



IHSAA FOOTBALL OFFICIALS

MECHANICS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR A CREW OF FIVE

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I. Introduction: The Importance of Mechanics in Football Officiating

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.

- Aristotle

Officiating mechanics is a system designed to help an official obtain the best possible position, using time-tested techniques and philosophies, to increase the probability of correct officiating decisions. Most officials have average judgment skills. A rigorous devotion to a well thought out set of mechanics places the official in the right position, at the right time, looking at the right thing, making superior results possible while employing merely average judgment.

Mechanics are also designed to ensure uniformity and consistency between officials regarding areas of responsibility and game procedures.

To achieve these goals a comprehensive knowledge of, and absolute devotion to, proper officiating mechanics is required. The mechanics, philosophies and techniques described in this Manual are the result of many years of officiating experience, and are drawn from a number of references, chief among them the 2020-21 edition of the NFHS Football Game Officials Manual. If painstakingly applied, over time they will produce positive results. Therefore, the game official is not at liberty to disregard these mechanics and substitute his own.

NOTE: Any reference in this manual to “he,” “him” or “his” shall be inclusive of “she,” “her” or “hers,” as the case may be, when the person is female.

II. General Officiating Mechanics

A. Uniform and Equipment

The officials' uniform shall conform to the current uniform requirements set out in the IHSAA Officials Handbook, available at www.myih saa.net/resource-library/.

Shirt Style: Short Sleeve USA137IN – Long Sleeve USA138IN
(2 ¼ Inch Black & White continuous stripes with no side panel)

1. Black and white vertically striped, long or short-sleeved knit shirt. The shirt shall have 2 ¼" inch stripes, black knit cuffs and Byron collar.
- *All officials in a given game are to wear the same type shirt with respect to long sleeve, short sleeve, or inclement weather shirt/jacket.
2. Black football pants that include a single 1 ¼" white vertical stripe running from waist to cuff. The game official must wear black socks.
3. Black football shoes with black shoelaces are required. Shoes should be shined before each game.
4. Black baseball cap with white piping is required. For the purpose of identification, the referee shall wear a solid white baseball-style cap.
5. Black leather belt 1 1/4 to 2 inches wide with a plain buckle.
6. Black jacket (not to be worn during the game).
7. The uniforms should fit properly and be clean and neat.
8. Inclement weather gear may include a black and white vertically striped jacket with black knit cuffs. All crew members must wear the same type of inclement weather gear.

In addition, each crew member shall have the following equipment:

1. At least one beanbag. All crew members must use the same color beanbag. Certain officials, as described elsewhere in this Manual, may carry two beanbags. The second beanbag must be of contrasting color to the primary beanbag, and all crew members carrying a second beanbag must utilize the same color.
2. At least one penalty flag.
3. A whistle. The whistle used should be black or silver. Any lanyard should be black.
4. A device for keeping track of downs.
5. A game information card and pen/pencil

In addition to the above equipment,

1. R shall have a coin for use at the coin toss.
2. B and at least one other designated official on the crew shall have a device capable of keeping the game and play clocks on the field if necessary.
3. H shall have at least one clip for use in measuring first downs. A second clip is recommended.
4. U should have a device for keeping track of the lateral location of the football on the field. U should also carry a device suitable for measuring the air pressure of the footballs.
5. The crew should have at least one spare whistle on the field.

The following additional equipment may be used by game officials, only as described:

1. Crews are permitted to use electronic communication devices during contests in accordance with the protocols described elsewhere in this Manual. The devices must be on a dedicated frequency so as not to be monitored by any persons other than those designated by the crew.
2. Sunglasses – The use of sunglasses by game officials is prohibited except, in general, when necessary for optimal officiating performance, and use is subject to the following :
 - a. When prescribed by a physician or optometrist as required for game wear.
 - b. During the pregame period, in daylight, and when lighting conditions warrant.
 - c. During a game only during daylight hours, and when necessary for the official to perform at an optimal level.
 - d. Notwithstanding the above, an official shall remove any sunglasses while speaking with a coach.
 - e. Sunglasses must be kept out of sight when not being used.
 - f. Sunglasses, when used, are functional, not a fashion accessory. They must have black frames, the lenses must be black or gray (no blue, yellow or red shades, or mirror reflections), and they must be a “sport” type of sunglasses. However, prescription sunglasses are not subject to these requirements.
 - g. If a crew member is wearing sunglasses, it is not necessary that the rest of the crew also wear sunglasses.

3. Crew members may wear position plackets denoting their position as R, U, H, L or B. The placket worn shall correspond to the position being worked. Position plackets, if worn, must be worn by the entire crew.

Since we are in the midst of transitioning the uniform, the following additional information is provided to assist officials during the transition period.

Insignias

1. Beginning the 2020-21 officiating seasons, purchased uniforms will ALL be sublimated (screened) to include the IHSAA insignia. During the transition period of three additional years, a general insignia patch may be ordered during renewal.
2. If ordered, firmly attach the IHSAA insignia to the left shoulder shirt sleeve, approximately one and one-half inch below the shoulder seam of the sleeve. No other insignia should be worn on the uniform while working high school athletic events.
3. If requested during license registration, three (3) IHSAA insignia are provided each year until 2022-23 when ALL uniforms will display the sublimated IHSAA insignia. Also, until 2022-23, additional patches will be available to the member official for \$1.00 each. These additional insignias may be ordered during renewal/registration of your license or through the same link used to renew your license.
4. Tournament Insignia may be sublimated on each new uniform ordered – should the ordering official qualify. IHSAA approved vendors have access to confirm each order for each official.
5. Professional Insignia may be sublimated on each new uniform ordered – should the ordering official qualify. IHSAA approved vendors have access to confirm each order for each official.
6. Other association insignia are to be worn ONLY on the jacket.
7. The American flag may ONLY be attached to the right sleeve of the official's shirt.
8. Exception: Memorial patches - permission must be granted from the officials' department of the IHSAA; permission will be granted for a short period of time.

II. B. Whistle Mechanics

1. The whistle used should be black or silver. Any lanyard should be black.
2. Officials should not have the whistle in their mouth while the ball is alive. This is the best prevention against inadvertent whistles. If you are responsible for calling pre-snap dead ball fouls such as false start, snap infraction, illegal substitution, or encroachment, it is permissible to have the whistle in the mouth at the snap, but it should be removed once the play starts and stay out of your mouth until the ball is dead.
3. The use of “finger” whistles as a primary whistle is discouraged. It is impossible to both blow the whistle and stop the clock with an appropriate signal when using a finger whistle. The use of “one-arm” signals to stop the clock, indicate an incomplete pass, *etc.*, is **not** approved.
4. When using the whistle at the end of the play, the cardinal rule is **you must see the ball dead in player possession to blow the whistle**. If you cannot see the ball, do not blow the whistle. If the play is not in your area of responsibility, do not blow the whistle. If the play is in your area of responsibility, find the ball first. A delayed whistle, or even no whistle on a play, is much better than an inadvertent whistle.
5. Do not simply “echo” another official’s whistle. There should not be more than one or two whistles at the end of the play. More than that is a sign of excessive ball watching.
6. **Blow the whistle sharply and confidently to signal the play is over.** Repeat as necessary to get the action stopped.
7. After the play is over, use repeated short blasts of the whistle to call to the attention of the other crew members that there is a foul, a timeout, an injury, an altercation, or any other appropriate reason. It is especially important to do so when there is a foul so that the chain crew does not move.

II. C. Penalty Flag Mechanics

1. Each official shall carry at least one ball-type penalty flag.
2. The flag shall be carried in front, tucked into the belt, as unobtrusively as possible. Wearing the flag in front will make it less likely that someone will see you reach for the flag and then think the better of it, something that many non-officials do not understand.
3. It is permissible to use black tape to cover the ball of the flag, so that it is even less visible.
4. There are two types of fouls that need to be signaled with the flag, and the type of foul will determine the technique of throwing the flag:
 - a. On dead ball fouls or fouls at the snap, where the spot of the foul will never be an enforcement spot, throw the flag straight up in the air. It need not “bring rain.” Just make sure it is noticeable.
 - b. On live ball fouls, since the spot of the foul may be the enforcement spot, the official must get his flag as close as possible to the location that the foul occurred. It is more important to get the flag on the proper yard line than the exact spot at which the foul occurred.
5. After the flag is thrown, continue to officiate the play. Once the action has ceased, if the flag is not in the correct location, move it to the correct spot quickly and unobtrusively. Do not throw it again, just drop it at the spot. Never move it with your foot, no matter how short the distance.
6. Never throw the flag directly at players, or in a manner that could reasonably be perceived as aggressive, confrontational, or accusatory.
7. Often after a play there will be a delay before penalty enforcement for a discussion of some type. During that time, flags for any spot fouls need to be “covered” by those officials not directly involved in calling the foul or enforcing the penalty.
8. On spot fouls, leave the flag on the spot, covered, until the penalty enforcement is completed.

II. D. Beanbag Mechanics

1. The bean bag is to be dropped on the appropriate yard line in accordance with the situations calling for such action in this Manual. The bean bag is to serve as an aid to enforcement and not an absolute reference point.
2. The primary purposes of the beanbag are four:
 - a. To mark the spot where player possession is lost by fumble or backward pass when that spot is a potential penalty enforcement spot, or in the case of a forward fumble out of bounds, the spot to which the ball is returned.
 - b. To mark the end of a scrimmage kick.
 - c. To mark a spot of first touching of a kick by a K player.
 - d. To mark the spot where an R or B player secures possession of a kick, recovery, or interception inside the 5 yd. line and his original momentum carries him into the end zone, where the ball is declared dead in his team's possession without having gotten out of the end zone ("Momentum Exception").
3. The beanbag should be dropped at the appropriate yard line, not thrown at a spot, unless it is a fumble between the hash marks, in which case the spot of the fumble is important. Just as with a flag, it is permissible to go back and correct an inaccurate mark after the play is over. Do so promptly and unobtrusively.
4. The beanbag should only be used to mark the yard line of a fumble or backward pass by the official who **actually sees** a live ball come out of player possession. We bag fumbles and backward passes. We do not bag loose balls.
5. Because of the possibility that any fumble could, eventually, end up out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble, all fumbles must be bagged, regardless of whether the fumble occurs behind, in or beyond the neutral zone.
6. The beanbag is used to mark the yard line where a K player commits "first touching" of a kick.
 - a. On free kicks, both B and L should be ready with a beanbag in hand at the kick. If a K player touches the kick before Team K has the right to possess the ball, that yard line should be marked with the bag.
 - i. In obvious short kick situations, when the crew moves up to cover both free kick lines, all crew members should have beanbag in hand at the time of the kick.
 - ii. On all free kicks, R should have beanbag in hand at the time of the kick to mark the spot of the Momentum Exception.
 - b. On scrimmage kicks, the bag is used by the covering official to mark the yard line on which a K player is the first to touch the scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone.

- i. **Note:** This most often occurs with B as the covering official. B must be alert to use his primary beanbag to mark first touching, reserving the contrasting color beanbag for the end of the kick.
7. On scrimmage kicks (punts), both B and the wing official releasing at the snap should have their contrasting color beanbag in hand at the snap in order to mark the yard line on which the kick ends, either by the ball becoming dead, or a player securing possession.
8. The covering official shall use his beanbag to mark the spot where B or R secures possession of a kick, fumble, or interception inside the 5 yd. line, in case the Momentum Exception applies when the play is over.
9. H, L and B should also use a beanbag to mark the spot where an A or K player intentionally leaves the field. There is no foul at that point, but if that player returns, the spot of the return is marked with a flag, and the bag is the indication that the illegal participation foul is based on such exit and illegal return.
10. H should also carry a contrasting color beanbag to be used in the following circumstances:
 - a. In a time-sensitive situation, when the down box is tardy getting to the spot of a first down, and the players are ready for the next play, use a beanbag to mark the spot where the down box will be placed on 1st down.
 - b. In “goal to go” circumstances, where only the down marker is used, H will place a beanbag at the spot of the down marker on each play, in the event the previous spot needs to be re-established and the down marker was moved.
11. In the event of an inadvertent whistle while the ball is in player possession, the covering official should drop a beanbag at the yard line where the ball was at the time of the inadvertent whistle.
- 12. In all instances where the beanbag is used, it is important that the official continue to officiate the play and the ensuing dead ball period after dropping the beanbag.**
13. The beanbag is not intended to mark a forward progress or out of bounds spot, except in the event the covering official is required to leave his spot because of an altercation or some other emergent situation.

II. E. Game Card

1. It is mandatory that every game official carry a game card for recording important information, as well as a pen or pencil.
2. The following information **must** be recorded by every official on the crew on his game card:
 - a. The game clock time of all charged timeouts.
 - b. The team in possession, position of the ball, line to gain, and down and distance at the end of the 1st and 3rd periods. H should also record the position of the clip on his game card
 - c. The results of the choices following any coin toss
 - d. **The game clock time, numbers, names, and any other pertinent information for any disqualified player**
 - e. **The game clock time, names, and any other pertinent information for any unsportsmanlike conduct foul and any disqualification of team personnel other than uniformed players.**
3. It is recommended that the crew members also record the following information on the game card:
 - a. Teams
 - b. Colors
 - c. Coaches' names
 - d. Captains' numbers for each team
 - e. Game time and points for each score
4. The game card should be used to record such additional information as each crew member deems necessary.

II. F. Ball Handling

1. Smooth ball handling by the crew helps keep the game moving at a nice pace. It also contributes to a professional presentation by the crew. In contrast, clumsy ball handling reflects poorly on the crew and brings their credibility into question, as well as delaying getting the ball in play.
2. There is no rush to retrieve game balls after a play is over. Officials must tend to dead ball officiating prior to retrieving any game balls. Do not turn away from opposing players in close proximity to one another in order to retrieve a ball. **Dead ball officiating is far more important than shaving a couple of seconds off the time needed to get the ball back in play.**
3. When the play ends out of bounds, the covering official **should not** leave his spot on the sideline to retrieve the ball. Maintain your spot, observe the action out of bounds, and wait for help from B or R to go in to the sideline after the ball.
4. **When relaying the game ball use short, underhand throws. If you cannot make the distance on a throw, close the distance before attempting. The goal is 100% completions. Do not let the ball hit the ground. Deliver short, crisp, belt-level, under-handed passes in clear passing lanes. Officials should never pass the ball over players, deliver long/high passes, or trap the ball with their feet.**
5. **Auxiliary game personnel handling footballs should never be on the field.**
6. **When the play ends in a side zone or out of bounds, behind the neutral zone, or no more than 5 yds. downfield, R should assist in relaying the ball to U for spotting by forming the point of the triangle relay.**
7. **When the play ends in a side zone or out of bounds more than 5 yds. downfield, B must hustle in to form the point of the triangle in relaying the ball to U for spotting.**
8. On long incomplete passes, do not attempt to retrieve the ball. Obtain a new ball from the ball boy and get it back in play.
9. In the event of inclement weather, U should have a towel and use it to clean the ball as necessary and shield the ball after it is set until the offense gets to the line. **Any crew member may order the ball changed between downs. (Rule 1-3-3)**
10. In time critical situations, when the offense is in a “hurry up” mode, U will need to go from **numbers** to **numbers** to retrieve and spot the ball.
11. On a try or field goal, B should insure that the scoring team’s ball personnel have a new ball ready behind the end line to be used in the ensuing free kick.

II. G. Dead Ball Officiating

The ball is actually alive for only a very small fraction of the time we spend on the football field. The vast majority of our work takes place while the ball is dead. Dead ball intervals are not the time to relax. It is imperative that we officiate the dead ball interval with as much focus and discipline as when the ball is alive.

There are three distinct dead ball intervals in the game: the pre-snap interval between the ball being made ready for play and the beginning of the next play, the time between the end of a play and the pre-snap interval of the next play, and the intermission after a score and before the ensuing kickoff.

1. Pre-snap.

Establishing a pre-snap routine is the best way to make sure that when a play from scrimmage is ready to go, you are, too, and that nothing necessary has been overlooked in the dead ball interval. Prior to the snap, each crew member should:

- Confirm accuracy of down, distance, line to gain, and time on the game clock. If there is disagreement about any of those, blow your whistle, kill the clock, and get the crew together and talk about it.
- Count the players for whom you are responsible, and signal your count to the rest of the crew.
- Make and be alert for any special crew communication signals under the circumstances, e.g., “double stakes,” clock stops after this play,” unbalanced line, numbering exceptions, etc.

2. After the Play.

Controlling action after a play is over is a primary part of dead ball officiating. Illegal actions after a play is over can lead to retaliation, and a more difficult game to work. By being in the right place at the right time, our presence at the end of the play can deter dead ball fouls, unsportsmanlike acts, and other problems that can spoil an otherwise good game.

- You cannot be a good dead ball official if you are a “ball watcher.” Typically, only one official assumes primary on-ball coverage, while other crew members cover action in front and behind the play. That leaves all other officials with the responsibility to keep their heads on a swivel and view all possible action away from the play
- H and L, when a runner goes out of bounds, signal to stop the clock 2x, and hold the out of bounds spot. Swivel while holding the spot to observe action out of bounds. Do not leave the out of bounds spot unless an altercation breaks out. Keep observing out of bounds until there are no conflicting players in the area. Only then should you turn back to the field to spot the ball and get ready for the next play.
- B, when approaching the pile, try to stop a minimum of 5 yds. away, so you are able to see more of the “big picture,” including late action on the periphery of the pile.

- If the game becomes “chippy,” all officials concentrate on moving closer to the pile at the end of the play. Implement preventive officiating simply by being there, and using your voice, calling to the players to “stop,” “play’s over,” *etc.*
- R should not come up to the line of scrimmage every play, but only as needed. Stay back and observe the bigger picture.
- When a play goes into the bench area, either R (up to 5 yds. beyond LOS) or B (more than 5 yds. beyond LOS) must hustle into the sideline and make sure the players of the opposing team leave the area without incident.
- If there is a scuffle, make every effort to identify the player who started it, and penalize that team. That usually puts a stop to the pushing after the play.
- Do not let other responsibilities, like retrieving a ball or reporting a penalty, take your attention away from the players. Keep officiating until all the action has stopped, and no one is in a position that threatens conflict. Then take care of any administrative duties.

3. During Intermissions After a Score or Try and Prior to a Free Kick.

- All** ☐ Getting the ball back in play timely is a priority.
- **The crew should meet briefly at the 10 yd. line in the center of the field before moving to free kick positions, to discuss any issues that have arisen or are anticipated. (e.g. – On-side kick, Mercy Rule application)**
 - Jog to free kick positions after first going directly to the sideline and then up the sideline to your position.
 - Upon reaching free kick position, make any necessary notations on your game card.
- R** ☐ Look to B who is timing the 60 sec. interval before making the ball ready for play.
- If teams are not in position at 45 seconds, notify rest of crew to give teams a 15 sec. warning. **(60 second interval begins immediately following PAT signal.)**
- U** ☐ **After the brief crew conference, move up your sideline to prevent illegal conferences and clear sideline and restricted area.**
- Move to the press box sideline in concert with L.
 - Be alert for signal from R, pointing directly at you, to give your team a 15 sec. warning. Say, in substance, “Coach, ball will be marked ready for play in 15 sec.”
 - Count R players and signal your count to rest of crew.
- H** ☐ **After the brief crew conference, move up your sideline to prevent illegal conferences and clear sideline and restricted area.**
- Move to the sideline opposite the press box in concert with B.
 - Be alert for signal from R, pointing directly at you, to give your team a 15 sec. warning. Say, in substance, “Coach, ball will be marked ready for play in 15 sec.”

- Make sure the chain crew is in the correct position.

- Count R players and signal your count to rest of crew.

L

- ☐ After the brief crew conference, move up your sideline to prevent illegal conferences and clear sideline and restricted area.
- Be alert for signal from R, pointing directly at you, to give your team a 15 sec. warning. Say, in substance, “Coach, ball will be marked ready for play in 15 sec.”
- Count K players and signal your count to rest of crew.

B

- ☐ Start 60 sec. count immediately upon conclusion of the brief crew conference.
- Take a new ball from behind the upright and bring it to your free kick position, moving to the sideline opposite the press box in concert with H.
- Move up the sideline to the K 40 yd. line, clearing the restricted area along the way.
- Once you reach the K 40 yd. line, move out to the kicker’s location. Count K players and signal your count to the rest of the crew.

II. H. Starting, Stopping and Winding the Game Clock

1. R should meet with the game clock operator prior to the game to go over timing procedures. The content of the meeting should reflect the NFHS General Instructions For Football Game And Play Clock Operators.
2. Stopping the Game Clock
 - a. Stop the game clock (signal #3) 2x when:
 - i. The down ends following a foul or any legal kick.
 - ii. An official's time-out is taken/charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.
 - iii. The period ends.
 - iv. The ball is out of bounds or any forward pass is incomplete.
 - v. A fair catch is made or awarded.
 - vi. An obvious first down has occurred.
 - b. Official's time-out – requires game clock be stopped when ball becomes dead. Stop Clock (S #3) 2x, followed by tapping hands on chest twice:
 - i. For measurement of possible first down.
 - ii. Before first down is declared. (Tapping hands on chest not required)
 - iii. Following change of team possession. (Tapping hands on chest not required)
 - iv. When captains and coaches are notified of time remaining.
 - v. For player who appears injured.
 - vi. For player in need of equipment repair.
 - vii. To dry or change ball.
 - viii. For unusual heat or humidity which may create a health risk to players.
 - ix. When coach-referee conference concerning misapplication of a rule results in referee altering ruling.
 - x. After a foul to administer the penalty. (Tapping hands on chest not required)
 - xi. For unusual delays in getting ball ready for play.
 - xii. A TV/radio time-out.
 - xiii. One minute between periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety.
 - c. Other reasons:
 - i. As provided by rule.
 - ii. When a team attempts to consume time illegally as provided in Rule 3-4-6.
 - iii. When the covering official determines ball reaches line-to-gain. (Tapping hands on chest not required)
3. Starting the Game Clock
 - a. Start the game clock on the ready-for-play-signal (S #1) followed by (S #2) – two different signals – if the game clock was stopped:

- i. For an official's time-out other than a new series for Team B or a new series following a legal kick.
 - ii. For a dead ball after a foul if:
 - There was no charged time-out during dead-ball interval.
 - The down is not extension of the period or a try.
 - There was no abuse of the timing rule, or a delay-of-game penalty.
 - The action that caused the down to end did not also cause clock to stop.
 - iii. Because of an inadvertent whistle.
 - b. Start the game clock on the snap if it was stopped for any reason other than those listed under i. – iii., above. If starting the game clock on the snap, no visible signal to start the game clock is given.
 - c. Start the game clock on a free kick when the ball is touched, other than first touching by K. The covering official signals the game clock to start (S #2) 2x.
 - d. If the signal to stop the game clock (S #3) is erroneously given, restart the game clock immediately (S #2) upon discovery of the error.
4. Winding the Game Clock
- a. If the ball becomes dead inbounds near sideline (within 2 yards) and behind the line-to-gain:
 - i. Covering official shall use normal coverage.
 - ii. After determining ball is dead, start the 40-second clock, give the start-clock signal (S #2) 2x.
 - b. If the ball becomes dead inbounds near sideline (within 2 yards) and first down is gained:
 - i. Covering official shall use normal coverage.
 - ii. After determining ball is dead, stop the clock with the time-out signal (S #3) 2x.
 - iii. **Do not give the start-clock signal (S #2).**
 - A. Make sure to use a crew signal or other communication to let R know that the game clock will start when the ball is ready for play.
5. Adjusting the Game Clock
- a. Proper clock management doesn't always mean that every second that errantly ticks away, or every time there is a slight delay in starting the clock, requires a correction. Whether to adjust the game clock is a judgment call based on the circumstances.
 - b. The more critical the situation, the more exact the crew should be in ensuring that the time on the game clock is absolutely accurate. Situations near the end of a half receive more scrutiny than those to start a half; and larger amounts of time added or subtracted in error may be addressed, while insignificant timing errors may be ignored.
 - c. In determining whether to adjust the game clock, R should use the "5 *with* 5" guideline,

i.e., outside of five minutes remaining in either half, there must be an error (+/-) of more

than five seconds in order to adjust the game clock. Within five minutes of either half's conclusion, all clear errors should be corrected.

- d. Any time run off when the clock is errantly started (*e.g.*, clock started on a snap that followed a pre-snap, dead ball foul) must be returned to the correct time.
- e. Any adjustment to the clock for an error in timing must be recognized and corrected before the next snap following the error. After that point, no adjustments can be made.

6. **Mercy Rule Game Clock Management**

- a. **Confirm compliance. (35-point differential after halftime.)**
- b. **Notify both Head Coaches that Mercy Rule will be applied.**
- c. **Notify Clock Operators of Mercy Rule application.**
- d. **Review clock stoppages with crew members.**
 - i. **Clock stops immediately following PAT signal.**
 - ii. **Clock starts on the following free kick when the ball is contacted by the kicker.**

II. I. Play Clock Procedures

R should meet with the play clock operator 15-30 minutes prior to the game to go over timing procedures. The content of the meeting should reflect the NFHS General Instructions For Football Game And Play Clock Operators.

1. The following chart illustrates the situations which call for the play clock to be set at either 40 seconds or 25 seconds, as indicated:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Play Clock Starts</u>	<u>Official's Signal</u>	<u>Referee's Signal</u>
Dead ball inbounds	40	#7	None
Dead ball out of bounds	40	#3	None
Incomplete pass	40	#10	None
Team A is awarded 1 st down	40	#3	#2
Penalty administration	25	#3	#2
Charged team timeout	25	#3	#1
Injury/Helmet off*	40/25	#3	#2
Measurement	25	#3	#2
Double COP – team A snaps	25	#7	#2
COP – team B snaps	25	#3	#1
Touchdown	25	#3	#1
Try, field goal, safety	25	Varies**	#1
Start of period	25	Varies	#1
Legal kick	25	#3	#1
Start of overtime period	25	NA	#1
Other administrative stoppages***	25	#3	#2
* See Rule 3-6-1a(1)e EXCEPTIONS for Defensive Injuries			
** The game clock will start on the legal touch of a free kick			
*** Includes inadvertent whistle and period extension			

2. Giving the signal to start the 40 second play clock (signal # 7) at the conclusion of the previous play is the responsibility of the covering official(s). It is not necessary for the other crew members to “mirror” the signal. Seeing 4 hands go up at the end of a play is an indication of excessive ball-watching.
3. It is necessary to also use the signal to start the 40 second play clock (signal # 7) when the covering official uses either signal # 10 (incomplete forward pass) or signal #3 (dead ball – ball out of bounds) to signal the end of a play. We cannot simply rely on the play clock operator to recognize when the play clock should be started in such situations.
4. It is B's responsibility to manage the play clock when it is running.
 - a. When there is no visible play clock, B shall keep the play clock on the field. With 5 seconds remaining on the play clock, B shall commence a second-by-second countdown

to zero. This will be done by using a single-armed signal # 20 (illegal motion) each second.

- b. In determining whether to call a foul for delay of game due to expiration of the play clock, B should focus initially on the play clock. When the play clock hits zero, B should then shift his focus to the ball. If the snap is not underway by that time, it is a foul for delay of game.

II. J. Timeouts

There are three specific types of timeouts, each with its own requirements of the officiating crew. Timeouts, of whatever type, are not an occasion for the crew to “take a break.” There is work to be done during these dead ball intervals.

1. Charged Timeouts - Basic Timeout Procedures

- All**
- ☐ The official that hears the request should blow the whistle and signal the clock to stop (signal #3) 2x. The rest of the crew should repeat the timeout signal (signal #3) 2x. If there is a penalty, the enforcement must occur prior to the timeout being granted. **All officials should glance at the game clock when the timeout is granted to make sure it stopped properly.**
 - Record the period, time on the game clock, team and who called the timeout on the game card.
 - Confirm with the crew the remaining number of timeouts
 - If there is a penalty, the enforcement must occur prior to the timeout being granted.
 - Maintain an alert posture.
 - Do not get together in groups unless there is something meaningful that needs to be discussed at that time.
 - Do not engage in discussions with coaches or players.
 - Insure that any sideline conferences take place in front of the team box and outside the 9 yd. marks.
- R**
- ☐ Sound whistle and repeat timeout signal (signal #3) 2x.
 - Extend both arms twice in a horizontal motion toward the team to which the timeout is charged.
 - Check the number of timeouts remaining for each team.
 - Confirm the number of the next down with H.
 - Check time remaining in timeout with B.
 - See that both coaches are notified of the number of timeouts each team has remaining.
 - Take a position away from the other officials and observe Team B during the timeout.
 - After receiving notification from the back judge that 45 seconds have expired, when the Team A conference is held between the 9 yd. marks, notify the Team A huddle that the ready for play will be in 15 seconds.
 - When the conference is held outside the 9 yd. marks, signal H and L by pointing directly to them to give their teams the 15 second warning.
 - After determining that the teams are ready or the timeout has expired, declare the ball ready for play (signal #1).
- U**
- ☐ Maintain a position over the ball throughout the timeout.

- After receiving notification from the back judge that 45 seconds have expired, when the Team B conference is held between the 9 yd. marks, notify the Team B huddle that the ready for play will be in 15 seconds.
- Observe Team A until R declares the ball ready for play.

- H & L**
- ☐ Move to a position halfway between the ball and your sideline and observe the team on your sideline.
 - On B's signal, if the conference is held outside the 9 yd. marks, notify the coach that the timeout will expire in 15 seconds: "Coach, the ball will be marked ready for play in 15 seconds."
 - Be alert for substitutions, including substitutions for purposes of deception.
 - If the conference is between the 9 yd. marks, maintain the proper number of players (11) and team attendants (3) in the conference.
 - Inform the coach on your sideline of the number of timeouts each team has remaining.

- B**
- ☐ You are responsible for timing the 60 second interval.
 - Sound your whistle 2x when 45 seconds have expired, and make eye contact with R.
 - Sound your whistle 2x again when 60 seconds have expired.

2. Injury Timeouts.

- All officials will follow usual charged timeout procedures, except R and U, whose duties include the following additional tasks during injury timeouts:
 - R should repeat timeout signal (signal #3) 2x, followed by tapping chest with both hands.
 - R should summon appropriate coaches and health care professionals onto the field to deal with the injured player.
 - Be alert to the injured player exhibiting signs or symptoms of concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems), as such players must be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional. **Make note on your game card of any player removed from the game for this reason.**
 - Be ready to assist the healthcare professionals and/or coaches in securing additional medical help, if necessary.
 - Keep players a significant distance away from any seriously injured player. Direct players and coaches toward their respective team bench areas if the delay will be prolonged.
 - Once the appropriate healthcare professionals begin to work on an injured player, the entire crew should control the playing field environment and team personnel in order to allow the healthcare professionals to perform services

without interruption or interference. Always ensure adequate lines of vision between the healthcare professionals and all available emergency personnel.

- Players and coaches should be appropriately controlled to avoid dictating medical services to the healthcare professionals on the time taken to perform such services.
 - Once the injured player has been appropriately treated and the playing field is clear, confirm the correct play clock time and clock status, and declare the ball ready for play.
- iii. U should make sure that any healthcare professionals or coaches who respond are not on the field for coaching purposes.
 - iv. U should also remind R of the clock status at the conclusion of the injury timeout.
- b. **All crew members should note on their game card any player removed from the game due to exhibiting concussion like symptoms.**
 - c. All crew members may be assigned additional tasks based on circumstances, as directed by R.

3. **Officials' Timeouts.**

- a. R should repeat timeout signal (signal #3) 2x, followed by tapping chest with both hands.
- b. U should also remind R of the clock status at the conclusion of the officials' timeout.
- c. Since officials' timeouts are called for a wide variety of circumstances, no precise delineation of additional duties can be made. However, all crew members should endeavor to resolve any issues requiring an officials' timeout in an expeditious and professional manner, as directed by R.

II. K. Forward Progress

1. Correctly marking forward progress consistently throughout the game is one of the most important responsibilities of officiating. Unless the play ends in a score or a touchback, forward progress must be determined on almost every play.
2. The forward-most part of the ball when it is declared dead in possession of the runner (when progress is declared dead inbounds or where it crossed the sideline when declared dead out of bounds), whether the ball is parallel to or perpendicular to the sideline, is the forward progress spot.
3. When it is apparent the runner's forward progress has been stopped, blow the whistle. There will be times when the ball comes out before the whistle has been blown. This does not mean that the ball was still alive. The play ends when the runner's forward progress has been stopped, not when the whistle blows.
4. Most forward progress spots are marked by the wing officials. Progress should be indicated by using the outthrust downfield foot. Keep your head up and observe players while marking a spot. Do not go around or jump over players to mark progress. Move into the field on routine plays to approximately the bottom of the numbers after marking progress, so as to be visible to all, then stop. If a spot is close to the line-to-gain, the covering official must come all the way to the spot, or as close as he can without moving off his line.
5. In ruling on forward progress, give the runner all the credit he deserves. A momentary pause does not mean progress is stopped, especially where the runner's legs are still moving. Just keep in mind, if you determine the runner's progress has not been stopped despite a momentary pause, that means if the ball comes out it's going to be a fumble.
6. On plays where the runner ends up out of bounds, consider whether his forward progress was actually stopped inbounds. When the runner is knocked sideways or backwards when going out of bounds, his progress should be ruled as stopped inbounds.
7. If the runner's forward progress is stopped **near the sideline but inbounds**, give the clock wind signal (signal #2) 2x, unless the line to gain has been made, or it is 4th down and the ball is short of the line to gain. Otherwise, do not give the clock wind signal.
8. On plays where there is a change of possession, and the ball becomes dead between the 20 yd. lines, round off the forward progress spot to the nearest yard line in order to possibly save yourself a measurement later.

II. L. Handling Fumbles

1. If the covering official observes a player recover a fumble while prone or otherwise down by rule, he will immediately whistle the play dead.
2. If the team that fumbled recovers the ball, the official should signal as if spotting normal progress, starting the 40 sec. clock if applicable, and signaling the next down.
3. If the opposing team recovers the ball, the clock should be stopped, the covering official should vocally announce his decision on the recovery to surrounding crew members and then he should point in the direction of the goal line of the recovering team's opponent. **Only the covering official should signal the recovery and point. The object is to have only one official pointing.**
4. If a fumble results in players from both teams forming a pile that prevents the covering official from determining possession, the ball must be found before awarding possession. Use the following procedure:
 - a. The official closest to the pile (other than R) should "dig" for the ball.
 - b. The next official in should signal for the clock to stop and visually confirm this occurs.
 - c. Other officials should continue to cover action in and around the pile, removing players and ensuring that additional players do not enter the fray.
 - d. Be particularly alert to players using forcible contact to pull or push opponents from the pile. This is a dead ball personal foul for unnecessary roughness, and can lead to retaliation. Use preventive officiating in and around the pile to prevent having to throw a flag for this.
 - e. Do not attempt to forcibly remove players from the pile. A player being pulled may not realize it is an official who is pulling on him and may react unpredictably, and then you will have created a problem. Use your voice and tap a player on the shoulder or helmet, calling him by his number, and telling him to get off the pile.
 - f. When the official working through the pile sees the ball and is certain as to which player recovered it, he should verbally relay that information to R. Regardless of which team recovers the fumble in the pile, **only R shall signal and announce possession of the ball if the clock had to be stopped to determine who recovered the ball.**
5. Whichever official is signaling the recovery, pause for a second before you do so and go through in your mind which team recovered, and which way you should be pointing. Then point decisively.
6. **Forward Fumble Out of Bounds.** By rule, in the event a fumble goes out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble, the ball must be returned to the spot of the fumble. This requires coordination of mechanics and communication by the crew.

- Assume every fumble is going to end up out of bounds until proven otherwise. Consequently, all fumbles are beanbagged, including those that occur behind the neutral zone.
- Every effort should be made to drop a beanbag at the spot of the fumble, if that spot is between the hash marks. If the ball goes out of bounds, we have to be able to return it to that spot. “Spot” bagging is not necessary if the fumble occurs outside the hash. Get the bag on the corresponding yard line, and if the ball goes out of bounds, it will be returned to that yard line at the nearest hash mark.
- As with the penalty flag, it is perfectly permissible to drop the bag, officiate the play, and then promptly and unobtrusively move the beanbag to the proper spot.
- The official who gets the spot where the ball goes out of bounds holds the spot and gives the “clock stop” signal and the “start play clock” signal.
- The crew members must then communicate, since it may not be obvious the fumble went out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble. This can be by signal, verbal notification, or radio.
- If the official with the out of bounds spot must leave the spot to communicate, B should be alert to cover that spot. If it is determined that it was a “forward fumble” out of bounds, the covering official should remind R that he is to wind the game clock when the ball is ready for play.
- The timing implications of the new rule should be part of the pregame discussion with the timekeepers.
- If the R is wearing a microphone, and it will not unduly delay making the ball ready for play, he should make a brief announcement: “The fumble went forward and out of bounds. It will be returned to the spot of the fumble where it will be ____ down. The game clock will start on my ready for play signal.”
- In time critical situations, wing officials should be communicating with the coaches on their sideline, advising them that the game clock will start on R’s signal when the ball is ready for play, not on the snap.

II. M. Measurement Mechanics

With the increasing prevalence of perfectly marked artificial surfaces, the frequency of measurements continues to decrease. However, when there is a measurement, it is often critical. So, it is important for the crew's measurement mechanics to not only result in an accurate measurement, but also one performed in a smooth, professional manner, so as to bolster the crew's credibility.

1. If, at the conclusion of the play, the covering official cannot determine whether the line to gain has been made, he should call for R to "take a look." If that can be done expeditiously under the circumstances, there is no need to stop the clock. If, however, it cannot be done quickly, the covering official should stop the clock. Note that if the clock is stopped for this reason, R must do one of two things: either declare a first down, or measure. R should never declare the ball short of the line to gain without a measurement, and then restart the clock.
2. In close line to gain situations, the wing official with the forward progress spot should come in from his sideline all the way to the dead ball spot, or to the first body, whichever is earlier. Do not run around players. Stay on your line. If he is unable to come all the way in to the ball, U should secure the ball and carry it to the covering official, who will place it at the correct yard line. Never toss the ball, always carry it. **This is the only circumstance in which the ball should be moved from the dead ball spot before measuring.**
3. During a measurement, each crew member has specific duties, and each must perform those duties efficiently, and in the proper sequence, for the measurement to go smoothly and accurately.

- R**
- ☐ Give the time out signal 2x, followed by tapping hands on chest.
 - Signal H to bring out the chains.
 - Keep players away from the ball and out of conflict with the chains.
 - Rotate the ball so the long axis is parallel to the sidelines
 - Position yourself near the ball on the side opposite the chains, so that you don't have to hop over them as they come on to the field.
 - Once H indicates the chains are ready, and U has stretched the chains out using the front stake, determine whether the line to gain has been made. The inside edge of the front stake marks the line to gain.
 - If the line to gain has been made, give signal #8. If the line to gain was not made, show to the press box the remaining distance necessary using your hands or fingers at approximately head level.
 - If the measurement took place in a side zone, and the line to gain was not made, grasp the chain at the link corresponding to the foremost point of the ball, and move in to the hash. Leave the ball at the spot where it was measured. Place a new ball at the spot on the hash corresponding to that link on the chain. Do so in a way that does not require you to move the chains over the football when returning them to the sideline.
 - When measurement is completed signal the next down after the ball is spotted.
 - Wait for H and the chain crew to resume their proper positions.

- If a new series is awarded to Team B because the line to gain has not been made, **do not** move the ball, as the rearmost point of the ball in the previous series becomes the foremost point of the ball for the new series. Make sure the line to gain is reset accordingly.
- Once all crew members are ready, declare the ball ready for play.
 - If the ball was out of bounds, give signal #1, to start the play clock, and signal that the game clock starts on the snap.
 - If not out of bounds, give signal #2 to start both the play clock and the game clock.
 - If it is first down for Team B, give signal #8 to signal the change of possession, followed by signal #1 to start the play clock and signal that the game clock starts on the snap.

- U** ☐ Take the front stake from the chain crew at the place of the measurement.
- Upon H's signal, tighten the chain and hold the front stake near the ball until R makes a decision.
 - If the measurement was in a side zone, upon R's signal, move the front stake in to the hash, and repeat the process to spot the ball.
 - Once the measurement is completed, take charge of the ball until R signals it ready for play.

- H** ☐ Upon R's signal for a measurement, inform the chain crew that there is to be a measurement.
- Instruct the box operator to move the box to the line to gain and keep the same down number.
 - Go to the clip and verify it is in the correct position. If it is not, reset it correctly before bringing the chains out for the measurement.
 - Grasp the chain with two hands, holding one hand on each of the links on either side of the clip, as you bring it on to the field. This improves the chances that you will be able to find the correct link in the chain if the clip somehow falls off during this process.
 - Bring the chains out on the field with the front stake behind the ball **on the side of the ball closest to the press box**. Do not lift the chain over the ball, either when bringing the chains out, or taking them back to the sideline.
 - Place the clip on the back of the corresponding yard line directly in line with the front stake, at the "90° spot" indicated by L and notify R that you are ready, so that U can stretch the chain out by moving the front stake to the front of the ball.
 - If the line to gain has been made, return with the chains to the sideline and instruct the box man to change the down to 1. Set the line to gain as you would on any first down. Notify R when ready.
 - If it is not a first down,
 - While holding the chain and clip, return with the chain crew to the sideline.
 - Re-spot the clip **on the sideline**, and stretch out the chains.
 - Return the box to the dead ball spot and instruct the box man to change to the next down.

- Back the chains off the sideline and re-position then in the corresponding position on the back of the restraining line, six feet from the sideline.
- Assume your position for the next play and signal R that you are ready.

- L**
- ☐ Move to the yard line where the clip is to be placed.
 - Place your foot at the “90° spot” where H should place the clip when he brings the chain out. The purpose of indicating this spot is to insure that the chains are parallel to the sideline during the measurement.
 - After H has placed the clip on the “90° spot,” place your foot on the chain to prevent it from moving when U pulls it tight from the front stake.
 - If the line to gain was not made and the measurement was in a side zone, on R’s signal, move to the nearest hash mark, and repeat the process to spot the ball for the next down.

- B**
- ☐ Do not allow team attendants on the field, except with the permission of R.
 - Keep players back from the area of the measurement.
 - Tend to the football when U leaves the ball to take the front stake. Make sure you are at the foremost point of the ball, and not to one side or the other, so that you don’t block one sideline’s view of the measurement.
 - If the measurement was in a side zone, and the line to gain was not made, procure an appropriate new football to be placed at the inbounds spot by R.

- All**
- ☐ Prior to the actual measurement, the crew should verbalize to one another the next down if the line to gain has or has not been made. For example, on a measurement after a 3rd down play, the crew should verbalize to one another that the next down will be “4th or 1st.”
 - Be sure to hustle when moving to your appointed stations during and after a measurement.
 - Be aware of the clock status at the time of the measurement, and be prepared to assist R in making sure that the clock starts on either the snap or the ready for play signal.
 - Try and make sure during the measurement that you are not blocking the view from either the sidelines or the press box.

4. Either team may request a measurement to determine whether a first down has been made. If it is obvious the line to gain has not been reached, do not measure merely to determine how much yardage must be gained for a first down.
5. While a request for a measurement may be denied if it is obvious the line to gain has not been made, R should use his discretion in determining whether to grant such a request. For example, if you are convinced a team is short of the line to gain after 4th down, a “public relations” measurement may nonetheless be in order simply to demonstrate clearly to all that the line to gain was not made.
6. On changes of possession, other than inside either 20 yd. line, try to “find the line” for first down. It is not critical that first down begin on the 35 ½ yd. line as opposed to the 35. But

starting the series on the yard line may save you a measurement later. **It must be emphasized that inside either 20 yd. line, no such adjustments are appropriate, and this mechanic should only be used on 1st down following a change of possession by kick, fumble, or interception, not if the ball goes over on downs.**

II. N. Signals & Crew Communication

Communication among crew members is key. The advantages of the crew concept are lost if the crew members do not communicate well with one another. There are many situations where the officials are spread out and direct verbal contact with one another is impossible. But the need for communication still exists. The consistent use of a set of signals has long been the primary means of on field communication between crew members. The increasing prevalence of radio communications between crew members has enhanced the ability to communicate. Signals, however, are still critical, since there will be many situations where radio contact is not feasible. Electronic communication aids are just that: aids. They augment, not replace, the time-tested use of non-verbal signals as the primary means of on field crew communication. In some cases, these signals can inform coaches and players, which can add to the credibility of the crew's calls.

Some schools now provide field microphones for R, allowing R to communicate with everyone in the stadium to describe penalty enforcements and other important information. Proper use of the field microphone enhances the crew's credibility and makes the game go more smoothly.

1. **Signaling:** The following are suggested signals for on field crew communication:

- a. "11 players." The players on both teams are counted by multiple officials on every play. The crew members should signal one another to confirm that the count is correct. The signal typically used for this is an outthrust fist at chest height.
- b. "More than 11 players." When an official counts more than 11 players on a team, he should signal the other crew members immediately so that they can confirm his count. The signal typically used for this is to flash two fingers at the other crew members, meaning "I've got 12."
- c. "Fewer than 11 players." While it is legal to play with fewer than 11 players, when a team plays with fewer than 11 there may be formation or numbering legality issues. Inform other crew members that you have counted fewer than 11 by holding out both hands showing 10 fingers, meaning "I counted 10."
- d. "Pass juggled." If a receiver ends up with the ball, but did not have control of it before going out of bounds, the covering official can give the "juggle" signal before signaling the pass incomplete, using an alternating up and down motion of both hands.
- e. "Don't start clock." If a play ends out of bounds, signal the clock status by holding both hands in front of you in the "X" signal. This tells the rest of the crew that the game clock will start on the snap. Use the same signal to remind R of the clock status following an official's timeout, penalty enforcement, or other interruption in play. Also use this signal on 4th down to remind the crew that the clock stops after the play, regardless of the result.
- f. "Double stakes." When the line to gain is more than 10 yds. from the spot of the snap, remind other crew members that the ball must pass "two stakes" before it's a first downs. The traditional signal is holding both hands up with index fingers extended, showing the 'two stakes' the ball must pass for a first down.

- g. “Unbalanced line.” It is important for pass eligibility status to be alert to an unbalanced line, since a player with an eligible number may be in a “covered” position, making him ineligible. The traditional signal is for the wing official on the unbalanced side to place the palm of his hand flat on the side of his face and head. The B should pick up this signal and then try to identify any covered eligible numbers.
- h. “Snapper protection rules apply.” In those circumstances and formations when the snapper is entitled to extra protection, U should signal that by using signal #19 (rolling hands).
- i. “Start clock on ready.” Use this signal to remind R of the clock status following an official’s timeout, penalty enforcement, or other interruption in play, telling him that the clock will start on the ready for play signal.
- j. “Receiver off the line/backward pass.” The wing officials should signal by punching backward that the eligible receiver closest to them is in the backfield. Hold that punch at shoulder height until the ball is snapped, or until motion or shifting make that no longer the case. Also use this signal if you are the covering official and rule that a pass was backward.
- k. “Five will/will not get you Ten.” When the ball is down very close to the mid-point of the line to gain, H should signal U and R that a five yard penalty either will, or will not, result in a first down. The signal is a hand in front of the chest pointing either toward the line to gain (“five will get you ten”), or toward the offensive backfield (five won’t get you ten”). This makes it easier to make choices, if necessary, following a 5 yd. penalty, and potentially speeds up the penalty enforcement process.
- l. “The ball remains alive.” While a try that obviously fails results in a dead ball, not so for a field goal attempt. If the kick is blocked, or woefully, short, and it remains in the field of play, the ball is alive. Remind crew members of this by giving the roll clock signal in front of the chest.
- m. “Watch clock.” There are times in a game, such as near the end of the period or in the closing minutes of a close game, when special vigilance is required to make sure there are no timing errors. In such cases, crew members should remind one another to “watch the clock” by repeatedly tapping on their wrist, where a wristwatch would be worn. Use this signal and point to either R or B, whichever is facing the game clock at period end, to indicate it is that official’s responsibility to signal the period end.

2. Radios

- a. With continued changes in technology, communication devices worn by officials are becoming more and more commonplace. Such devices enhance the ability to communicate on the field and, thus, have the potential to improve officiating, if they are used correctly. Consequently, the use of such devices is permissible, when used consistent with these guidelines.
- b. Crew communication devices must be two-way radios with an attached earpieces and push-to-talk microphones. They may not be left in an “always-on” mode. Other types of

communication devices are prohibited and may not be carried by an official during competition.

- c. Officials should be ever mindful that the vast majority of radio systems are NOT secure from the public. Careful attention must be paid to what is said when speaking into the headsets and the safest axiom is “if you don’t want it on the public address system, don’t say it on the radio”.
- d. The use of crew communication devices is voluntary and not mandatory. The decision on whether to implement the use of a crew communication device is solely the decision of the officials in a given contest.
- e. Crews must ensure that the channel or frequency of the communication devices does not interfere with any communication devices of the coaching staffs and/or game administration. It is the crew’s responsibility to avoid channel or frequency conflicts with any other party.
- f. The use of these crew communication devices shall not replace any IHSA approved mechanics, crew communication signals or other signals designated by any NFHS publication or IHSA adopted mechanics from another source.
- g. The crew communication devices are not a substitute for the desired verbal communication that is necessary at times during the game between head coaches and the Referee.
- h. Use of crew communication devices during the contest must follow these guidelines:
 - i. Crew communication devices are intended solely to ensure timely communication between officials and coaches, as well as between the officials.
 - ii. All communication on the devices must be directly related to the contest using only appropriate and professional language.
 - iii. Communication may not be advisory in nature, i.e. “watch #66 or that’s twice #32 has done that”, but must solely relate to the application of the playing rules.
 - iv. Do not use any inappropriate language, derogatory statements or comments in reference to any player, coach, fan, etc.
 - v. Crew communication devices may be used during dead ball periods only. Refrain from using these devices during a live ball period, or when the snap or free kick is imminent.
 - vi. Refrain from using crew communication devices when R is communicating or signaling to the press box, with a head coach or game administration.
 - vii. Crew members must keep communication short and to the point. Keep chatter and unnecessary comments off the devices.
 - i. The following are examples of appropriate times and situations to use crew communication devices. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

- Preparation and securing of both teams and/or captains for the coin toss.
- Ball placement
- Play clock/game clock/time management/timeouts
- Goal line reminders
- Positioning on scoring kicks
- Line-to-gain confirmations
- Player foul reporting
- Sideline control and communication issues
- Player conduct concerns
- Confirmation of rulings
- Penalty enforcement options
- Kickoffs or scrimmage kicks that go out of bounds
- Unusual play situations
- Specific information needing to be communicated to either or both teams' sidelines.

3. Field Microphones

- a. R's use of a field microphone should be limited to explanation of penalties or unusual situations, or giving direction to the game clock operator in the event of a timing issue.
- b. The option to use or not use an available field microphone is R's.
- c. When using the microphone to explain a penalty:
 - i. give the explanation in conjunction with any signal(s).
 - ii. **State the foul, the offending team, the enforcement, including the spot of enforcement, and the down following enforcement.**
 - iii. Add other information if significant, *e.g.*, the status of the ball ("during the kick").
 - If acceptance of the penalty results in a replay of the down, announce it as "replay X down."
 - If the penalty is for a dead ball foul prior to the snap, announce it as "remains X down,"
 - If the penalty enforcement results in the ball going beyond the line to gain, announce it as "enforcement of the penalty results in a first down."

Example: "Holding. Offense. 10 yds. from the spot of the foul. Replay 2nd down."

Example: "Prior to the snap, encroachment on the defense. 5 yd. penalty. Remains 2nd down."

Example: "After the play was over, personal foul, unnecessary roughness on the defense. 15 yds. from the end of the run. Enforcement results in a 1st down."

Example: “There were fouls by both teams on the play. Holding on the offense. Personal foul, roughing the passer on the defense. The penalties offset. Replay 3rd down at the previous spot.”

- d. Find an open space and come to a complete stop before beginning to signal and use the microphone.
- e. Use normal voice quality and speak in short phrases with a pause between them.
- f. **The number of a player committing a foul may not be announced.**
- g. Be sure to turn off the microphone when the announcement is finished.
 - i. It is recommended that the crew adopt the practice of U reminding R after every announcement to turn off the microphone.
- h. It is recommended that the words “dead ball” not be used in the announcement, even though the dead ball signal is being used. Instead, use “prior to the play,” or “after the play was over.”

II. O. Victory Formation

1. The purpose of the Manual's treatment of "Victory Formation," end of game scenarios is to insure a consistent approach to these common situations, and one that minimizes the possibility of unsportsmanlike acts at the end of the game.
2. At the end of the game, and occasionally at the end of the first half, a team will line up in a "Victory Formation," preparatory to taking a knee and running out the clock. Victory Formation often occurs when Team A alters its usual formations, usually by narrowing down splits, and moving backfield players in a protective screen around the quarterback, often with a "safety" deep in the offensive backfield. But any formation can be "Victory Formation" in an end of game situation, where Team A indicates it will be taking a knee to run out the clock.
3. When Team A is ahead by 9 or more points and can take a knee(s) to run out all of the remaining game clock, the officials will request Team A to declare its intent on whether they will be taking a knee. If Team A indicates they will be taking a knee, U and R will instruct all players that the play will be over immediately after the snap, and that all players should avoid contact, on pain of a foul and potential disqualification. However, if the snap is muffed, all bets are off, and it's play football.
4. If the offensive team declares that they will be utilizing the Victory Formation to take a knee, and runs any offensive play other than a kneel down, the officials will rule this an unfair act under Rule 9-3-1, allowing R to enforce any penalty deemed equitable under the circumstances. This does not apply if the snap is muffed.
 - a. In most cases replaying the down at the previous spot and resetting the game clock is an adequate remedy.
 - b. Of course, Team B retains the right to decline the penalty and accept the result of the play.
5. If the offense muffs the snap or fumbles the ball while in Victory Formation, the ball is live and can be recovered and advanced by either team, as if Team A had not been in Victory Formation.

II. P. Change of Possession/Turnovers

- A. On change of possession, L should wait for R's signal before directing the line to gain crew to move.
- B. On a change of possession, start the series on a whole yard line, unless the spot is inside either 20 yd. line.
- C. L or H should get the appropriate ball in play. There is no need to keep the old ball at the dead ball spot until the new ball is in play, unless the ball is going over on downs. The covering official simply announces the dead ball spot to U, who places the new ball there. If the ball goes over because the line to gain has not been made after 4th down, keep the old ball on the field until the new ball can be brought in and they are switched out.
- D. R should be alert for action against the QB on changes of possession. He is a target.
- E. All officials should give the "stop clock" signal x 2 on change of possession.

II. Q. Period End

1. At the end of the 1st and 3rd periods:

- R
- ☐ If facing the game clock, assume responsibility for determining whether the game clock expired prior to the snap.
 - If the ball is snapped immediately after the period expires, sound your whistle long and hard to get the action stopped.
 - After checking to insure there is no foul, no obvious timing error, no request for a coach-referee conference, and no other irregularity has occurred, hold the ball overhead to signify the period has ended (signal #14).
 - Meet U at the ball and agree on down, distance and ball position.
 - Confirm the number of timeouts remaining for each team.
 - In concert with U, jog to the succeeding spot.
 - Check to make sure ball is in correct spot, the line to gain equipment and all officials are in their positions and ready for the next play, and the clocks are set correctly. Then blow the whistle and signal the ball ready for play.
- U
- ☐ After R declares the period over, assume control of the ball.
 - Meet R at the ball and agree on down, distance and ball position.
 - Confirm the number of timeouts remaining for each team.
 - In concert with R, jog to the succeeding spot and place the ball down.
 - Check to insure that the line to gain equipment is placed correctly in relation to the ball.
 - Inform R when all officials are ready.
- H
- ☐ Go to the sideline and verbally announce to the line to gain crew the down, distance and position of the clip.
 - Reverse the ends of the line to gain chain.
 - Move to the succeeding spot.
 - After the ball has been placed by U, mark the corresponding spot on the sideline for the down indicator.
 - Check to make sure the down number and the distance to be gained are correct.
 - Signal R that you are ready by indicating the down number.
- L
- ☐ Observe the team on your sideline for appropriate conference procedure, and assume normal timeout responsibilities.
 - Move down your sideline to the succeeding spot on the sideline. Be there before U arrives at the succeeding spot with the ball.
 - Signal R that you are ready by indicating the down number
- B
- ☐ If facing the game clock, assume responsibility for determining whether the game clock expired prior to the snap.
 - If the ball is snapped immediately after the period expires, sound your whistle long and hard to get the action stopped.

- Observe the team on H's sideline for appropriate conference procedure, and assume normal timeout responsibilities.
- Jog to your succeeding position.
- Time the 60 second interval for the intermission. Notify R when 45 seconds have elapsed, and again at 60 seconds.

- All
- ☐ Give stop clock signal (signal #3) twice when the play is over, or if the clock expires before the play.
 - Record down, distance, clip and ball position on your game card.
 - During intermission, monitor team attendants.

2. At the end of the 2nd period:

- a. Either R or B, whichever is facing the game clock, assume responsibility for determining whether the game clock expired prior to the snap. If the ball is snapped immediately after the period expires, sound your whistle long and hard to get the action stopped.
- b. After checking to insure there is no foul, no obvious timing error, no request for a coach-referee conference, and no other irregularity has occurred, R holds the ball overhead to signify the period has ended (signal #14).
- c. When teams have left the field, R should signal the clock operator to start the clock running for the halftime intermission.
- d. B is responsible for timing the intermission, so that the crew can return to the field timely.
- e. If possible, obtain choices from the coaches for the second half kickoff.
- f. Leave the field as a crew.
- g. Retire to a secure location to discuss and plan for the remainder of the game.
- h. If the situation warrants, discuss overtime procedures and rules.
- i. Return to the field at least five minutes before the second half is to begin.
- j. R is responsible for insuring that three minutes is placed on the game clock for the mandatory warm-up period prior to the start of the second half after the intermission time has elapsed.
- k. If both teams return to the field within three minutes of the end of the halftime period, zero the halftime clock, then add the three minute warmup period.

3. At the end of the game:

- a. Either R or B, whichever is facing the game clock, assume responsibility for determining whether the game clock expired prior to the snap. If the ball is snapped immediately after the period expires, sound your whistle long and hard to get the action stopped.
- b. After checking to insure there is no foul, no obvious timing error, no request for a coach-referee conference, and no other irregularity has occurred, R holds the ball overhead to signify the period has ended (signal #14).
- c. Leave the field together as soon as possible.
- d. Refrain from shaking hands or otherwise congratulating one another until you are in the locker room out of sight of fans, players and coaches.

II. R. Penalty Enforcement

Penalty enforcement is one of the very few areas of football officiating where judgment is not required. Certainly, there is plenty of judgment involved in calling fouls. But once the foul has been called, what follows is black and white. There is no grey area in penalty enforcement.

When errors in penalty enforcement occur, it is because the entire crew erred. Penalty enforcement involves the entire crew. Every official has a role to play. The correct enforcement of penalties is the responsibility of every crew member. This requires communication between crew members, so that everyone knows what foul was called and what the enforcement should be.

1. Reporting Fouls

- a. Proper penalty enforcement begins with a prompt and accurate reporting of the foul by the calling official to R. U should also be a party to this conversation. The reporting official should provide R with the following information:
 - i. Identify the foul, using rule book language. It's "holding," not "a takedown." You may, however, at R's request be asked to supply more detail, so that an appropriate explanation can be given to the coach of the offending team.
 - ii. Identify the offending team, using both jersey color and team designation, *i.e.*, offense, defense, kickers, receivers.
 - iii. Identify the offending player, preferably by number. If you don't have a number, at least have a position, *e.g.*, "the wideout on my side." If you can't do either, consider whether you saw the play well enough to warrant a flag.
 - iv. Indicate the spot of the foul, end of run, end of kick, *etc.*
 - v. Indicate the status of the ball at the time of the foul, *e.g.*, during the kick, while the ball was loose following a fumble, *etc.*
- b. When reporting fouls, use a businesslike tone. Do not display anger, frustration, or any other emotion. Maintain a professional demeanor. Refrain from touching the other officials or gesturing.
- c. On obvious pre-snap fouls such as false start or encroachment, or delay of the game, the required information can be communicated by signal from the calling official while he is moving slowly in and toward R, and pointing toward the offending team. This speeds enforcement and keeps the game moving. Remember to practice good dead ball officiating while moving and signaling, as a false start or encroachment may provoke a retaliation.
- d. If two officials have flags on the play, they should confer first to determine if they have the same foul, two different fouls, or a disagreement that cannot be resolved, before going to R to report.
- e. While the foul is being reported, the other crew members have critical functions to perform.
 - i. No flag should be left "uncovered" prior to penalty enforcement. In case it turns out to be a spot foul, a crew member should stay with the flag to make sure it is not moved. Leave the flag on the field until the penalty is enforced. Then pick it up and return it to the calling official.

- ii. Many times the calling official will also be the official who determined the forward progress or out of bounds spot. Someone needs to hold that spot while penalty enforcement is being determined.
- iii. Wing officials should be informing the designated representative of the offended team on their sidelines of the penalty and any information the coach needs to know to make choices, *e.g.*, that the penalty includes loss of down, clock status, spot of enforcement, or the like.

2. Obtaining Choices

- a. At the time the foul is fully reported to R, R should announce the proposed enforcement to both the calling official and U. This serves as a check on the proposed enforcement. If either the calling official or U have any reservations about the proposed enforcement, speak up immediately.
- b. As soon as practicable when a foul is called, wing officials, or B if one of the wing officials is the calling official and busy reporting to R, should be informing the designated representative of the offended team on their sidelines of the penalty and any information the coach needs to know to make choices, *e.g.*, down and distance for each option, clock status, status of the ball, any special enforcements, and the like.
- c. The official who reported the foul to the offended team's sideline should communicate their choice to R. Don't let the coach make a mistake here. If the coach is making an unusual choice, check to make sure he understood the options correctly. Once the choice is finalized, it cannot be rescinded.

3. Administering the Penalty

- a. Once the enforcement has been decided, the penalty can be administered (if accepted). Each crew member has specific duties during this phase of penalty enforcement.

- R
 - ☐ Give preliminary signal to press box. No preliminary signal is necessary on pre-snap line of scrimmage fouls or delay of game fouls.
 - After getting the choice from the offended team, verbally repeat the enforcement to U.
 - Verbally report the down, distance and clock status after enforcement to U.
 - Give signal(s) to the press box while U walks the penalty yardage.
 - Check that ball position, down and distance are correct.
 - Check that clock is correct.
 - Check that all crew members are in position.
 - Announce the down and make the ball ready for play.
- U
 - ☐ Maintain control of the football throughout the enforcement.
 - Confirm to R that his proposed enforcement is correct, or discuss any concerns with the proposed enforcement.

- Confirm to R that the proposed ball position, down and distance, and clock status after enforcement are correct, or discuss any concerns.
 - Step off the penalty. It is not necessary to take 15 steps for a 15 yd. penalty. Merely walk briskly to the succeeding spot.
 - Confirm that the box is set correctly.
- H
- ☐ Manage the line to gain equipment during any potential enforcement, insuring that following enforcement, the down, distance, and box position are correct.
 - **“Walk” the penalty yardage along your sideline along with U, as he walks the penalty off in the field.** Make sure the ball is placed at the proper yardline after penalty enforcement.
 - Once the line to gain equipment is secured, remind R by signal of the clock status following enforcement, *i.e.*, “wind clock” or “dead clock.”
 - If you are on the sideline of the offending team, make sure the coach has necessary information about the foul and its enforcement.
- L
- ☐ Once the choice has been determined, go to the enforcement spot on your sideline.
 - Hold the enforcement spot until U has set the ball down at the succeeding spot, and the placement has been confirmed as correct by H.
 - Once the penalty has been enforced, remind R by signal of the clock status following enforcement, *i.e.*, “wind clock” or “dead clock.”
 - If you are on the sideline of the offending team, make sure the coach has necessary information about the foul and its enforcement.
- B
- ☐ Procure a new ball if necessary.
 - Once the choice has been determined, go to the succeeding spot in the field where U will place the ball after enforcement.
 - If the penalty is to be administered on a free kick, after the intermission, go to K’s free kick line, signal the penalty, enforce the distance to the new free kick line, and place the ball there for the free kick.
- All
- ☐ Once the penalty has been enforced, assist in picking up any flags and returning them to the proper crew member. Do not make R or U pick up their own flags if they are the calling official(s), as they will be busy with other enforcement duties.
 - Confirm that ball position, down, distance and clock status are correct following enforcement.

- b. If the penalty for the foul includes disqualification, follow this procedure:
 - i. Include in your report to R that the foul includes disqualification, and describe with specificity the conduct resulting in disqualification.
 - ii. Both R and the calling official shall note the disqualification on their game cards, including the number and name of the offender, if known, the period and time, and a short description of the disqualifying conduct.
 - iii. R and the calling official will explain the reason for disqualifications to the coach of the offending team at the sideline. Remind the coach that disqualified team members may remain in the team box, but disqualified nonplayers must leave the facility.
 - iv. If the disqualification is of a team's designated representative, obtain a substitute designation.
 - v. Confirm name of disqualified person with the coach and make note on your game card for reporting of the disqualification.

II. S. Sideline Management

1. The rules regarding sideline management are clear. These are safety rules and should be enforced as such.
2. Consistency, from crew to crew, week to week, and from one side of the field to the other, is important. Let everyone know what the expectations for sideline conduct are **before the game starts**, and then adhere to them.
3. Effective management of the sidelines depends on communication between the wing officials and the coaching staff. Be proactive in your communications from the outset. Find the “get back” coach and form a partnership with him in order to keep the sideline clear without having to resort to warnings or penalties.
4. That being said, do not hesitate to invoke the sideline warning procedure if necessary, especially early in the game to set the tone. Even though the first step is a warning with no distance enforcement, use the flag in a clearly visible manner to get everyone’s attention.
5. Any warning or foul involving sideline management should be promptly noted on the covering official’s and the R’s game cards. This is important, in that the sideline management rules can involve sequential discipline.
6. Follow these guidelines when enforcing the sideline management rules:
 - a. Uniformed team personnel, as well as coaches and attendants, must be in the team box unless entering or leaving the playing field, or unless participating in an authorized outside the numbers conference. No exceptions.
 - b. **Coaches may not be on the playing field except when appropriate during charged or officials’ timeouts. A coach may not be on the field for any other purpose, e.g., criticizing the officials, calling plays.**
 - c. A maximum of three coaches may be in the “restricted area” while the ball is dead. All other coaches must remain in the team box.
7. If the sideline warning procedure is invoked,
 - a. Upon the first violation only a warning is given. The covering official should throw a flag, and report to R. R should give signal #15. If a field microphone is in use, announce the violation as “Sideline warning against _____. First warning. No distance enforcement.”
 - b. Upon the second violation, the covering official should throw his flag and report to R. R will then give signal #7 (dead ball) followed by signal #29 (sideline interference), and enforce a 5 yd. penalty. If a field microphone is in use, announce the violation as “Sideline warning against _____. Second warning. Five yard penalty, ____down.”

- c. Upon the third and any subsequent violations, the covering official should throw his flag and report to R. R will then give signal #7 (dead ball) followed by signal #29 (sideline interference) and signal #27 (unsportsmanlike conduct) and enforce a 15 yd. penalty. If a field microphone is in use, announce the violation as “Sideline warning against _____. Third [or subsequent] warning. Unsportsmanlike conduct. Fifteen yard penalty, _____down.”
8. Special emphasis is directed to enforcement of the rules requiring all persons except officials to vacate the restricted area while the ball is alive. Unintentional contact between sideline personnel and an official in the restricted area while the ball is alive is **a zero tolerance foul**. Of course, officials should make every effort to avoid such contact. But having to “run around” someone in the restricted area while the ball is alive should never be ignored. Any foul for unintentional contact with an official in the restricted area while the ball is alive should be promptly noted on the covering official’s and R’s game cards, as a second such foul results in disqualification of the head coach. Utilize the following procedure:
- a. The covering official shall throw his flag to signal the foul. This is not a spot foul, so just get the flag high in the air so everyone sees it. Report the foul to R.
 - b. Both R and the covering official must make note of the foul on their game cards, since a subsequent foul of the same type results in disqualification of the head coach.
 - c. R will give signal #38 (personal foul), followed by signal #29 (sideline interference. If a field microphone is in use, announce the violation as “Personal foul against _____. Unintentional contact with an official in the restricted area by a nonplayer while the ball was alive. Fifteen yard penalty, _____down.”
 - d. The wing official should advise the head coach of the foul, and inform him that another such foul will result in his disqualification.
9. If personnel not affiliated with a team causes a problem on the sidelines, either by their location or by interaction with team personnel or officials, the sideline warning procedure does not apply. Do not penalize a team in such circumstances. Instead, relay the issue to game management and ask them to deal with it.

II. T. Coach/Referee Conference

Rule 3-5-11 provides that, upon request, a coach may request a conference with the Referee to review the possible misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule. When such a request is made, the following procedure should be followed:

1. R should signal officials' time out by giving signal #3 and tapping his chest.
2. R, the wing official on the requesting coach's sideline, and any other crew member R deems essential to accomplish the purposes of the conference, will confer in the field of play **with the head coach only** in front of the requesting coach's team box, approximately 5 yds. from the sideline.
3. Those officials not involved in the conference should keep players and nonplayers away from the area of the conference.
4. If, following the conference, the ruling is not changed, the requesting team will be charged with a time out. R should then, at the conclusion of the conference, signal a charged timeout to the requesting team. If the requesting team has no timeouts remaining, it is assessed a delay of game penalty. R should then, at the conclusion of the conference, give signals ## 7 & 21.
5. Every crew member should record the charged timeout on his game card in the event the conference does not result in a change in the ruling.
6. It is suggested that R make a brief notation on his game card regarding the substance of the conference, if possible.
7. R will review and explain the ruling and its results to the opposing head coach before continuing the game.

II. U. Fighting

1. Football is an emotional game, and occasionally tempers flare. The best way to deal with fights is to prevent them.
 - a. Be sensitive to things “heating up” during a game, and put a stop to it immediately.
 - b. Curtail talking between players of opposing teams.
 - c. Wing officials and B, pinch in a little further so that you are closer to the players at the end of the play. Your presence is an important deterrent.
 - d. U occupies an important role in the middle of the field. He can “take the temperature” of the players better than anyone else.
 - e. Do not hesitate to penalize unsportsmanlike acts early in the game. If you don’t penalize it, you’re encouraging it. And it can escalate.
2. If players are just pushing or shoving, or they “chest up” with one another, get between them. Defuse the situation with your whistle and your voice. And then assess penalties if and as required.
3. If the players are swinging at one another, **do not** get between them. Instead, step back, observe, prevent other players from being involved, and record the numbers of players involved.
4. If a fight breaks out on the field, it is important for the wing officials to turn to their respective benches and try to prevent any team personnel from coming off the sideline to get involved, whether they purport to be “peacemakers” or not. The people on the other sideline cannot judge their intent, so they will respond by going out on the field themselves, potentially escalating the situation.
5. Similarly, if a fight breaks out on the sideline, the wing official on the opposite sideline should try to prevent any team personnel from coming off the sideline to get involved. In the meantime, the other officials should get into the affected sideline and attempt to “wall off” the combatants from the remaining personnel on that sideline in order to keep the altercation contained to the greatest extent possible.
6. If a large scale brawl breaks out, **do not** get in the middle of it. Get to the side, observe, and take numbers. Never grab, push or pull players. The player might assume it’s an opponent, not an official, grabbing him and retaliate.
7. If this is a large-scale fight and/or team personnel come off the sideline and onto the field:
 - a. Both teams should be sent to their respective sidelines once order has been restored and the teams separated.

- b. The entire crew should meet on the field, away from any players or team personnel, to discuss the players and/or personnel to be disqualified, and any other fouls and how they will be enforced.
 - c. R should notify each head coach personally about those players and team personnel who have been disqualified. The wing official on that sideline should accompany R when he does this.
 - d. R and at least one other official on the crew should record on their game cards the numbers of any players, and the names of any team personnel, who have been disqualified, and any other unsportsmanlike fouls not resulting in disqualification. Record all necessary information needed for your post-game report to the IHSAA before resuming play.
8. Make your report to the IHSAA as described in this Manual. See that the report is transmitted via e-mail or text the night of the game.

II. V. “When In Doubt”

1. On every level of football officiating, axioms or “when in doubts” are used to aid officials in making calls. Axioms are not a substitute for good mechanics, thorough rules knowledge, and sound philosophy. However, the reality of football officiating is that sometimes, even though we do everything right, we just do not get as good a look at a play as we’d like. It is in those circumstances, where we have to make a call but don’t have the level of confidence we’d like to have, that we apply a “when in doubt” for guidance.
2. It must be emphasized that these axioms apply only to the covering official on a call. When you are not the primary official covering a play, it’s the difference between having a call and having an opinion. You have doubt as a non-covering official but the primary official has a call. Stay out of it unless the covering official needs your help, and even then understand the difference between having a call and an opinion. You don’t use “when in doubts” to bolster an opinion, only to help make a call.
3. Not every axiom that you come across is suitable for high school football, since many axioms are based on rules, which may differ from level to level. Here are the approved axioms to be used in officiating Indiana high school football:
4. The “when in doubt” axioms can be broken down generally into two categories, those that help make “calls,” and those that help “call fouls.”
 - a. Axioms relating to calls:
 - i. When in doubt, the player is inbounds.
 - ii. When in doubt, the airborne kickoff/punt near the goal line is a touchback.
 - iii. When in doubt, the kickoff/punt/pass is untouched.
 - iv. When in doubt, the pass thrown from in or behind the neutral zone is forward.
 - v. When in doubt, the pass thrown from beyond the neutral zone, or on a play where there is no neutral zone, is backward.
 - vi. When in doubt, control of a pass followed by loss of possession is an incomplection.
 - vii. When in doubt, the pass near the ground is a catch.
 - viii. When in doubt as to whether the runner is down before fumbling, it is a fumble. But when in doubt as to whether the runner’s forward progress is stopped before being stripped, he was stopped.
 - ix. When in doubt, the passer's arm was going forward and it is a forward pass rather than a fumble.
 - b. Axioms relating to fouls:

- i. When in doubt, it is roughing, not running into, the kicker.
- ii. When in doubt on a facemask foul, it is a personal foul, not incidental.
- iii. When in doubt, any kick or bat was accidental, not intentional.
- iv. When in doubt as to whether a movement constitutes illegal motion, illegal shift, or a false start, it is a false start.
- v. When in doubt when a safety foul is involved, such as clipping, chop block, blocking below the waist, facemask, illegal blindside block, or any of the roughing or helmet contact fouls, the contact **is** a foul.
- vi. When in doubt, the action of the K player **is** kick catching interference.
- vii. When in doubt, the passer has not grounded the ball.

II. W. Weather Interruptions

Inclement weather represents a potential safety hazard to players, coaches, fans, and the officials themselves. The National Federation policy on dealing with threatening weather is very clear and must be followed scrupulously. In dealing with lightning and/or thunder, utilize the following guidelines:

1. Prior to the officials assuming jurisdiction when they enter the field before the start of the game, the determination as to whether conditions are unsafe to play rests with game management, in consultation with the visiting school representative.
2. **Once the officials assume jurisdiction by entering the field, the determination as to whether conditions are unsafe to continue rests with R. Any decision made by R to suspend or resume play should be made by taking into account all available information, and after consultation with representatives of both schools.**
3. The decision if and when to suspend the game to be continued at a subsequent date, or to end the game with the final score as is, is made by the representatives of the schools, and not the officials. The officials' only input in this regard is to determine whether it is safe to resume play at any particular time.
4. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen, play should be suspended immediately and those present moved to a safe location for at least 30 minutes.
5. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or the lightning seen prior to resuming play. A member of the crew should be assigned to time this interval.
6. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30 minute count will reset the clock and another 30 minute count should begin.
7. When lightning detection devices or mobile phone apps are available, they can be used to assist in making a decision to suspend play if a lightning strike is noted to be within 10 miles of the location. However, hearing thunder or seeing lightning always take precedence over the information provided by any technology.
8. At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes can be seen from distant storms. This lightning, traveling only from cloud to cloud and not from cloud to ground, and unaccompanied by thunder, may not present a threat and, in that case, it may be safe to continue.
9. If the game is interrupted due to severe weather during the last three minutes of the second period, and the delay is at least 30 minutes, the opposing coaches can mutually agree to shorten the halftime intermission to as little as one minute, not including the mandatory three minute warmup period.
10. If the game is interrupted by severe weather, the crew members are responsible for recording the following information, which will be necessary when play is resumed:

- R
 - ☐ home team and visiting team score
 - home team and visiting team timeouts remaining
 - coin toss choices

- U
 - ☐ team in possession
 - goal defended
 - location of ball between the hashmarks

- H
 - ☐ visiting team sideline warnings
 - down
 - distance to line to gain
 - yardline of the clip

- L
 - ☐ home team sideline warnings
 - game clock time and period
 - time lightning and thunder occurred

- B
 - ☐ any players removed from the game due to concussion-like symptoms
 - any disqualifications
 - any unsportsmanlike conduct penalties against non-uniform team personnel

11. In the event a game that has been suspended is rescheduled to be completed at a later time, and the crew will **not** be working the resumed contest, R is required to prepare a report including all of the information recorded above and provide it to game management, so that it can be made available to the crew working the resumed game.

III. Pregame Mechanics

A. The Week of the Game

The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win. Everyone wants to win but not everyone wants to prepare to win. Preparing to win is where the determination that you will win, is made.

-- Robert Montgomery Knight

Waiting until Friday afternoon to begin preparing for your game is a recipe for failure. There are many tasks to be accomplished in the period in between games that will get you ready for that next Friday night. Don't waste this valuable preparation time. It is recommended that the crew chief assign various tasks to individual crew members. Keeping the entire crew involved in game week preparation makes it more likely that everyone will show up ready to officiate on Friday night.

1. Early in the week, communicate with the AD of the host school to confirm the assignment, game time, and logistics such as parking, dressing area, escort, *etc.* Find out if there are any special arrangements such as Homecoming or Senior Night. Will halftime be extended? Lay the groundwork for a pregame meeting with the clock operators.
2. The crew should communicate early in the week to confirm the assignment, positions, travel arrangements, *etc.*
3. Do some sort of "football" preparation during the week. This preparation can take many forms. Video review is always helpful, and with the widespread availability of services like Hudl, there is no excuse for a crew not including video self-critical analysis as part of their preparation. It can be done individually, or as a crew. There are also innumerable resources available for rules quizzes, mechanics topics, and other aids to game preparation. Utilize them.
4. The pandemic has taught us that online meeting services like Zoom can be utilized effectively to make crew discussions during the week relatively convenient. A 30 minute "meeting" of the crew after everyone has had a chance to look at video of the previous week's game can pay big dividends.
5. It is important to involve each crew member in the game week preparation. There are enough tasks to go around. Assign each a discussion topic to lead the locker room pregame on game night. If you are using rules tests to prepare, assign different questions to each crew member. The key is for everyone to be involved during the week, so the entire crew is thinking "football" before they get to the game site on Friday night.
6. Utilize the resources available to you to "scout" the teams you're going to see in the game. Read published accounts, including online accounts. Is a team run-oriented, or do they throw the ball all over the field? Is this a backyard rivalry game? Is there a conference championship on the line? If you have video available, it is highly recommended that you use it in your preparation. Is it going to be a "ground and pound" game, in which case you can focus preparation on things like handling fumbles, forward progress, and the like? Or will you face an aerial circus, so that you concentrate on pass coverage keys, pass interference

requisites, eligibility, *etc.* Knowing that a team is option-based, or runs a 5-wide passing attack, or uses a “swinging gate” formation on the try, can allow you to target your game week preparation to better prepare you for the things you’re likely to see when the game starts. Focus on things like formations, motion and shifting, and the abilities of the kickers. But do not allow your preparation to form preconceived notions about fouls or sportsmanship. The teams scout opponents to better prepare themselves for the game. The third team on the field should do the same.

III. B. In the Locker Room

The pregame meeting can set the tone for the entire game. Will it be businesslike and professional, with everyone knowing his role? Or will it be haphazard, random, and rambling? A well thought out and organized pregame meeting sends the crew out on the field feeling confident and prepared.

1. Arrive in the locker room at least 90 minutes prior to the scheduled game time. Tardiness is a sign of a lack of professionalism and leads to a hurried pregame and heightened level of anxiety among the crew members and, possibly, game management. When traveling to a distant game site, try to travel together. Be on time, every time.
2. Be aware that, from the moment you arrive at the game site, you are under scrutiny. Your manner should be professional and businesslike at all times.
3. Meet with the AD or his designee upon arrival and confirm any special game procedures such as an extended halftime.
4. Hold an effective pregame meeting.
 - a. This is not the place for a rules clinic. However, you should discuss any specific rules that may be impacted by whatever your game week preparation has suggested.
 - b. Make sure that every crew member participates in the pregame meeting. This should not be a 30 min. lecture by the crew chief.
 - c. There are as many pregame meeting formats as there are officiating crews. Outlines or templates are available from any number of resources. They can serve as a starting point, but a pregame meeting should always be tailored to the specific needs of the crew in that particular game.
 - d. End the pregame meeting at least 15 min. before the time you have designated to go out to the field. This gives each crew member sufficient time to attend to any individual issues, and insures that the crew isn't rushing to get to the field on time.
5. Leave the locker room as a group so as to arrive on the field at least 45 min. before scheduled game time.

III. C. Coaches' Meetings

As the saying goes, “you never get a second chance to make a first impression.” In many instances, the pregame meeting with the coaches will be the first impression they get of the crew. Consequently, a thorough and efficient meeting, conducted in a professional manner, will leave the coach with an initially favorable impression of the crew, which can prove invaluable.

1. **All officials should participate in the pregame conference with each head coach. This is one of the reasons why the crew needs to be on the field 45 min. before game time. This gives each crew member ample time for the tasks that follow the pregame conference.**
2. **Hold the pregame conference as soon as possible after getting onto the field. Getting the pregame meeting with officials accomplished early in the pregame period allows for the least disruption of the teams' pregame routines.**
3. There is no priority in meeting with the home team coach vs. the visiting team coach. However, as you come on to the field, do not walk past one coach in order to meet with the other.
4. **The coaches' meetings should be conducted in a businesslike and professional manner.** Undue familiarity must be avoided on the field. The coach should always be addressed as “Coach”.
5. Keep the two meetings with the coaches to the same length of time for each. During each meeting emphasize the expectation of good sportsmanship from all participants.
6. **Topics to be covered in the meetings with the coaches:**
 - a. Introduction of the crew and positions. Provide the coach with a game card with names and positions. It is also recommended that the game card include whatever information is necessary to facilitate the crew obtaining postgame video review capability.
 - b. The length of, and arrangements for, halftime intermission. **LJ and BJ will notify their appropriate locker rooms with a 3-minute notice before opening kickoff and halftime.**
 - c. **Head coach to verbally verify that all players have been issued, and are wearing, required/legal equipment in compliance with NFHS rules.**
 - d. Discuss unusual plays or formations. Use preventive officiating here.
 - e. Identify the “get back” coach and emphasize the importance of sideline control.
 - f. Identify the team representative authorized to call timeouts, if other than the head coach.
 - g. Identify the team representative authorized to accept or decline penalties, if other than the head coach.

- h. Note time on scoreboard clock and synchronize.
 - i. Player and game specific information to aid in game administration:
 - i. Players with unusual pads, braces, casts, to be examined and ruled upon by U.
 - ii. QB right or left handed?
 - iii. Kickers right or left footed?
 - iv. Identify captains
 - j. Describe procedures for coin toss and get choices. Don't let the captains make a mistake.
7. End the conference by asking the coaches if they have any questions for you. If they do, answer them.
8. **Should both teams leave the field prior to the mock coin toss, the crew may leave the field.**

III. D. Field/Facility Inspection

At some point prior to the game, the officiating crew is responsible for inspecting the field and the facility to identify and attempt to remedy any safety hazards. Obviously, certain aspects of the inspection may be unique to the facility. But there are many aspects of the pregame inspection that are common to all facilities.

1. The crew should walk the boundary of the field, although it is not necessary to do so as a group. During the walk around inspection, particular attention should be paid to:
 - a. Potentially hazardous field conditions, such as holes in the field or defects in turf.
Specifically, inspect the middle of the field, between the numbers.
 - b. Padding on goal posts and play clocks if located near the field.
 - c. Certain hazards presented by multiple use facilities, such as pole vault or long jump runways and pits.
 - d. Temporary structures present for game use and located close to the playing field, such as kicking nets, video monitors, or benches.
 - e. End zone pylons should be examined to insure they are in the appropriate position.
 - f. Yardline markers located on the ground along the sideline(s) should be moved back well out of the restricted area.
2. Any potential hazards identified should be brought to the attention of game management, who should make every attempt to mitigate the hazards if possible.
3. If field or facility hazards exist that are of a serious nature, or cannot be easily mitigated for the game, the crew chief is responsible for reporting such conditions to the IHSAA immediately following the game.
4. The field should also be inspected for rules compliance:
 - a. Are the sidelines, yard lines, goal lines, end lines, hash marks and 9 yd. marks properly done? Many of the fields we find ourselves on are multiple use field and contain many markings not related to football. Identify and discuss such markings, especially where there may be confusion due to the proximity of football markings.
 - b. Are the restricted areas and team boxes properly marked?
 - c. On artificial turf fields, if there is a logo on the field, are the yard lines within the logo properly marked with “shadow” lines to facilitate ball placement and measurements?
 - d. Non-compliant fields should be reported to the IHSAA following the game.

III. E. Equipment Inspection

Prior to the start of the game, the officiating crew is responsible to inspect both player and game equipment to ensure that all is in good working order, legal, and safe for the contest. Specific officials have specific duties in this regard, as follows:

R

- Following approval, turn the game balls over to B for distribution to the auxiliary personnel of each team.

U

- ☐ Check on the legality of any player equipment identified in the coaches' meeting, or observed by the officials during inspection. You are the final authority on the legality of equipment.
- Utilize preventive officiating to identify potential illegal equipment in the pregame period and have it addressed.
- Secure, inspect and approve game balls from each team. Mark each approved ball with a distinctive mark.

H

- ☐ Assisted by B, secure and check the line to gain and down marker equipment, as well as any auxiliary markers, to insure all are accurate and in good working order.
- Ensure that the line to gain equipment is marked at the halfway point, in order to easily provide important information during penalty enforcement.
- Meet with the chain crew and insure they are properly instructed.

L

- ☐ Carry an accurate timepiece with the correct time, with stopwatch and countdown capabilities.
- If the game clock malfunctions, you are responsible for keeping the game clock.
- After R has approved the game balls, see that they are distributed to the auxiliary ball personnel for each team.

B

- ☐ Assist H in his inspection of the line to gain equipment.
- Carry an accurate timepiece with the correct time, with stopwatch and countdown capabilities.
- If the play clock malfunctions, you are responsible for keeping the play clock, as well as timing charged timeouts and intermissions.

All

- ☐ **During the field and facility inspection, while carrying out other duties, and during "down" time before the start of the game, continually inspect the players for equipment issues or uniform violations. Every effort should be made to address these in the pregame period, instead of during the game.**

III. F. Coin Toss

1. Pregame Coin Toss

- a. The coin toss should be conducted off the field, during the pregame period, after the coaches' meetings have taken place.
- b. H should procure the visiting team captains and L should get the home team captains, and escort them to the site of the toss. Have them line up facing one another, with the "speaking captain" closest to R on each side.
- c. Have the captains introduce themselves to one another and shake hands.
- d. Introduce the officials to the captains.
- e. R should show the coin to the captains and explain which side is "heads" and which is "tails."
- f. Instruct the visiting captain to make his call of "heads" or "tails."
- g. After verifying the captain's choice with U, toss the coin. Announce whether it was "heads" or "tails," which team has won the toss, and invite the losing captain to view the result of the toss.
- h. Present the winning captain with the choices of defer, receive, or choose a goal to defend. It is not necessary to present the option to "kick."
- i. When the captain makes his choice, compare the choice to the choices you discussed with the head coach in the pregame meeting. If they are not the same, start over. **Do not let the captain make a mistake!**
- j. Once the winning captain makes his choice, go to the losing captain and get his selection from the remaining choices. Again, compare them to the choices discussed with his head coach prior to the game. **Do not let him make a mistake.**
- k. Once the choices have been completed, instruct the captains that when they come out for the mock toss immediately before the kickoff, they should, on R's signal, move to the center of the field on the 45 yd. lines, lined up with the backs to the goal they will be defending to start the game.
- l. Dismiss the captains, and then make sure everyone on the crew records the toss winner and choices accurately on their game cards.

2. Mock Toss

- R ☐ Approximately 3 minutes before scheduled game time, go to the center of the field at the 50 yd. line, facing the press box.

- When captains are in place on their sidelines, signal them to come to the center of the field. Line them up with their backs to the goals they will defend.
- When captains are in place, direct them to shake hands.
- Discuss sportsmanship expectations with the captains.
- Re-enact the pregame toss by first tapping the shoulder of the captain whose team won the toss. If the choice was to “defer,” give signal #10 twice. If the choice was to receive, turn your back to the goal they will be defending and give the “receive” signal. If the choice was to defend a goal, give the “kick” signal.
- After the choices have been completed, and the captains dismissed, gather the crew together for any last-minute instructions, and then jog to kickoff positions.

- U ☐ Line up on the **home** sideline with the captains and await R’s signal.
- Upon R’s signal, escort the captains to the center of the field.
 - Assume a position on the 50 yd. line with your back to the press box, facing R, while R conducts the remainder of the toss procedure.
 - Remain in that position, listening to R’s instructions as a check to make sure they are correct.
 - **Move to K captain’s side.**
 - After the choices have been completed, and the captains dismissed, meet with the crew at midfield for any last-minute instructions, and then jog to kickoff position.

- H ☐ **Line up on the visiting team sideline and bring out the visiting team captains, stopping at the numbers.**
- After the choices have been completed, and the captains dismissed, meet with the crew at midfield for any last-minute instructions, and then jog to kickoff position, clearing your sideline as you go.

- L ☐ Line up on the Home team sideline with the **home** captains **on opposite 45-yard line from B** and await R’s signal.
- Upon R’s signal, escort the home captains toward the center of the field. Stop at the **top of the numbers** but instruct the captains to continue to the center of the field.
 - For the remainder of the mock toss, observe the players on the home sideline to make sure they do not come onto the field during the toss.
 - After the choices have been completed, and the captains dismissed, meet with the crew at midfield for any last minute instructions, and then jog to kickoff position, clearing your sideline as you go.

- B ☐ Procure the game ball that will be used to kick off.
- Line up on the visiting sideline with the **visiting** captains **on opposite 45-yard line from L** and await R’s signal.
 - Upon R’s signal, escort the visiting captains toward the center of the field. Stop at the **top of the numbers** but instruct the captains to continue to the center of the field.
 - For the remainder of the mock toss, observe the players on the visitors’ sideline to make sure they do not come onto the field during the toss.

- The umpire stays with the referee and the BJ stops at the numbers.
- The referee should have the teams line up in the direction they are going to kick and/or receive.
- The referee is facing the press box and walks between the captains to give his signal.
- **After the choices have been completed, and the captains dismissed, meet with the crew at midfield for any last-minute instructions, and then jog to kickoff position.**

3. Overtime Coin Toss

- a. For the coin toss that begins overtime, the procedure and alignment is the same as for the mock toss, except the captains remain with their backs to their own sidelines until the toss is completed and the choices made. Then they shift with their backs to the goal they will be defending for the first overtime period.
- b. The remainder of the overtime coin toss procedure is described in the section of this Manual covering Overtime.

II. G. Auxiliary Personnel

Auxiliary personnel are indispensable to a smoothly run game. The crew must communicate well with the auxiliary personnel to that end. Each crew member has specific duties with respect to certain types of auxiliary personnel.

Keep in mind that these auxiliary personnel are a part of the officiating crew, for all intents and purposes. Consequently, they relinquish certain rights that they might otherwise have. They must refrain from rooting or coaching for or against either team. Their interaction with other personnel must be professional and not partisan. The keys to making sure this happens are having a clear understanding with the auxiliary personnel of everyone's duties and responsibilities from the outset, and an appropriate level of supervision during the game.

1. Timekeepers

- a. The crew chief's initial communication with the home AD the week of the game should include a very specific request to meet with the clock operators prior to the game, either in the locker room or on the field. Consider e-mailing the AD copies of the *NFHS General Instructions For Football Game And Play Clock Operators*.
- b. **R and B** should meet with both the game clock and play clock operators 15-30 minutes prior to the game. The Agenda for that meeting is set out in the *NFHS General Instructions For Football Game And Play Clock Operators*. Some of the more important points to cover are:
 - i. The timing of the halftime and any overtime intermissions, including display of the clock for the mandatory warmup period.
 - ii. Procedures by which R can communicate with the clock operators during the game, if necessary, by signal or otherwise.
 - iii. Procedures in the event one or more game or play clocks becomes inoperative.
 - iv. End of period procedures, including extension of the period.
 - v. "Mercy Rule" timing.

2. Chain Crew

- a. Ideally, the chain crew consists of 4 adults, a "box" man who holds the down box, a clip man, responsible for maintaining the 5 yard line clip, and two stake holders, who man the front and rear stakes of the line to gain equipment.
- b. **H will meet with the chain crew on the field at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the game.** The Agenda for that meeting is set out in the *NFHS General Instructions For Football Line to Gain Crews*. Some of the more important points to cover are:
 - i. The crew must refrain from showing any partisan reaction to the events taking place on the playing field.
 - ii. The crew must move only on the instruction of H, or R on long plays. Be especially alert for multiple whistles at the end of plays, which may signal a penalty, requiring that the line to gain equipment not be moved prior to enforcement.

- iii. **A discussion of the manner H will “set” the box on 1st down. It is recommended that the linesman place his heel on the sideline at the spot of 1st down. The box will then be placed on that spot, the front and back stakes set and the 5 yard line clipped. Then the chain and box are moved back to the back edge of the restricted area.**
- iv. That the use of electronic devices by members of the line to gain crew during the game is prohibited.
- v. “Goal to go” procedures.
- vi. Procedures at the ends of the 1st and 3rd periods.

3. Ball Handlers

- a. Ideally, each team will furnish competent ball handling personnel in sufficient numbers so that the crew can have access to game balls from each team on both sidelines. But whatever ball handlers are provided, adjust ball handling procedures to compensate.
- b. L should instruct the home team’s ball handlers and B should instruct the visitors’ ball handlers. Ball handlers may be given varied and special responsibilities by the officials, depending on factors such as weather conditions and the number of ball personnel. Ball handlers’ general responsibilities are:
 - i. Maintain each team’s pre-marked game balls.
 - ii. Be attentive to the game and respond to the directions of the officials, promptly.
 - iii. Do not enter the field. Stay behind the restricted area at all times.
 - iv. On obvious punting situations, a ball handler with the receiver’s ball should be stationed downfield.
 - v. Retrieve the ball following a kick try or field goal, and promptly provide the correct new ball for the ensuing free kick.
 - vi. Retrieve a long pass or kick that goes out of bounds, after supplying a new ball to the official.
- c. When conditions warrant, the crew will procure sufficient towels from the teams to enable the ball handlers to keep the game balls as dry as possible.

III. Free Kick Mechanics

Every game starts with a free kick, so it represents a good way to set the stage for a good game ... or a less than satisfactory performance. Each crew member has very specific duties and responsibilities on free kicks. With the play spread out over a wide area, it is critical that every crew member know his specific responsibilities and focus on them if we are to have a well-officiated free kick.

A. Kickoff

- R ☐ Assume an initial position on R's goal line, halfway between the center of the field and the hash mark on H's side of the field. Have your beanbag in hand in case it is necessary to mark a "momentum" spot.
- Count the R players and signal your count to the rest of the crew.
 - Check the positions of the other crew members, and wait for them to signal their readiness with an upraised arm.
 - Declare the ball ready for play and sound your whistle, verifying that there are at least 4 K players on each side of the kicker until the ball is kicked.
 - o If there are not, immediately sound your whistle, killing the play if the ball was kicked, and throw your flag. Give signal #19 for the free kick infraction, and have B move the spot of the kickoff back 5 yds.
 - After signaling the ball ready for play, assume responsibility for the play clock and any delay penalty.
 - On kicks down the middle or in H's side zone, give signal #2 to start the game clock when the kick is touched, other than first touching by K. Pick up the runner and follow until you release him to the next covering official.
 - If the kick is deep, rule on touchback or the momentum exception while standing on the goal line.
 - If the kick threatens the far pylon, hustle down the goal line and get help from U before ruling on touchback vs. kick out of bounds. If the kick is out of bounds, that is U's flag, not yours. If you are unsure, make eye contact with U before calling anything. If he is not calling the kick out of bounds, then the "when in doubt" dictates it's a touchback, which should be signaled by R.
 - If the kick threatens the near pylon, hustle down the goal line toward it. You are responsible for ruling whether the kick went out of bounds, or it was a touchback. The flag is yours. Remember, that is a spot foul.
 - On kicks into U's side zone, observe action around the runner, moving cautiously upfield.
 - Serve as clean up behind the play.
- U ☐ Assume an initial position on L's sideline at the 20 yd. line. It is permissible to adjust your initial position as deep as the 10 yd. line if K's kicker threatens the goal line. This is something you can pick up in the pregame warmups.
- Check your sideline to make sure team personnel are in the team box and the restricted area is clear.
 - Count the R players and signal your count to the rest of the crew.

- Signal you are ready with an upraised arm. Hold the signal until R signals the ball ready for play.
- If the kick threatens your pylon, hustle toward the goal line and coordinate coverage with R. If you can get to the pylon before the ball gets there, assume a position on the pylon to rule. Before you do anything, make eye contact with R, who will be moving along the goal line in your direction.
 - If you have the kick definitely out of bounds on your sideline, before it gets to the pylon, untouched by R, throw your flag for a kick out of bounds. This is a spot foul.
 - If you are not 100% sure the kick was out of bounds before crossing the goal line, make no call but continue toward the pylon while making eye contact with R.
 - By doing so, you will be telling R you are unsure. If R hasn't signaled a touchback yet, that means he's unsure, too. At that point, the "when in doubt" dictates that it's a touchback, which should be signaled by R.
 - Although it is not necessary to stop the clock, since it should not have started in the first place, when you see the kick either out of bounds or behind the goal line, give signal #3 twice and blow the whistle to get the action stopped.
- On a kick to your side of the field, give signal #2 to start the game clock when the kick is touched, other than first touching by K. Pick up the runner and follow him along the sideline until you release him to L at approximately the R 35 yd. line. If the runner is downed before then, sound your whistle, hold the forward progress spot, and give signal #3 to kill the clock.
- After releasing the runner to L, clean up behind the play.
- If the kick is down the middle or on H's side of the field, observe action around the runner, moving along the sideline. Clean up behind, to your side of, and around the runner.
- Stay off the field the entire play. You remain responsible for your sideline throughout.

- H ☐ Assume an initial position on your sideline at the 30 yd. line.
- Check your sideline to make sure team personnel are in the team box and the restricted area is clear.
 - Count the R players and signal your count to the rest of the crew.
 - Signal you are ready with an upraised arm. Hold the signal until R signals the ball ready for play.
 - If the kick is to your side of the field, give signal #2 to start the clock only if the runner is even with or upfield of you.
 - Mark the spot where the kick goes out of bounds on your sideline, throw a flag for a spot foul if the kick was untouched by R.
 - Before R releases the runner to you, you are responsible for action around the runner.
 - Gradually give ground as the runner comes to you. When he does, follow him along the sideline. Stay off the field for the entire play. You are responsible for the sideline all the way to K's goal line. If the runner is downed in your area, sound your whistle, hold the forward progress spot, and give signal #3 to kill the clock.

- If the kick is to the other side of the field, observe the legality of blocks and action away from the ball.
- L
- ☐ Assume an initial position in the middle of the field at the 50 yd. line. to line up the front line of R. Advise them not to cross the 50 yd. line before the ball is kicked.
 - Move to a position on your sideline at midfield with your beanbag in hand.
 - Check your sideline to make sure team personnel are in the team box and the restricted area is clear.
 - Count the K players and signal your count to the rest of the crew.
 - Signal you are ready with an upraised arm. Hold the signal until R signals the ball ready for play.
 - Be alert for encroachment by R, or a pop-up kick by K. In either case, blow your whistle and throw your flag to shut the play down. Give signal #18 or #19 to R and point to the offending team.
 - Be alert for first touching by K and mark the yardline of first touching with your beanbag.
 - Watch the initial blocks on the K players on your side of the field as they cover the kick.
 - Move slowly down your sideline on a deep kick but no farther than the R 35 yd. line.
 - Be aware of the return and, if it appears to be potentially a long one, start giving ground along your sideline. You are responsible for your sideline all the way to K's goal line.
 - If the runner is downed in your area, sound your whistle, hold the forward progress spot, and give signal #3 to kill the clock. If the runner is downed in your area, sound your whistle, hold the forward progress spot, and give signal #3 to kill the clock.
 - If the kick is to the other side of the field, observe the legality of blocks and action away from the ball.
- B
- ☐ Take charge of the ball to be kicked.
 - If there is a penalty to be administered, give the final signal and administer the penalty.
 - Assume an initial position in the middle of the field at K's free kick line. Advise K players not to cross the free kick line until the ball is kicked. Hand the ball to the kicker, point out R to him, and advise the kicker not to kick until R has made the ball ready for play. If the kicker is not ready, place the ball on the ground.
 - Move to a position on H's sideline at K's free kick line with your beanbag in hand.
 - Temporarily move back to the K 35 yd. line to check that no K player other than the kicker is more than 5 yds. behind the spot of the kick. Then resume your position on K's free kick line.
 - Check your sideline to make sure team personnel are in the team box and the restricted area is clear.
 - Count the K players and signal your count to the rest of the crew.

- Signal you are ready with an upraised arm. Hold the signal until R signals the ball ready for play.
- If the ball falls off the kicking tee, blow your whistle. Move into the field to the kicker and remind the kicker not to kick until signaled by R.
- Be alert for encroachment or a pop-up kick by K. In either case, blow your whistle and throw your flag to shut the play down. Give signal #18 or #19 to R and point to K. Administer the 5 yd. penalty.
- Be alert for first touching by K and mark the yardline of first touching with your beanbag.
- Watch the initial blocks on the K players on your side of the field as they cover the kick.
- Watch for action against the kicker and the holder, if there was one. Cover the kicker and holder to the R 45 yd. line.
- After the ball has gone downfield, move into the center of the field. Move downfield cautiously, no more than 10-15 yds., remaining alert for the possibility of a long return.
- On a long return, take responsibility for the runner, but from a position ahead of him, not trailing. You are responsible for the K goal line.
- On a short return, observe the legality of blocks and action away from the ball.

- All ☐ Assume every kickoff is going to be an onside kick and be mentally ready for that. But the practice sometimes followed of asking the kicker to declare if there is going to be an onside kick, and then B giving some “secret signal” to the rest of the crew is discouraged. Changes in the crew’s behavior, however subtle, from one kickoff to the next get noticed by astute coaches, and can give away the element of surprise.
- Echo signal #3 at the end of the play.
 - Do not allow the ball to be kicked without the proper number of players on the field for both teams. Instead, hold the ready for play signal while urging the team to line up correctly.

B. Onside Kicks

Many times, on when it is highly likely that K will be attempting an onside kick, it is because the score is close and it is late in the game. It is recommended that the crew prepare to officiate this potentially crucial play by:

1. Discussing onside kick rules, coverages, and mechanics in their pregame conference and/or at halftime.
2. When the crew meets briefly in the intermission between the score and the kickoff, spend 30 seconds reminding the crew of key points like K blocking restrictions, kick catching interference, and pop-up kicks. Then break to onside kick positions as described below.

In game situations where it is likely K will attempt an onside kick, R should direct the crew to adjust their normal initial positioning and responsibilities as follows:

- R
- Take an initial position at the 10 yd. line, or behind the deepest receiver, whichever is closer to the goal line, approximately in the center of the field.
 - If the kick is onside, move up quickly and observe action around the ball.
 - If recovery is contested, move up to covering official(s), obtain information from them, and rule on possession.
- U
- Take an initial position outside the home team sideline on R's free kick line, with beanbag in hand.
 - Be mindful of restrictions on contact by K when the kick is still in the neutral zone.
 - Be alert for first touching by K, or a kick that has not both crossed R's free kick line and been grounded, or touching by R before these requirements are met.
 - Use the beanbag **only to mark a spot of first touching by K**. The beanbag should not be used to mark a spot where R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded.
 - If R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded, it is permissible for the covering official to give the informal "touch" signal, the same signal often used to indicate that a kick or a pass in flight has been tipped.
 - Observe legality of blocks and action away from the ball if the kick goes to the other side of the field.
- H
- Take an initial position outside the visitors' sideline on R's free kick line, with beanbag in hand.
 - Be alert for first touching by K, or a kick that has not both crossed R's free kick line and been grounded, or touching by R before these requirements are met.
 - Use the beanbag **only to mark a spot of first touching by K**. The beanbag should not be used to mark a spot where R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded.
 - If R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded, it is permissible for the covering official to give the informal "touch" signal, the same signal often used to indicate that a kick or a pass in flight has been tipped.
 - Be mindful of restrictions on contact by K when the kick is still in the neutral zone.
 - Observe legality of blocks and action away from the ball if the kick goes to the other side of the field.
- L
- Take an initial position outside the home team sideline on K's free kick line, with beanbag in hand.
 - Be alert for first touching by K, or a kick that has not both crossed R's free kick line and been grounded, or touching by R before these requirements are met.
 - Use the beanbag **only to mark a spot of first touching by K**. The beanbag should not be used to mark a spot where R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded.
 - If R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded, it is permissible for the covering official to give the informal "touch" signal, the same signal often used to indicate that a kick or a pass in flight has been tipped.

- Be mindful of restrictions on contact by K when the kick is still in the neutral zone.
 - Observe legality of blocks and action away from the ball if the kick goes to the other side of the field.
- B
- ☐ Take an initial position outside the home team sideline on K's free kick line, with beanbag in hand.
 - Be alert for first touching by K, or a kick that has not both crossed R's free kick line and been grounded, or touching by R before these requirements are met.
 - Use the beanbag **only to mark a spot of first touching by K**. The beanbag should not be used to mark a spot where R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded.
 - If R touched the kick before it went 10 yds. and was grounded, it is permissible for the covering official to give the informal "touch" signal, the same signal often used to indicate that a kick or a pass in flight has been tipped.
 - Be mindful of restrictions on contact by K when the kick is still in the neutral zone.
 - Observe legality of blocks and action away from the ball if the kick goes to the other side of the field.
- All
- ☐ H, L, U, and B should all be especially alert for encroachment violations in these situations. Where normally a little leeway might be given, in these situations the rule must be strictly enforced.

C. Free Kick Following Safety

1. Following a safety, the ball is next put in play by free kick from K's 20 yd. line. Normal kickoff positions and mechanics are maintained, adjusted for the free kick lines.
2. Unlike a kickoff, a free kick following a safety may be put in play by a punt. It is important to remember that even though K punts, the rules regarding free kicks apply, not scrimmage kicks.

D. Free Kick Following Fair Catch

One of the rarer plays in football is a field goal attempt following a fair catch or awarded fair catch. That field goal attempt is a free kick. Although it is a free kick, it requires some unique mechanics from the crew.

- R
- ☐ Assume an initial position on the end line underneath one of the uprights.
 - You are responsible for determining whether the kick went completely inside that upright.
 - Employ normal scoring kick signal mechanics.
- U
- ☐ Assume an initial position on the end line underneath one of the uprights.
 - You are responsible for determining whether the kick went completely inside that upright.

- You are responsible for determining whether the kick went over the crossbar.
 - Employ normal scoring kick signal mechanics.
- H ☐ Use normal kickoff mechanics, with positioning adjusted for the situation.
- Set the line to gain indicator to define the neutral zone.
 - You are responsible for knowing whether the kick breaks the plane of the goal line.
- L ☐ Normal kickoff mechanics
- B ☐ Normal kickoff mechanics
- All ☐ Remember that this is a free kick. Free kick rules apply. If the kick is unsuccessful, but the ball remains in the field of play, it is alive.
- Crew members should signal one another to remind them that the ball will remain alive.

V. Scrimmage Kick Mechanics

Scrimmage kicks present unique challenges for the crew. Frequently, the play becomes strung out all over the field. There are special rules and enforcements. Deception often plays a role in the kicking game. Consequently, rigid adherence to the specialized mechanics developed to cover scrimmage kicks to the best of a five man crew's ability is necessary to give the crew the best chance for a well officiated play.

A. Punts

- R ☐ After declaring the ball ready for play, assume an initial position 3-5 yds. outside the tight end, and 2-3 yds. behind the kicker, on the side of his kicking leg. Adjust your formation when necessary to account for the ball position.
- Make sure you can see the ball and all the backs.
 - Count K players and signal your count.
 - Signal crew that K is in scrimmage kick formation, which keys them to look for numbering exceptions and action against the snapper.
 - Make sure you can see the snap clearly.
 - At the snap, look through the kicker and personal protector(s) to the far tackle and end, and evaluate those blocks.
 - Shift your attention to the blocks of, and action against, backs or personal protectors. Be ready to rule whether a player was blocked into the kicker.
 - Lastly, focus on action against the kicker. Stay with the kicker until he is no longer threatened.
 - When the ball is kicked, if it is safe to momentarily divert your attention from the kicker, take a brief look to check the flight of the ball. If it is apparent it is not going out of bounds in flight, you are no longer responsible for the ball.
 - In the event of a bad snap, blocked kick, mishandled snap, or other mishap, be prepared to move in the appropriate direction. Remember, you are responsible for K's goal line and the sideline on your side of the field.
 - Once the ball is successfully kicked, loudly call out "Ball's away!" or the equivalent, to let the receivers know to stop rushing the kicker.
 - After the kick crosses the neutral zone, observe line play and slowly move downfield. Watch for fouls and be prepared for a long runback. On a return, you are responsible for K's goal line.
 - If the kick goes out of bounds in flight, go to the spot of the kick and line up the covering official at the spot where the ball crossed the sideline by using an outstretched arm.
 - If there is no foul on the play, signal the line to gain equipment to move downfield to H.
 - Confirm the line to gain indicator is properly set before signaling the ball ready for play.
- U ☐ Assume an initial position 10 yds. deep, favoring the side of the formation opposite R, and keeping the snap in view.

- Count K players and signal your count to the crew.
- Signal crew that K is in scrimmage kick formation.
 - Verbally inform the defense that the snapper is afforded special protection.
- Check for numbering exceptions and, if present, signal the crew.
 - Most teams use the same lineup for all of their punts. After the first punt for each team, make note on your game card of the numbering exceptions on punts. It may help you if there's a question later.
- Focus your attention on the guards and snapper, watching for false starts or snap infractions, and for illegal action against the snapper.
- At the snap, step toward the neutral zone, focusing on interior line play. Read the play.
- If you see that the kick is going to go out of bounds in flight, alert R to pick up the flight of the kick, if possible.
- Be alert to assist R with a short or blocked kick, and assist the “stay” wing official in determining whether a kick crosses the neutral zone.
- After the kick, turn to the “release” wing official's side of the field to pick up blocks in that side zone.
- Move toward the return area, observing players away from the ball.
- Be alert for fouls in the secondary.
- When the ball goes out of bounds, move to help relay the ball to the inbounds spot.

H & L □ Initial positioning and pre-snap responsibilities the same as any scrimmage play.

The wing official on the opposite side of the formation from R:

- Hold the line of scrimmage at the snap, focusing on the initial contact on the “gunner” in front of you, and/or the end players on your side of the line of scrimmage.
- After the ball has crossed the neutral zone, release and move slowly downfield, observing blocks in front of the return.
- Pick up a return to your side after the runner is released by B.
- If the ball goes out of bounds in flight on your sideline:
 - Sound your whistle and give the stop clock signal (signal #3) twice.
 - Move farther downfield than the spot where the ball crossed the sideline.
 - Face R and walk up the sideline until R gives the signal to stop. Turn and face the field at that spot.
 - Hold the spot until a new ball is procured and placed by U at the inbounds spot.
- If the kick rolls out of bounds on your sideline:
 - Sound your whistle and give the stop clock signal (signal #3) twice.
 - Get to the out of bounds spot and continue to observe action.
 - Hold the spot until a new ball is procured and placed by U at the inbounds spot.
- Assist R in covering a fake, scramble, or a short or blocked kick.
 - Note if kick is touched beyond the neutral zone
 - Note if kick is recovered in or behind neutral zone.

- Be prepared to mark a spot of first touching, a fumble, or the end of the kick with a beanbag.
- You are responsible for the sideline on your side of the field, and K's goal line, as well whether the kick crossed the neutral zone.

The wing official on the same side of the formation as R:

- Make sure your sideline downfield is completely clear.
- At the snap, release and **sprint** down the sideline watching blocks on your side of the field.
 - **Exception:** When the kicker is standing in the end zone, hold the line of scrimmage until the kick crosses the neutral zone, and then proceed downfield to cover the kick. The priority in that situation is to make sure the goal line is well covered.
- On a kick to the other side of the field, watch players in front of the return man for blocks or signals.
- On a kick to your side of the field, watch the return man for signals, whether he makes a catch, and any action on him.
- Whenever an R player signals for a fair catch, and no catch is made, you are responsible for knowing whether the player that signaled illegally blocked during the play
- Pick up a return to your side.
- If the ball goes out of bounds in flight on your sideline:
 - Sound your whistle and give the stop clock signal (signal #3) twice.
 - Move farther downfield than the spot where the ball crossed the sideline.
 - Face R and walk up the sideline until R gives the signal to stop. Turn and face the field at that spot.
 - Hold the spot until a new ball is procured and placed by U at the inbounds spot.
- If the kick rolls out of bounds on your sideline:
 - Sound your whistle and give the stop clock signal (signal #3) twice.
 - Get to the out of bounds spot and continue to observe action.
 - Hold the spot until a new ball is procured and placed by U at the inbounds spot.
- On a short kick into your side zone, beanbag the end of the kick if it ends in the field of play.
- You are responsible for the sideline on your side of the field, and R's goal line.

- B
- Take an initial position 10-12 yds., wider than, and 2-3 yds. behind the deepest receiver on the side of the field opposite R. If there are two deep receivers, go as far into the side zone as you need to in order to set up outside the receiver closest to the sideline opposite R. Have your contrasting color beanbag in hand. Your goal is to move as the receiver moves, maintaining that same cushion as the play develops..
 - If the deepest receiver is at or inside the R 15 yd. line, assume an initial position on the goal line and remain there until the kick has ended, or it is certain the goal line will not be threatened.

- Remind the deep receiver(s) to make a legal fair catch signal. If the sun is a factor, remind the receiver(s) that they must bend the elbow to shade their eyes. Otherwise, it will be considered a fair catch signal. When in doubt, it's a fair catch signal.
- Count R players and signal your count.
- If the kick is short to either sideline, the wing official will assume responsibility for the ball. Your responsibility is action around and behind the ball.
- For a long kick out of bounds on H's sideline:
 - Sound your whistle and give the stop clock signal (signal #3) twice.
 - Move farther downfield than the spot where the ball crossed the sideline.
 - Face R and walk up the sideline until R gives the signal to stop. Turn and face the field at that spot.
 - Hold the spot until a new ball is procured and placed by U at the inbounds spot.
- For a long kick out of bounds on the far sideline, your responsibility is action in the field of play and out of bounds around that out of bounds spot.
- Cover all kicks down the middle of the field or in the side zone on your side of the field, and be ready to rule on whether a kick was touched by either team:
 - If the ball is muffed, be prepared to rule on possession.
 - Be alert for a handoff or reverse. Maintain your cushion.
 - When K is first to touch the kick while it is moving, beanbag the spot of the touch **with your regular beanbag, not your contrasting color beanbag**, and continue to officiate the play.
 - When K is first to touch a kick that is motionless beyond the neutral zone, sound whistle, give clock kill signal (signal #3) twice, and **mark the spot with your contrasting color beanbag**.
- Following a fair catch, sound your whistle, give clock kill signal (signal #3) twice, and **mark the spot with your contrasting color beanbag**. Communicate with R so that he knows it was a fair catch.
 - To reduce the possibility of an inadvertent whistle, make sure you are working with the whistle out of your mouth. If the receiver muffs the catch, the extra time it takes you to bring the whistle to your mouth may save you from an IW.
- Where a fair catch signal is given, but a catch not made, stay with the ball and the "release" wing official will pick up action by or on the signaler/receiver.
- When the goal line is threatened by a kick,
 - Be prepared to rule quickly and decisively, giving the touchback signal (signal #7) twice, from a position on the goal line.
 - If the kick is caught or recovered inside the R 5 yd. line, use your contrasting color beanbag to mark the spot of the catch or recovery, which may later be used as a momentum spot. Be prepared to rule on whether the player's momentum took him into the end zone and, if so, signal with outthrust arm toward the end zone.
- Move with the runner who catches the kick and advances, cleaning up behind as he moves away from you.

B. Field goal

- R
- Assume an initial position 5 yds. behind and 8-10 yds. to the side, at approximately a 45° angle to the holder, on the side facing into the holder. You should have a wide enough angle to see all 11 offensive players in a traditional field goal formation. Widen your position as necessary to reflect ball position. Angle is more important than distance here.
 - Count the K players and signal the crew.
 - Signal that K is in scrimmage kick formation.
 - Signal that the ball will remain alive if the kick is blocked or short in the field of play.
 - Focus on kicker and holder. Do not look away after the ball is kicked. Rule on any contact on the kicker or holder.
 - Watch for fumble or muff by holder and rule accordingly.
 - Assist in coverage of your sideline if run or pass.
 - After there is no longer any threat to the kicker and holder, pick up the officials under the crossbar and signal score (signal #5) or no score (signal #10) twice.
- U
- Assume an initial position 4-7 yds. deep and on the same side of the formation as R.
 - Count K players and signal your count to the crew.
 - Check for numbering exceptions and signal the crew if they are found.
 - Verbally remind the defense that the snapper enjoys special protection.
 - At the snap, step toward the neutral zone, observing interior line action, including action on the snapper.
 - Be ready to assist R in the event of a short or blocked kick. Assist in determining if kick crossed the neutral zone.
 - Assist in goal line coverage on run or pass to R's side.
 - After players go past your position, pivot to R's side of the field and observe blocks in that side zone.
- H or L **Whichever wing official is on the side opposite R's initial position and looking at the holder's back**
- Assume your regular position on the line of scrimmage outside the sideline.
 - Count the R players and signal your count to the crew.
 - Observe neutral zone for infractions.
 - If a pass or run develops, move as you would on a scrimmage play.
 - Quickly move to the goal line, and employ cross-field officiating to help on a play to the other side of the field.

B & H or L

B and whichever wing official is on the same side as R's initial position and looking at the holder's hands:

- Assume an initial position on the end line or behind it, so as to be able to see directly up the upright and rule whether the ball passed completely inside the upright.
- Count the R players and signal your count.
- Identify and verbally confirm to one another the numbers of the eligible receivers on your side of the formation.
- B has responsibility for play clock.
- When ball is kicked, B has responsibility for his upright and rules on whether the ball went over or under the crossbar.
- The wing official has responsibility for his upright.
- When the kick passes the upright or is obviously unsuccessful, B should sound his whistle.
- On kicks down the middle, of kicks that obviously fail, both officials should simultaneously step out a yard in front of their upright, pause briefly, and then without looking at one another, signal the score (signal #5), holding it until R makes eye contact, and then dropping it simultaneously, or no score (signal #10) twice, while facing the line of scrimmage.
- While stepping into the end zone the officials should communicate with one another verbally to insure that they both give the same signal.
 - Avoid saying "good" or "no good," as it is possible, with crowd noise, that one official will say "no good," and the other will only hear the "good" part of it.
 - It is recommended that the officials communicate by saying "yes" or "no."
- On kicks that threaten an upright, only the official on the threatened upright should step out and signal.
- If the kick is blocked, or there is a fake or scramble:
 - Wing official should move down the end line to the pylon to rule on the sideline. His next move is up to the goal line to assist.
 - B remains on the end line and has normal goal line situation responsibilities.

All□ Have situational awareness. When the situation calls for it, look for the tee coming onto the field and move quickly to field goal positions.

- Communicate by signaling that the ball remains alive until the kick ends if unsuccessful.
- If it is 4th down, remind the crew members that the clock will stop at the conclusion of the play, regardless of the outcome, by giving the "dead clock" signal.

C. Try

Utilize the same mechanics on a kick try as you would on a field goal, with the following modifications:

1. All officials should remind one another that if the kick is obviously unsuccessful, the try fails and the ball is dead. In that event, R should blow the whistle to kill the play.
2. If there is a fake or a scramble, the ball is dead if the defense gets possession.

VI. Scrimmage Play Mechanics

The large majority of plays in a typical game are scrimmage plays. Thus, good scrimmage play mechanics are essential to a smooth, well-officiated game.

A. Running Plays

- R
- Assume an initial position that is visible to the game and play clock operators, approximately 11-13 yds. from the line of scrimmage, and as wide as the tight end position. Adjust based on ball position and formation as necessary.
 - On the side of the QB's passing arm
 - Able to see the snap, the far tackle, and the backs.
 - Count the A players and signal your count to the **Umpire**. Do this as early as possible.
 - Declare the ball ready for play.
 - Check for one second count after huddle or shift, snap irregularities, and movement of linemen and backs in your field of vision.
 - Be alert for illegal shift or player in motion.
 - Identify eligible backs.
 - After the snap, key the tackle on the opposite side, unless formation dictates otherwise, and read pass or run from his block.
 - You are responsible for the ball, the runner, action around the runner, and blocks behind the runner all the way to the neutral zone.
 - Do not move aggressively toward the line of scrimmage, in order to avoid hindering a reverse or narrowing your field of vision too much.
 - Be alert for the following:
 - Illegal use of hands by A.
 - Action behind the ball and away from the runner near the neutral zone.
 - Action on the QB after he no longer has the ball.
 - Backward or forward pass when the ball is thrown.
 - Out of bounds spot behind the neutral zone.
 - You are responsible for the runner until he crosses the neutral zone.
 - If the ball becomes dead behind the neutral zone:
 - Be positive of ball location, and then blow the whistle.
 - Move quickly to the spot of forward progress.
 - Signal the number of the next down.
 - After the ball becomes dead, check that the down marker is correct, and that the rest of the crew is ready before the ball is allowed to become ready for play.
 - If the line to gain is made, or possession changes, stop the game clock (signal #3) unless already stopped by rule.
 - **Go to the line of scrimmage after every play. Go there to see if the line to gain has been made, observe player demeanor, monitor substitutions, keep the game flowing. Show a presence.**

- U
- After spotting the ball, remain facing R until the ready for play signal or released by R.
 - Move to a position 4-7 yds. behind B's defensive line of and between A's tackles. Adjust deeper if necessary depending on the position of the linebackers and the play situation. If the teams are at or near the line of scrimmage, back to your position. Do not turn your back on teams that are at the line. It is recommended that, unless formation or field position dictate otherwise, you line up on the side opposite R. Keep the snap in view at all times.
 - Vary your position from time to time so that the players cannot use you as interference.
 - Count A players and signal your count to the **Referee**.
 - Check for numbering requirements and ineligible receivers.
 - Be alert for interference with the snap, false start, or disconcerting signals by B.
 - Note the position of the ball between the hash marks.
 - Note the B players on the line of scrimmage and in the free blocking zone.
 - At the snap, read run or pass by reading the blocks of the center and guards.
 - On a run, identify the point of attack, paying particular attention to free blocking zone restrictions.
 - On wide plays, move toward the play officiating from the inside out.
 - Check for illegal use of hands or arms and other fouls near neutral zone.
 - Be alert for ineligible receivers and the point at which a forward pass strikes anything.
 - If a fumble occurs beyond the neutral zone, assist in determining who secures possession.
 - Observe action of players in and just behind the neutral zone.
 - Do not sound your whistle unless the covering official is not in position.
 - Spot the ball for the next down.
- H & L
- After the ball is spotted, assume an initial position straddling the line of scrimmage **outside** your sideline. It is recommended that you start from a position at the back of the restricted area on your sideline. This position widens the field of vision, and makes sideline management easier.
 - Signal the number of the next down.
 - Identify the eligible receivers on your side.
 - Pick up R's count of the A players and then count the number of players in the backfield to determine the legality of the formation.
 - If there is a foul for 5 players in the backfield, both wing officials should have simultaneous flags, since they are both counting the same thing.
 - Use preventive officiating with respect to wide receivers being on or off the line.
 - If the widest player in the formation closest to you is off the line of scrimmage, signal by pointing toward the offensive backfield at shoulder level. Hold the point until the snap, or until motion or shift changes the formation.

- You are responsible for the legality of a player who goes in motion away from you. Responsibility is maintained if the player in motion reverses direction. Remain in position unless your vision of the player in motion is impaired, in which case take a step into the offensive backfield.
- Be alert for false start, encroachment, illegal shift or illegal motion.
- After the snap, observe your keys and read the near tackle to determine run or pass. Hold the line of scrimmage until the ball carrier crosses it.
- Watch the initial charge of linemen.
- Watch blocking on the back side on runs to the opposite side of the field.
- Check blocks on eligible receivers.
- On a running play toward your side:
 - Stay on the sideline, watching for illegal offensive and defensive blocks.
 - Pick up the runner when he nears the neutral zone, and follow him when he crosses it, trailing the play.
 - When you see the ball become dead, sound your whistle and mark the forward progress spot with an outthrust downfield foot.
 - Mark the forward progress spot by first “squaring off” your approach – move down the sideline and then perpendicularly to the center of the field to the dead ball spot or the 9 yd. marks, whichever is reached first. Your path should form a 90° angle.
- Keep the players in front of you when marking the forward progress spot, unless the spot is close to the line to gain or to the goal line. In that event, come in to the field of play to mark the spot as far as possible. Do not go around any players.
- If the ball is down inbounds near the sideline and the line to gain **is not** made, “wind the clock” (signal #2) twice, and then signal the 40 sec. clock to start.
- If the ball is down inbounds near the sideline and the line to gain **is** made, “stop clock” (signal #3) twice, and then signal the 40 sec. clock to start.
- If the ball becomes dead in a side zone, relay it to U or B to get it spotted.
- If the run is to the opposite side, move down the sideline until it is certain the runner will not reverse his field. Observe action on the backside of the play, but stay off the field.
- On option plays toward you, assume responsibility for:
 - Action against the pitchman.
 - Whether the pitch was forward or backward – if backward, signal with “punch” toward offensive backfield.
 - Whether the pitch was beyond the neutral zone.
 - If the pitch was:
 - from behind the line and backward, you have responsibility for the pitchman, and continue to officiate.
 - From behind the line and forward, it is a legal forward pass. If it hits the ground it is incomplete.
 - From beyond the line, and backward, it is legal, but you should beanbag the spot of the pass, as it could conceivably be an enforcement spot.

- From beyond the line, and forward, is an illegal forward pass. It is a spot foul, so get your flag on the spot of the pass. Continue to officiate. If the pass is incomplete, the ball is dead.
- If the runner goes out of bounds on your sideline:
 - Make your way to the out of bounds spot while killing the clock (give signal #3 twice) and continuing to observe the action near and across the sideline.
 - At the out of bounds spot, pivot to face into the sideline to better observe the action. Do not leave the out of bounds spot. R or B should be coming behind you to go into the sideline to clean up.
 - Do not mark the out of bounds spot with a beanbag unless it is necessary for you to leave the spot and go into the sideline area in the event of an altercation.

H
only

- In setting the line to gain indicator:
 - Mark the foremost point of the ball on the sideline with your heel. Face the field of play while doing so.
 - The box man will set the box on the sideline at the spot. The rear and front stake will then be set accordingly.
 - The clip will be placed on the 5 yd. line closest to the rear stake.
 - Then the line to gain equipment will be moved back to the rear of the restricted area.
- When the line to gain is the goal line, remove the line to gain equipment from the sideline except for the down box.
- Provide the down box operator with a bean bag to mark the line of scrimmage in case that spot needs to be re-established after a play or penalty.

L
only

- You are primarily responsible for determining whether the line to gain has been made.
 - When the ball is dead, look through the forward progress spot to the line to gain indicator on the far sideline.
 - If the line to gain has been made, kill the clock by giving signal #3 twice. Indicate verbally and/or by signal to U and R that the line to gain was made.
 - If the spot is close to the line to gain, notify R to come up and take a look to see if it's a 1st down. It is not necessary to stop the game clock at that point, unless R's ability to get to the spot is delayed.
 - Generally, if the game clock is stopped, that means either a 1st down will be declared, or there will be a measurement. Do not routinely stop the clock to determine if a 1st down has been made.

B

- Assume an initial position approximately 20 yds. behind the defensive line of scrimmage favoring the strong side of the formation. Adjust position as dictated by formation and ball position.
- Count B players and signal your count to the wing officials.
- Assume responsibility for the play clock and delay of game. Give a visible signal for the last 5 sec. if on field play clocks are not present.
- Read keys to determine run or pass at the snap. Your first step is always backward.

- On runs to either side of the field, keep the runner between you and the wing official, while observing the blocks in front of the runner.
- Retreat to stay deeper than the deepest receiver. Do not get too close to the play.
- Maintain inside-out coverage while staying inside the hash marks during the play.
- When the runner breaks free, assume responsibility for the runner, but from a position in front, so that you can be stationary at the goal line if the runner gets that far.
- On runs more than a few yards beyond the line of scrimmage that end near or beyond the sideline, move in to assist the wing official in getting the players back on the field and the ball properly spotted.
 - On a play that goes into the team box area, hustle in there and look for opposing team players who got into the bench area. Get to them and bring them out safely.
 - When you go into the bench area, use both whistle and voice to make your presence known, to prevent anything untoward from starting.
- When a run ends outside the 9 yd. marks, assist the wing official in relaying the ball to U.

- All ☐ Be alert for substitution infractions. If you count more than 11 players, signal for help, count again, and if there are more than 11, try to get the illegal substitution flag out before the snap, so it is a 5 yd. dead ball penalty, rather than a 15 yd. live ball penalty.
- If the covering official stops the clock because the line to gain has been made, or the ball goes out of bounds, all crew members should echo the signal.
 - When the ball becomes dead in your area, sound your whistle promptly **after you see the ball** dead in player possession. If the ball is not in your area, you should not be blowing the whistle. Don't be a ball watcher! Concentrate on your area of responsibility.

B. Reading Keys

Keys are intended to help determine coverage at the initial snap only. They do not necessarily determine coverage for the entire play, as the crew must adjust to the situation as it is presented. The NF Football Game Officials Manual has an excellent discussion of formation strength, keys, and diagrams and is required reading.

1. Keys are determined initially by the strength of the formation. B is responsible for determining and then declaring strength of the formation.
2. Strength of formation is determined by the number of eligible receivers outside the tackle position of the formation. The side with the most such eligible receivers is the strong side. If the formation is balanced, strength is declared to L's side.
3. When B declares the formation's strength, he should signal that to the wing officials, and adjust his initial position to favor the strong side.
4. B has the initial key. The wing officials have the second key.

5. Each crew member is responsible for the initial action of, and on, their key(s).
6. Initial keys are as follows:
 - a. B has the widest receiver on the strong side of the formation. Note: if players are “stacked” one behind the other, the player closest to the line of scrimmage is considered to be wider.
 - b. The wing official on the strong side of the formation has the inside receiver(s) on that side.
 - c. The wing official on the weak side of the formation has any receivers on that side.
 - d. If the strong side of the formation has three eligible receivers (“trips”), then B takes the two widest receivers on the strong side, and the wing on the strong side takes the inside receiver.
 - e. Wing officials always key on receivers out of the backfield who came from inside the tackles toward them.
7. Keep in mind that motion can change the strength of formation and, thus, the keys. The crew must be alert to a possible change, as the actual strength of the formation is not finally determined until the ball is snapped.

C. Pass Plays

- R
- Pre-snap positioning and responsibilities same as running plays.
 - Look through QB to block of far tackle.
 - Observe all blocks behind the neutral zone.
 - As passer retreats or moves laterally, maintain relationship on throwing side as long as possible.
 - When QB is threatened, focus on him. When pass is released do not turn your head. Continue to focus on the passer, while alerting the defenders verbally that the ball is away.
 - After the QB drops back, you are responsible for determining whether a pass is backward or forward. If backward, punch toward the offensive backfield.
 - If the passer threatens the line of scrimmage, move to the spot of the pass to determine whether the passer’s feet were in or behind the neutral zone when the ball was released. If so, this is a spot foul for illegal forward pass. Get your flag on the spot and continue to officiate.
 - Intentional grounding may require communication between R and other crew members.
 - Intentional grounding is a foul that is only called by R. No exceptions.
 - If the pass goes to an area unoccupied by an eligible receiver, the covering official should go to R and report that information.

- R will then make a judgment as to whether contact on the passer or some other reason caused the errant pass, or whether it was intentional grounding.
- In such cases, it is perfectly acceptable to throw the flag on the spot of the pass after discussion.
- You remain responsible for the runner until he crosses the neutral zone.

U

- Pre-snap positioning and responsibilities same as running plays.
- Be alert for illegal contact and illegal use of hands.
- When you read pass, step toward the neutral zone and continue moving deliberately to the line of scrimmage. This gets you out of the way of shallow drag pass routes, and enables you to better determine whether an ineligible is illegally downfield.
- Observe action in and just behind the neutral zone.
- Assist R in determining whether passer's feet were in or behind the neutral zone when the pass was released.
- On passes over the middle, turn when the ball passes you so that you can help on catch/trap when B might be screened.
- Assist R in ruling on touching of short forward passes. Give the "tip" signal when you see the pass touched by B.

H & L

- Pre-snap positioning and responsibilities same as running plays.
- Observe keys and read tackle to determine run or pass. Stay on the line of scrimmage until receivers have gone 10-12 yds. downfield. Then move down your sideline and find the ball.
- On a quick pass to a wide receiver on your side, you are responsible for determining whether the pass was backward or forward. If backward, signal with a punch toward the offensive backfield.
- Stay off the field as you move downfield. Be prepared to rule on interference by either team.
- If pass is incomplete in your area, sound whistle and give incomplete pass signal (signal #10) twice. Retrieve the ball and relay it in.
- Be prepared to adjust if the potential passer decides to run. Watch for blocks by receivers coming back toward the ball in such situations.
- You are responsible for your entire sideline, and for the forward progress of the runner.

B

- Pre-snap positioning and responsibilities same as running plays.
- Read keys at the snap. **Your first step is backward.** Make sure you stay behind the deepest receiver. You cannot get beat deep! On a long pass play, you should be stationary on the goal line when the ball gets there.
- When the ball is in the air, move quickly toward it. Watch for interference by either team.
- On passes complete for long gains, you are responsible for the forward progress spot.
- If pass is incomplete in your area, sound whistle and give incomplete pass signal (signal #10) twice, and start the play clock. Retrieve the ball and relay it in.

- If pass is complete in your area, sound whistle when ball becomes dead, move to the forward progress spot. If the line to gain has been reached, give clock stop signal (signal #3) twice.

All

- ☐ Observe touching or catching by ineligible player.
- Observe players going out of bounds or out of the end zone while running pass routes.
- On catch/trap plays, if you see the ball bounce, signal it incomplete immediately. If you are unsure, move toward the spot making eye contact with other officials. If no one has called it incomplete by the time you get to the spot, it's a catch.

VII. Goal Line

The goal line is the most important line on the field. Goal line officiating is among the most difficult challenges a crew faces. Because the field is compressed, there is no room to recover from mistakes. The importance of the scoring opportunity intensifies the scrutiny we face. Mistakes that would be soon forgotten at midfield are magnified many times on the goal line. Because of the challenges of goal line officiating, thorough knowledge of, and adherence to, proper goal line mechanics gives the greatest chance for the crew to succeed in the goal line situation.

A. Red Zone -- Goal line officiating starts in the Red Zone, defined as the area from the B 25 yd. line to the goal line. All officials have normal scrimmage play responsibilities in the Red Zone, with the following modifications:

1. When the ball gets to the 25 yd. line, B should assume an initial position on the goal line, and begin each down there until the ball reaches the 10 yd. line.
 - a. You are primarily responsible for the goal line on any running play.
 - b. Coordinate goal line coverage with wing officials in the event you are driven off the goal line by receivers in the end zone.
2. Wing officials must be conscious of the approaching goal line, and coordination of goal line coverage with B. Know when B is going to be on the goal line, and when he is not, and adjust your coverage accordingly.
3. **All officials must be aware that penalty enforcements against B may be $\frac{1}{2}$ the distance to the goal in the Red Zone, depending on the penalty and the location of the ball. Calling officials should remind R and U when reporting the foul.**
4. The crew should communicate every play to verbalize and signal the approaching goal line.
5. Be alert for a field goal attempt on 4th down in the Red Zone. Recognize it early, and hustle to positions.

B. Goal Line – Once the ball reaches the 10 yd. line, true goal line officiating starts. Normal scrimmage play mechanics are modified as follows:

- | | |
|---|--|
| R | <ul style="list-style-type: none">☐ Do not signal a TD until the covering officials do so.• When the covering official signals the TD, check to insure that there are no fouls. Then repeat the TD signal to the press box.• Stay well in the offensive backfield during play. Keep in mind that if there is a turnover, you are responsible for A's goal line. |
| U | <ul style="list-style-type: none">☐ If the defensive lineup permits, move your initial position a little closer to the line of scrimmage than normal.• Do not signal a TD. |

- Stay off the goal line during a live ball, do not block the vision of the wing officials.
- On runs between the tackles, find the ball at the conclusion of the play. Do not indicate a score. If the wing officials do not have a spot, simply communicate that you have the ball. Do not make any signal to the wing officials. It's up to them to determine whether there was a score or not.

H & L

- Make sure the sideline area between you and the goal line is absolutely clear and free of obstruction. Move any non-essential personnel off the goal line and well away from the field, as you may have to use the goal line extended.
- Reverse your normal run mechanics. Instead of allowing the play to go past you and then trailing it, you must lead the play to the goal line. **Ideally, you are set up and stationary on the goal line, ready to rule, when the ball gets there.**
- **When the ball is snapped:**
 - **between the B 10 and the B 5 yd. lines, your first step at the snap should be toward the goal line, get your momentum moving in that direction. Read the play and react accordingly.**
 - **between the 5 yd. line and the goal line, go directly to the goal line at the snap and remain there during the play. Work back to spot forward progress at the conclusion of the play.**
- Once you get to the goal line, stay there. Do not give up the goal line for any reason. If the play is headed in your direction, back along the goal line extended, but do not get off the goal line.
- If the play threatens your pylon, causing you to back along the goal line extended, and it's a TD, move to the pylon to signal the TD, pivoting as necessary to continue observing players in the end zone and/or out of bounds.
- If the forward progress spot is short of the goal line, come in as far necessary to accurately spot the ball, give the signal to start the 40 sec. clock, and signal the number of the next down. If you need to do so to sell the call, come in hard. Do not run around players, stay on your line.
- You absolutely must see a live ball in player possession before signaling a TD. On plays into the line near the goal line when you cannot see the ball, come in hard to the field of play straddling the goal line, making no signal. Let U find the ball.
- On pass plays into the end zone, stay at the pylon and pivot to watch the action.
- **On "fade" passes into the corner of the end zone, coordinate your coverage with B. The opposite Wing stays home and the affected Wing releases.**
 - **Communicate to assure that someone is positioned to make sure the ball crosses the LOS if the Umpire is late in coverage.**
 - If you see the receiver out of bounds, or the pass incomplete, immediately blow the whistle and signal incomplete (signal #10, twice).
 - If you have the receiver catching the ball inbounds, make no signal. Instead, make eye contact with B, who should be moving down the end line toward the play.

- If B is not signaling the pass incomplete, then both simultaneously signal the TD.
- H should remove the line to gain equipment from the sideline except for the down box. Furnish the box with a contrasting color beanbag to mark the spot of the box on every play, in case the ball position needs to be reestablished following a play or penalty.

- B
- Assume an initial position on the end line. Do not leave the end line during the play.
 - You are responsible for knowing if a pass receiver completes a catch before touching on or beyond the end line.
 - You are responsible for knowing if a receiver leaves the field of play by touching on or beyond the end line during the play. In such cases, beanbag the spot where the receiver goes out, and flag the spot of his return. Continue to officiate the play.
 - On “fade” passes into the corner of the end zone, coordinate your coverage with the wing official.
 - If you see the receiver out of bounds, or the pass otherwise incomplete, immediately blow the whistle and signal the pass incomplete (signal #10) twice.
 - If you have the receiver catching the ball inbounds, make no signal. Instead, make eye contact with the wing official, who should be moving down the sideline toward the play.
 - If the wing official is not signaling the pass incomplete, then both simultaneously signal the TD.

B Positioning for Goal Line

<u>Ball Position</u>	<u>B Lineup</u>
Outside B 25	20 yds. from ball
B 25 to B 10	Goal line
At or inside B 10	End line

- All
- **Do not mirror TD signals.**
 - Verbally and/or by signal, communicate with each crew member regarding the presence of the goal line and goal line responsibilities in the dead ball interval between every play on the goal line.

C. Reverse Goal Line

1. When the ball is snapped inside the A 5 yd. line, normal scrimmage play mechanics are modified as follows:
 - a. R assumes an initial position on the end line. He has end line responsibility, except on a pass play where the wing officials have dropped into pass coverage. Then, R stays with the QB and is responsible for both the end line and the goal line.

- b. H and L are responsible for the goal line. At the snap, they should move initially to the goal line, and then officiate back upfield.
 - c. U should remind R that all penalties against A are $\frac{1}{2}$ the distance.
- 2. When the ball is snapped from the 5 yd. line to the 10 yd. line, R is responsible for both the goal line and the end line. He should assume an initial position as close to the goal line as is safe, and wider than normal, depending on formation and ball position.
- 3. When inside the A 10 yd. line, R, H and L should communicate on every play, reminding one another of goal line responsibilities.
- 4. If there is a safety, the covering official responsible for the goal line should signal it.

VII. Overtime

A. At the end of the 4th period going into overtime:

1. After checking to insure there is no foul, no obvious timing error, no request for a coach-referee conference, and no other irregularity has occurred, R holds the ball overhead to signify the period has ended (signal #14).
2. After R declares the 4th period to be over, and the score is tied, send both teams to their team box for a three minute intermission.
3. During the three minute intermission, the crew should meet in the center of the field at the 50 yd. line and confer briefly to discuss overtime rules and procedures, including whether any penalty enforcements carry over from the 4th period, and then move briskly to their normal coin toss positions.

B. The overtime coin toss:

1. H and L should inform the coaches on their sideline of any carryover penalty enforcements **before** the coin toss, as they may affect decision-making.
2. Normal mock coin toss procedures will be followed, with the winner of the toss choosing defense or offense first, or of designating the end of the field where the ball will be put in play. The loser will have his choice of the other options.
 - a. R indicates the winner of the toss by placing a hand on his shoulder.
 - b. The team captains are then arranged so that the team first going on offense is facing the goal toward which they will advance.
 - c. R then faces that goal and gives the first down signal (signal #8).
3. The crew then moves briskly to the succeeding spot to begin the overtime period.

C. If the score remains tied at the end of an overtime period:

1. There will be an intermission of two minutes during which the teams may hold an authorized conference.
2. During the intermission, H and L should determine the overtime choices of their respective teams, with the loser of the initial coin toss choosing first. The teams' options remain the same.
3. If additional overtime periods are needed, then first options will be alternated. There is no coin toss other than the initial overtime coin toss.

IV. Post-Game

A. Leaving the Field

1. As soon as possible after the game is concluded, the crew should leave the field together.
2. Avoid shaking hands with one another, or other congratulatory gestures until you are in the locker room, as that may be misinterpreted by disappointed coaches, players or fans.
3. Neither seek out nor avoid coaches following the game. Any conversation should be as brief and non-controversial as possible.
4. Do not discuss the game on the field or make public statements about the game to the news media.

B. Reports to IHSAA

It is clear the officials' jurisdiction continues after the game for the purpose of completing any reports that are responsive to actions occurring while the game officials had jurisdiction, including disqualifications. The IHSAA requires a number of different types of reports to address certain situations. These reports are to be submitted online, using the forms under the Officials tab on your my.IHSAA dashboard.

1. Unsporting Behavior Reports –
 - a. To be used:
 - i. To report an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty assessed against a coach or other non-uniform personnel associated with a team.
 - ii. To report the disqualification of any player or nonplayer.
 - iii. To report an instance of “fighting”
 - iv. To report any other unusual incident or situation having a bearing on sportsmanship
 - b. Report should be submitted to IHSAA Asst. Commissioner Robert Faulkens by e-mail (rfaulkens@ihsaa.org) prior to 9:00 a.m. Eastern the day following the contest.
 - c. Content of report
 - i. Date and location of incident.
 - ii. Description of incident.
 - Game opponents
 - Time, situation and score of the game
 - A factual description of the incident.
 1. Include verbatim language where possible.
 2. Provide the number and name of the offender, the period and time, and a short description of the disqualifying conduct.
 3. Be as descriptive as possible.
 4. Cite to rules providing for any penalties assessed, including

disqualification.

5. State facts, not opinions.
 6. Include in your report any instances of non-cooperation by team personnel when you attempt to obtain the names.
 - The names and positions of the officials involved.
2. Exemplary Sportsmanship Reports – the IHSAA wants to hear about incidents where good sportsmanship goes beyond the expected levels, and ought to be recognized. Provide your identifying information and that of any others involved, the date and location, and a description of the behavior that warrants recognition for exemplary sportsmanship.
3. Concussion Reports
 - a. A contest official shall complete a concussion report when the official removes an athlete from a contest who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems).
 - b. This report shall be completed as soon as possible, but under no circumstance later than 24 hours after the conclusion of the contest.
 - c. Note that the report is only required if it is the officials who remove the player from the game. If the player is removed by someone else, no report is required from the officials.
 - d. The report looks for identifying information regarding the player removed as well as the contest.
4. Miscellaneous Reports – Contest officials should also report any unusual circumstances in connection with the game to IHSAA Asst. Commissioner Robert Faulkens by e-mail (rfaulkens@ihsaa.org). A non-exhaustive list of subjects to be reported includes:
 - a. Hazardous or substandard conditions at the facility which could not be remedied easily, such as obstacles located near the field.
 - b. Problems with auxiliary game personnel, such as clock operators, line to gain crew, or public address announcers.
 - c. Potentially dangerous conditions such as requiring officials to travel unescorted through an unsafe environment to get from the field to their locker room, or failing to provide a secure locker room.
 - d. Non-conforming fields, in the nature of improper or absent lining or markings.
 - e. Wearing uniforms that do not comply with the rules, or wearing the wrong color uniform for the visitor or home team.