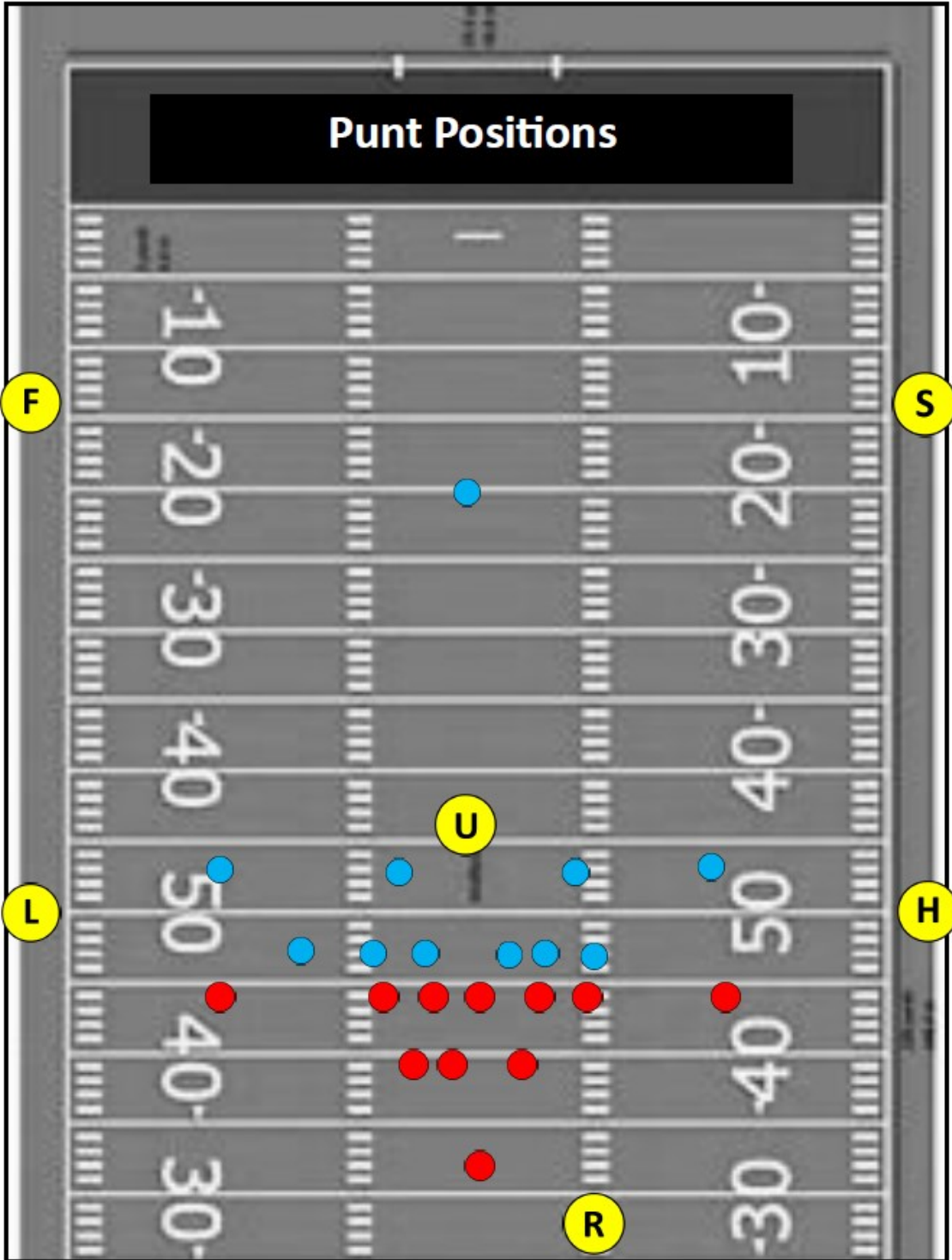
**Field Judge** — With a beanbag in hand, take a position on your sideline approximately 5-7 yards behind the deepest receiver. When the ball is snapped at or inside Team B’s 35-yard line, take an initial position at the goal line pylon so you can cover a kick going out of bounds or into the end zone. Adjust your position to the ability of the kicker.

## Coverage



The legal touching signal shown in the PlayPic is crucial because some rules apply or don’t apply if Team B touches the kick. For instance, partial touching of the kick may legalize certain contact on the kicker that would otherwise be a foul. Although the Referee or Umpire will be the officials most likely to use the signal, any official who sees such touching should signal.

# Punt Positions



**Referee** — Secondarily responsible for observing the shield in front of the kicker. Observe players while proceeding slowly downfield if the kick remains inbounds. If the flight of the kick is toward a sideline, move quickly to a position in line with the flight. Raise your hand, signaling the covering official to begin moving up the sideline toward the area where the ball went out of bounds. When the covering official reaches the spot, chop down with your arm. During the pregame, discuss with the deep officials what to do if you are not aware of the spot. Be alert for action on the kicker, who is a defenseless player after kicking the ball, during the kick and on the return. Specifically, be alert for targeting fouls at all times and illegal blocks when the kicker is clearly out of the play.

**Umpire** — Be alert for the pull and shoot. Observe the line at the initial charge, checking blocks of Team A and action by Team B players. Pay particular attention to the Team B player over the snapper. After players go past your position, turn, and move toward the return area to observe the entire picture by players of either team. If the kick is short or partially blocked, assist in determining if the ball crosses the neutral zone.

**Head Linesman** — Primary for observing the shield in front of the kicker. After the snap, hold your position until the ball is kicked. Move slowly downfield after the kick crosses the line, covering play ahead of the runner if the Side Judge has the runner. On a long return, you have the goal line. You are responsible for helping with a player who blocks after signaling for a fair catch.

**Line Judge** — Remain on the line of scrimmage until the ball crosses the neutral zone. You are responsible for determining if the ball crosses the neutral zone. Move slowly downfield. Cover the play ahead of the runner if the Field Judge has the runner. On a long return, you have the goal line.

**Side Judge** — When the kick is to the opposite side of the field, you may move onto the field but never past the top of the numbers. Cover action in front of the receiver. If the Field Judge goes with the ball, you have to help with action on/by the receiver. If the kick is to your side, you have the receiver. Follow the ball if the receiver fails to field the kick. If the return is to your side, take the runner. Be prepared to rule on the legality of handoffs on the return. You are responsible for marking the end of the kick with a bean bag.

**Field Judge** — When the kick is to the opposite side of the field, you may move onto the field but never past the top of the numbers. Cover action in front of the receiver. If the Side Judge goes with the ball, you have to help with action on/by the receiver. If the kick is to your side, you have the receiver. Follow the ball if the receiver fails to field the kick. If the return is to your side, take the runner. Be prepared to rule on the legality of handoffs on the return. You are responsible for marking the end of the kick with a bean bag.

**SJ & FJ** — If the kick is to the middle of the field, the Side Judge will take responsibility for the receiver, and then the ball. The Field Judge will cover action in front of the receiver.

**All** — Watch for recovery and advance of blocked kicks and also be prepared for fake kicks. The covering official must drop a beanbag on the yard line where the kick ends. Don't hesitate to call a foul that occurs away from your position if you are certain a foul occurred.

## Scoring Kicks

### **Positioning and Zones**

**Referee** — Starting position is one to three yards behind and at least five yards to the side of the potential kicker, facing the holder. Observe the motion of the backs within your line of vision and action on the kicker and holder. Be prepared to move with the ball if the snap cannot be controlled by the holder. Cover as usual if the play results in a run or pass. Signal a score only after being positive that requirements are met.

**Umpire** — Initial position is at least seven yards deep. Observe line play and defensive action on the snapper, and be alert for the “pull and shoot.”

**Head Linesman and Line Judge** — Take regular positions and be ready to cover your sideline from the line of scrimmage to the goal line. You are both responsible for covering the play on short field goal and try attempts and fake field goals, and for knowing whether or not the kick crossed the goal line. The Line Judge is responsible for knowing whether or not the kick crossed the line of scrimmage. After the play, pinch in toward the middle of the field and clean up.

**Field Judge and Side Judge** — Take positions behind the goalpost to look up the upright of the goal on your side of the field. You are responsible for ruling on the success or failure of field-goal & Kick Try attempts. The official nearest the ball rules on the play, communicating the ruling with the other official, who then mirrors the signal. When the attempt narrowly passes outside an upright, the official nearer the ball may give a sweeping motion with both arms away from the upright after giving the “no good” signal. Both should be prepared to move out into position to cover a play in the end zone or on short field goal and try attempts. Be prepared for illegal touching or batting of ball, a blocked kick or a kick striking an upright or crossbar. If the ball strikes the crossbar, the Field Judge is responsible for the ruling. Both officials have sideline and endline responsibilities.

**All** — Do not sound your whistle until you are certain the ball is dead by rule.

