



HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL OFFICIAL'S 4-MAN MECHANICS

1. All officials should arrive at the game site for a:
4 PM game; 15 minutes if possible before game start.
7 PM game; 15 minutes minimum before game start.
2. The official listed first is the Crew Chief. He does not have to be the Referee but is responsible for all paperwork (sportsmanship report).
3. Let the Athletic Director or Game Manager know that you have arrived. Check with him to confirm the starting time and if there are any special events prior to and/or during half time of the game. If so, has the visiting team been advised?
 - a) Check to see if the time will be kept on the scoreboard clock or on the field.
 - b) Check to see that they have a Chain Crew and request that they are on the field 5 minutes prior to game time to meet for a review with the linesman.
4. Referee and Umpire should visit each team on the field and review with the head coach the following:
 - a) Team Captains – Four (4) maximum – get names (first and last) and numbers.
 - b) Get the passer's number and find out if he is right or left-handed. Then get the kicker's number and find out if he is right or left-footed.
 - c) Get team jersey colors.
 - d) What type of game balls do they use and do they have a ball person to keep the extra ball? (Get one legal game ball from each team)
 - e) Towels for the umpire and ball person if it is damp or raining and who will handle them.
 - f) Synchronize Time – Let the coach know that you **EXPECT** him to have his team ready for the coin toss three (3) minutes before game time.
 - g) Ask him if his team meets all requirements for **LEGALITY** and **SAFETY RULES** as specified by the rules of the **National Federation Football Rules Book**. He **MUST** respond **YES**.
 - 1) Ask the coach if any players have Eye Shields (if so they must be clear) and ensure they are properly fastened to the helmet.

2) Ask the coach if ALL players have mouthpieces. **PIAA's recommendation as of 1998 is for teams to wear colored mouthpieces.**

3) Ask the coach if any equipment needs to be inspected. If so, the **UMPIRE** will rule on its legality. His ruling is **FINAL!**

4) Review the "**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PROCEDURES**" and the enforcement.

h) Ask him if he has unusual plays that you should be aware of.

i) Discuss the sideline rule for three (3) coaches only. **IT WILL BE ENFORCED!**

j) Wish him and his team Best of Luck.

5. **Entrance Onto the Playing Field:**

a) Linesman will go to the side opposite the press box.

b) Linesman to locate the Chain Crew (at least 3, preferably 4 persons) and review how he wants the crew to work. Make sure the chains have the tape at the 5-yard measurement.

NOTE: Chains must be located off the field of play.

c) Linesman to locate the ball person for his side of the field and review how he wants him (her) to work. Make sure they have a towel.

NOTE: Of course this may not be needed if both teams are using the same ball, which will be supplied by the home team.

d) Line Judge will go to the press box side of the field.

e) Line Judge will do the same as the Linesman for ball boys as noted in "C" above.

f) The Referee will check both 3-yard lines, etc.

6. **Pregame Ceremonies (Coin Toss):** (3 minutes before game time)

a) The Referee and Umpire will move to the center of the field and indicate to Linesman and Line Judge to escort the captains to the center of the field for the coin toss.

b) The Linesman and Line Judge will stop at the hash mark. Advise the ball boy to be ready to give the Linesman or Line Judge a ball as soon as it is determined which team will kick the ball. **DO NOT TAKE A BALL OUT ON THE FIELD DURING THE COIN TOSS.**

NOTE: Have the talking captain positioned so he will be next to the Referee in the center of the field for the coin toss.

c) The Referee will face the scoreboard and the Umpire will face the Referee. Captains will introduce themselves to each other and the Referee will introduce the crew to the opposing captains.

- d) The Coin Toss – The winners will select one of the following:
 - 1) Receive
 - 2) Kick
 - 3) Defend a Goal
 - 4) Defer their options until the second half.
- e) After the coin toss, the Referee will complete his procedure, showing the options that the captains have selected to the press box.
- f) Then all officials will meet at the 50-yard line at the center of the field, to review and write down what each team has selected. Then all officials will proceed to their positions at the same time – **TROTting**. Either the Linesman or Line Judge will secure the ball that the kicking team will be using to start the game.

7. Kickoff Positions:

REFEREE: Position yourself on the Press Box side of the field opposite Linesman, inside the sideline, at about R’s 5 or 10 yard line. Count “R” players and verify with U & LJ.

UMPIRE: Position yourself on the side opposite the Press Box and the Line Judge, at R’s 20 yard line. Count “R” players.

NOTE: Be prepared to move up in the event of a possible onside kick.

LINESMAN: You secure possession of the ball. Hand the kicker the ball and instruct the kicker not to kick the ball until the Referee has sounded his whistle. Point out the position of the Referee. Count K’s players. Move to the sideline at K’s free kick line opposite the Press Box. **MAKE SURE YOUR SIDELINE IS CLEAN.**

NOTE: Should there be a penalty that dictates re-kicking, you will administer the penalty and signal the press box with the proper signal and repeat the procedure above.

LINE JUDGE: Receivers line on the opposite side of the chains. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO GO TO THE CENTER OF THE FIELD.** Count “R” players. **MAKE SURE YOUR SIDELINE IS CLEAN.**

NOTE: Be aware of the 50-yard line.

8. Referee should review:

- a) Counting “R” and verifying with umpire on every play. Striving to verify count while in huddle. Give visible signal when “A” gets into initial formation.
- b) After ball is spotted for a down checking quickly with all officials to be sure that they are ready.

- c) Sliding into backfield and set up in a position most advantageous to the situation prior to snap.
- d) Always looking to view players in backfield as well as tackle on far side.
- e) Be alert for legality of formation, movement and motion of backs and false starts in backfield.
- f) Use tackle on far side as key to read type of play.
- g) Keep wide of action allowing a good view in and behind runner.
- h) Help with spotting ball on quick plays into middle and long incomplete passes.
- i) Always be aware of free blocking zone and which backs are in the zone at snap.
- j) Protect passer at all times and stay wide and deep of passer. Don't get too close; when passer drops back "R" should drop back.
- k) Use beanbag for forward progress spots on sacks in order to stay with QB.
- l) Be aware of quarterback throwing motion to rule on possible fumble. Be alert for intentional grounding.
- m) Don't get caught following flight of pass, keep focused on action in backfield and cleaning up action of blockers.
- n) Be wide on kicks on kicker leg, for punts. For pat's and field goal on open side of holder. Be aware of open side of field. You have to rule on ball going through the uprights.
- o) Be aware of action around kicker and holder.
- p) Be alert for blocked punts or kicks.
- q) Be ready to rule on out of bounds spot for kicks going out in flight. Cover procedure with LJ and L. If they have a good spot have them put hand up immediately.
- r) Repeat all scoring signals to press box.
- s) Time all time outs and the 25 second count.

9. Linesman should review:

- a) Before the game, introduce yourself to the **HEAD COACH**. Let him know you will communicate with him throughout the game. Develop a **GOOD RAPPORT**. Use **TACT** when communicating with sideline.
- b) Review the following with chain crew:
 - 1) Keep chains and box 1-2 yards off sideline.
 - 2) Never move chains or box until so directed by linesman.

- 3) Change number of down only at linesman's direction.
- 4) Keep chain tight at all times.
- 5) Set box at place indicated by linesman giving you downfield heel. Stakes will setup on box.
- 6) Insert clip on chain at rear most edge of rear most yard line between stakes. Do this on every series.
- 7) Use clip inside the 10 yard line to mark down box position.
- 8) If linesman directs you to move but you observe something that could keep us from moving chain (flag), call this to his attention **immediately**.
- 9) Instruct box man to place box at forward stake for measurements.
- 10) Move quickly when so directed.
- 11) When action of players looks like it will approach your area, drop chains and down box and retreat from sideline.
- 12) If no ballboy is used, retrieve ball on extra point attempts.
- 13) Reminder, you are part of officiating crew. Discourage crew from rooting and talking to players or coaches. Offer no criticism on decisions.
- 14) Provide chain clip to crew.

- c) Know where your sideline is.
- d) Has 120 yards of sideline coverage.
- e) Motion man coverage.
- f) Quick pass coverage.
- g) Pass coverage. Read you key, was he held?
- h) Scrimmage Kick Coverage [Punt – Field Goal – Extra point (Kick or Run)]. Help with action on kicker and holder for field goals and pat's.
- i) Signal backward pass with arm extended. Hold whistle if ball hits ground, get spot if it goes out of bounds.
- j) Crack back blocks. Watch for legality.
- k) Defensive holding on pass play.
- l) Keep track of downs, check that the down marker is correct and signal to referee the next down.
- m) Run out of bound coverage.
- n) Know eligible and help with ineligible receiver(s) down field.
- o) Assist with 7 men on the line of scrimmage.
- p) Assist the Referee if you know the **QB INTENTIONALLY** grounded a pass.
- q) Maintain **CLEAN** sideline.

- r) Help with getting the second ball into the Umpire under situations.
- s) You are to count the defensive players the entire game and communicate via signal to the Line Judge that you have 11 players on the field.
- t) Observe “A” tackle – read run/pass.
- u) Be alert for illegal snap.
- v) General Mechanics:
 - 1) Work wide (wider is better).
 - 2) No need to line up inside numbers.
 - 3) When ball is snapped from your hash, line up off field.
 - 4) Accordion in during dead ball interval.
 - 5) Always use downfield foot for forward progress spot. Heel of spot foot never in advance of toe on other foot.
 - 6) Always use downfield heel to set the chains.
 - 7) Use hand to side of face (federation signal) to indicate unbalanced line. Look for ineligible receivers. Use hand closest to defense.
 - 8) Be aware of ball position in relation to 5 yard tape.
 - 9) Check referee’s signal for 11 players on offense and count players in backfield.
 - 10) Signal with arm extended (federation signal) if end is off the line. Hold until snap. If man goes in motion, drop arm.
 - 11) Use rear most foot to indicate line of scrimmage to end.
 - 12) After kick try or field goal, slide back to 5 yard line and pinch in.
 - 13) Bean bag in hand for free kicks.
 - 14) Use wind the clock signal (2 winds) for plays ending outside the numbers but inbounds.
 - 15) Signal with hands at side and palms facing to sideline (federation signal) to indicate last play ended out of bounds.
 - 16) Use signal of 2 forefingers coming together to indicate pinch in on this play.
 - 17) Never turn your back to the field of play during dead ball interval when play ended inbounds.

- 18) Run Try for 2 points to your side that is short of goal line, always signal no good (incomplete) whether progress was stopped on 6 inch line or for a 10 yard loss.
- 19) Signal “two stakes”, arms crossed over chest (federation signal), to indicate more than 10 yards for 1st down.
- 20) When in doubt pass is incomplete.
- 21) Square off forward progress spots.
- 22) Pinch in until you meet resistance. Never step over or around players.
- 23) Make eye contact with umpire/line judge on questionable catches between you and him before signaling.
- 24) Hustle but don't hurry.
- 25) **See the ball** before blowing whistle!

10. Umpire should review:

- a) Count the number of players on the line of scrimmage and make sure you have 5 with the proper numbers (50-79) on the line of scrimmage during scrimmage plays. Count 11 offensive players and verify with Referee.

NOTE: EXCEPTIONS – Kicks, Punts, Extra Points, and Field Goals.

- b) Watch for holding.
- c) Watch for ineligibles down field on passes.
- d) On passes, move up on the line of scrimmage to make sure the passer does not go over the line of scrimmage when passing.
- e) Assist on pass coverage on the short pass over the middle. (Turn & Look)
- f) Will spot the ball after each play.
- g) Will mark (step) off all penalties.
- h) Will assist the Referee in handling the ball between quarters.
- i) Will keep track of the position of the ball on the field for each play.

11. Line Judge should review:

- a) Before the game, introduce yourself to the **HEAD COACH**. Let him know you will communicate with him throughout the game. Develop a **GOOD** rapport. Use **TACT** when communicating with sideline.

- b) Know where your sideline is.
- c) Has 120 yards of sideline coverage.
- d) Motion man coverage.
- e) Quick pass coverage.
- f) Pass Coverage. Read your key, was he held? Recognize formations and get off quick.
- g) Scrimmage Kick Coverage, [Punt (move downfield before snap) – Field Goal – Extra Point (Kick or Run)].
- h) On field goal and pat's, move to end line to determine if ball passes over or under crossbar, if under signal no score immediately.
- i) Signal backward pass with arm extended. Hold whistle if ball hits ground, get spot if it goes out of bounds.
- j) Crack back blocks. Watch for legality.
- k) Defensive holding on pass play.
- l) Know where the line of gain stick is and assist the Referee on plays that end close to that spot.
- m) Run out of bound coverage.
- n) Know eligible and help with ineligible receiver(s) down field.
- o) Assist with 7 men on the line of scrimmage.
- p) Assist the Referee if you know the **QB INTENTIONALLY** grounded a pass.
- q) Maintain **CLEAN** sideline.
- r) Help with getting the second ball into the Umpire under situations.
- s) You are to count the defensive players the entire game and communicate via signal to the Linesman that you have 11 players on the field.
- t) Observe the game clock to be assured it is starting, stopping and generally functioning properly.
- u) Observe "A" tackle – read run/pass.
- v) Be alert for illegal snap.
- w) General Mechanics:
 - 1) Work wide (wider is better).

- 2) No need to line up inside numbers.
- 3) When ball is snapped from your hash, line up off field.
- 4) Accordion in during dead ball interval.
- 5) Always use downfield foot for forward progress spot. Heel of spot foot never in advance of toe on other foot.
- 6) Use hand to side of face (federation signal) to indicate unbalanced line. Look for ineligible receivers. Use hand closest to defense.
- 7) Check referee's signal for 11 players on offense and count players in backfield.
- 8) Signal with arm extended (federation signal) if end is off the line. Hold until snap. If man goes in motion, drop arm.
- 9) Use rear most foot to indicate line of scrimmage to end.
- 10) Bean bag in hand for free kicks.
- 11) Use wind the clock signal (2 winds) for plays ending outside the numbers but inbounds.
- 12) Signal with hands at side and palms facing to sideline (federation signal) to indicate last play ended out of bounds.
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- 14) Never turn your back to the field of play during dead ball interval when play ended inbounds.
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- 17) When in doubt pass is incomplete.
- 18) Square off forward progress spots.
- 19) Pinch in until you meet resistance. Never step over or around players.
- 20) Make eye contact with umpire/linesman on questionable catches between you and him before signaling.
- 21) Hustle but don't hurry.
- 22) **See the ball** before blowing whistle!

12. Review Procedure when you have a Penalty:

- a) Immediately upon completion of the play, report to the Referee, **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, and WHERE**. Stay with the Referee while he is giving the options to the captain(s).
- b) Other Officials should:
 - 1) Cover the flag.
 - 2) Maintain the spot where the play ended.
 - 3) Go to the enforcement spot to assist the Referee and Umpire.
 - 4) Secure another ball and have ready to hand to the Umpire.
- c) The Referee should give a preliminary signal to the press box, then have the team captain face his team's sideline and give him his options. Once he has made his choice, give the results to the umpire so he may administer the penalty. Then give the signal again to the press box.

NOTE: If it is anything strange, go to the sideline and explain it to the head coach and then go over the opposing head coach and give him an explanation also.

- d) Make sure that the Linesman or Line Judge knows the details of the penalty so he may communicate it to the head coach on his sideline.
- e) The official on the offending team's sideline should obtain the penalty, who did it, and report it to the head coach.
- f) Mark down all unsportsmanlike penalties and ejections, team, quarter, time, number and type of penalty. They are sometimes requested by the conferences or commissioners following the game or on a game report.
- g) U & L should agree on location of succeeding spot prior to placing ball on the ground.
- h) Every official has responsibilities on every play.

13. Procedures and Positioning on Authorized Conferences:

REFEREE: Free to roam. Time the 60 second interval; at 45 seconds, signal Linesman and Line Judge.

UMPIRE: Responsible for the ball and observe ball.

LINESMAN: Keeps track who goes off or on the field on his sideline should the coach elect to come onto the field. **If the coach elects the team to go to the sidelines, he must make sure that there are only 11 players in the huddle and they must stay in front of the team box and within 5 yards of the team's sidelines.** When 45 seconds has elapsed, the referee will

give a visual signal to the Linesman and Line Judge to notify the coach that the ball will be **MARKED READY-FOR-PLAY** in 15 seconds.

LINE JUDGE: His responsibility is the same as the linesman for his sideline.

NOTE: All Officials keep track of which team called time out and checks with fellow officials on how many time outs each team has remaining.

14. Procedures and Positioning between Period:

a) When the First and Third Quarters expire:

NOTE: Teams may go to the sidelines to confer with their coach(s). If so, the Linesman and Line Judge, after completing their responsibilities listed below should position themselves near the team(s) huddle to advise them when the time out has expired and the teams should return to the field.

REFEREE: Records the yard line the ball is on, the down, the yards to gain and the position on the field. Also he notes from what yard line the umpire stepped off the position of the ball. Time 60 second interval.

NOTE: Referee may wish to handle the ball himself between periods.

UMPIRE: Steps off the ball. Give the Referee the following information so he can mark it down. Down – Yards to Go – Position on the field – What yard line he is using to determine the yard line that the ball is on.

LINESMAN: Records the down, yards to go, and what yard line he is placing the chain clip on. He should make a mental note as to which stick is in what position.

LINE JUDGE: Determine the yard line the ball is on and the position on the field and take both teams to the spot where the ball will be positioned to start the next quarter. Also keep an eye on the teams so they do not attempt to harass each other.

b) The Referee should once again review to see that everything remained the same as it was at the end of the previous quarter.

15. Procedures and Positioning on Measurements:

REFEREE: Advise the offense of the measurement and ask the QB and/or Captain to go up to the ball area to view the measurement.

UMPIRE: Handle the ball until the sticks arrive and then handle the front stick.

LINESMAN: Make sure the clip is secure to the chain in the proper position and proceed onto the field to the position where the Line Judge is positioned.

LINE JUDGE: Take a position on the yard line where the linesman has picked up the chains. Position a foot where you want the linesman to place the chain clip down for the measurement.

16. Half Time Procedure:

- a) At the conclusion of the first half and both teams have left the field, the Referee will signal to the Clock Operator to start the clock for half time. The Line Judge will also start his clock to time half time.
- b) All officials will go to the home team bench.
- c) Review any situations that occurred in the first half.
- d) When 7 minutes has elapsed the Linesman and Line Judge should go to their team to prepare them to return to the team bench. When 10 minutes have elapsed, the teams should be on the field for the required 3 minutes warm up time.
- e) When both teams return to the field, the Referee will signal for the scoreboard clock operator to start the clock at 3 minutes for loosening up.
- f) When the 3 minutes has expired, get the team captains. The Referee and Umpire will again TROT captains to the center of the field for selection of options. The Linesman and Line Judge should refer to 5 B & C.
- g) The Linesman should make sure the chain crew has returned and is ready.
- h) After the Referee gives the options to the captains and signals their choices, all officials meet at the center of the field on the 50 yard line, where the Referee will review what the captains choose, and then break and TROT to your respective positions for the second half kick-off.

NOTE: Once again, have the team's ball person right behind you. You should know which team is going to kick off to start the second half.

17. Instructions to the Clock Operator:

- a) Have you operated this clock before and are you familiar with the operations of it?
- b) Do you run anything other than the time? Down, Yards to Go, Yard Line the ball is on, etc.? If so, starting and stopping the clock is your **FIRST** and **FOREMOST PRIORITY**, then the other functions.
- c) What do you have to do to reset the time, should be need to do so?
- d) Does it have a horn or siren on it? Is it automatic or manual? If the horn can be operated manually shut it off.
- e) Has the clock malfunctioned before?

- f) Do you have access to a phone or headset that comes down to the field? If so, what sideline is it on?
- g) Time for the half time is 10 minutes (8 for JJ). **PUT 10 MINUTES ON THE SCOREBOARD CLOCK.**
- h) Once **BOTH** teams are back on the field after half time, put 3 minutes on the scoreboard clock.
- i) Take your signals from the covering officials. The Referee will relay the signal if it's along the sideline.
- j) Review the following:
 - 1) Ready For Play
 - 2) Starting The Clock
 - 3) Stopping The Clock
 - 4) If A Penalty Flag Is Thrown
 - 5) If We Start The Clock In Error
 - 6) Incomplete Passes
 - 7) First Downs
 - 8) Injured Players
 - 9) Scoring Plays
- k) Review the procedure for an **UNTIMED** down at the end of the quarter.
- l) Please stop in during half time to see us.
- m) Do you have any questions?

18. Last Minute Review with All Officials:

- a) Make sure you see the ball and the play has ended before you "**BLOW YOUR WHISTLE.**" A late whistle is better than an early whistle. (Let's **NOT** have any **INADVERTENT WHISTLES!**)
- b) Talk with the players. Use preventative officiating.
- c) Make sure the penalty has a bearing on the play, unless it is a personal foul or unsportsmanlike conduct. Use common sense.
- d) Make sure the Referee has a coin for the toss.
- e) Make sure **ALL** officials have the following:
 - 1) Flag
 - 2) Bean Bag
 - 3) Whistle(s)
 - 4) Card and Pencil
 - 5) Down Marker (Rubber Band)

- 6) Proper and complete uniform for all officials
- 7) Linesman has a clip for the chains
- 8) Line Judge has a stopwatch.

f) Only the Referee talks with anyone, before or after the game, on game-related situations. **(NO EXCEPTIONS!)**

19. Take A Minute and Review a Procedure Should You Need To Revert To a Three –Man Crew!

a) Who will move to what position if the _____ needs replaced?

- 1) Referee –
- 2) Umpire –
- 3) Linesman –
- 4) Line Judge –

20. Is there anything anyone wants to add?

- 1) Umpire –
- 2) Linesman –
- 3) Line Judge –

21. Let's hustle and give them the officiating they deserve!