



**California
Football Officials
Association**

**Four Man Mechanics
for High School Football**

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FOUR MAN CREW OFFICIATING

GENERAL: All mechanics stated in “Five-Man Crew” officiating in this manual will apply *unless exceptions are specifically stated in this section of 4-Man Crew Mechanics. OFF or ON Mechanics will be used. The entire crew will share the duties that are normally given to the Back Judge in a 5-Man Crew.*

PRE-GAME DUTIES

REFEREE

- Visit each dressing room with the umpire. Check official time and confirm starting time with each coach.
- Get the captain’s names and ask the coaches if they have any unusual plays the crew should be aware of.
- Turn over the game balls after full inspection to the Line Judge.

HEADLINES

- Arrange to meet Captains on your sideline 3 minutes before kickoff and get game ball of your team. LJ gets the other teams captains and game ball for the toss.
- After completing the pre-duties, retire to the bench on your side with the umpire.

UMPIRE

- The Umpire instructs the ball boys, and has the ball of the team on the HL sideline for the toss.

TIMING

LINE JUDGE

- The LJ takes over all timing duties of the Back Judge, including the 25-second clock.
- Instruct the clock operator in pre-game duties on the field 15 minutes before kick-off.
- Time all charged time-outs, the one-minute intermission at the close of the 1st and 3rd quarters, and time the halftime intermission. Know the elapsed game time. It may be required in a commissioner’s report.

COUNTING PLAYERS

REFEREE & UMPIRE

- The Referee counts the offensive players.
- The Umpire counts the defensive players.

LINE JUDGE & HEADLINES

- The LJ and the HL count the players of the team on their sideline.

TIME-OUTS

LINE JUDGE

- Take the team on your side of the field at timeouts.
- Standing by the huddle facing that team's sideline and locate the Captain for the Referee.
- Time the T.O. and notify the Referee when one minute has elapsed.

HEADLINES

- Take the team on your side of the field at timeouts.
- Standing by the huddle facing that team's sideline and locate the Captain for the Referee.

UMPIRE

- Stay over the ball.

REFEREE

- Stand 5 to 10 yards away from the ball. During the timeouts inform the Captains of the down, distance, and the number of timeouts remaining.
- The LJ will inform the Referee when 1 minute of the timeout has elapsed.
- The Referee will then notify each team captain to get his team ready.
- The ball will then mark ready for play.

KICKOFF COMMENTS

Our association continues to approve two sets of mechanics for a 4-Man Crew on kickoff coverage. They are the Box and the Diamond mechanics. Box is our traditional mechanic with the Referee and the Umpire near their sidelines on the 5-yard line, the HL and the LJ handling the receiving and kicking teams' restraining lines. Box mechanics kickoff coverage is shown in the diagram below. The duties of the officials are listed here below and in the instructions that follow.

A diagram for "diamond mechanics" is shown bellow as well. The Referee is alone in the middle of the field at the 5-yard line. The Head Linesman is at the sideline of the receiving team's restraining lines. The Umpire is behind the ball with the kicker, in the middle of the field. Because the Umpire and Referee, with the two flank officials, form a diamond kickoff positioning, these mechanics are referred to as diamond kickoff mechanics.

Either are approved mechanics for kickoffs and the Referee will determine at the Pre-Game Conference which mechanics will be used by his crew during the game. Both sets of mechanics have a great deal of merits. The duties of the officials in diamond mechanics are listed in the instructions that follow.

In the event that a short, or "on-sides" kickoff is anticipated a modification of both the box and diamond mechanics for kickoffs is recommended. **The important thing is whether the kick crosses the 50-yard line or not!!** Therefore, two officials are placed at the 50-yard line to judge the plane and the ball's progress as well as the 1st touching by any player. **The Umpire takes a position at the 50 on the same side of the field as the Line Judge, who has the kicking team's restraining line. The Head Linesman is at the 50 on the sideline opposite the press box.** They both immediately pinch in after the kickoff to judge the play.

KICKOFF BOX MECHANICS

ALL

- Keep unauthorized persons away from side and end lines.
- Signal readiness by extending one hand aloft overhead and keeping aloft until whistle blows.
- Responsible for all play situations (fumbles, muffs, laterals, runs, fouls) in own zone of coverage.
- Watch for kickoff going out of bounds.
- Nearest official covers ball until declared dead.
- Watch for players going out of bounds during play.
- Shift positions to keep ball and play well in view.

REFEREE

- Take position on 5-yard line approximately 5 yards in from the sideline opposite the Umpire. If a short free kick is anticipated, line up in the middle of the field at R's 25.
- Get ready to signal from other officials and captains.
- Blow your whistle and give chopping arm motion to indicate start of game and declare ball ready for play.

LINE JUDGE

- Instruct kicker and then move the sideline.
- Take a position on the press box side opposite the Head Linesman, at the kicking team's free kick line (usually the 40) (35 NCAA).
- Count the kicking team for eleven players.
- Raise arm when ready.
- Review the positioning on page 60 for 4-man Crews.

HEADLINES

- **Line up at 50. Remind Referee they are not to step forward on or over their Free Kick Line until ball is kicked.**
- Count receiving team for eleven players.
- Then move to the same sideline as the Referee and between the receivers' 45 and 50.
- Be prepared to move up to the 50 to rule whether the ball crossed this line on a short free kick.

UMPIRE

- Take position on the press box side at the receiving team's 5-yard line five yards five yards in from the sidelines.
- Watch for kickoff going out of bounds behind goal line and deep near goal line.
- Raise your arm above your head when ready for play.

LINE JUDGE & HEADLINES

- You both are guardians of your sidelines throughout any kickoff return. Remember, the Referee and the Umpire will be looking from the "inside to the outside".
- Watch restraining lines for encroachment or offside fouls.
- Be alert for short kicks, first touching, kicks going out of bounds, and whether the ball traveled far enough. Have beanbags in your hand.

SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICIALS ON KICKOFF/RETURN BOX MECHANICS

- Cooperate and coordinate with fellow officials. Shift position and duties according to movement of the ball. Keep play and runner well boxed in and sidelines covered at all times.
- On kickoff returns down the center of the field, both the Referee and Umpire should keep the runner and the play around the runner well boxed in between them, with the Head Linesman and Line Judge covering the sidelines and secondary zones for fouls.
- If the runner shifts into either side zone, the two officials covering that side of the field (Referee and Line Judge, or Umpire and Linesman) will cover the play with the LJ or Head Linesman covering the sideline and the Referee or Umpire covering the inbounds line, depending on what side zone the runner is in.
- If the kickoff return is in the Line Judge's side zone, then both the LJ and Referee will cover runner and play around the runner, keeping the play well boxed in. The LJ covers the sideline and the Referee covers the inbounds line. The Head Linesman will then cover the play in front of the runner and the Umpire will cover the play to the side and behind the runner.
- If the kickoff return is in the Head Linesman's side zone, the Head Linesman and Referee will cover the play around the runner with the Referee and Line Judge covering the secondary zones.
- Official closest to the runner will whistle and declare ball dead and when the runner is tackled or downed.
- In any situation there should be two officials covering the secondary zones away from the ball carrier.

DUTIES OF OFFICIALS IN DIAMOND KICKOFF MECHANICS

- The Referee is in the middle of the field at R's 5.
- The LJ is out of bounds at K's 40 on the press box side.
- HL is out of bounds at R's 45-50 opposite the press box.
- **If there is a possibility of an outside kick, the Referee moves up to the 25-30 staying in the middle of the field, the Umpire moves out of bounds at the Kicker's Free Kick line on the LJ side, the LJ moves to the 50 and the HL is at the 50.**

ALL

- Duties remain the same unless a difference is listed below.

REFEREE

- Take position in the middle of the field at the 5-yard line.
- Cover receiver either way, and box in the runner between himself and either the Linesman or the Line Judge, depending on whose side the return run is.
- Primarily responsible for any piling on of the runner.
- Take position in the middle of the field at the 30-yard line if you and your crew are expecting a short or onside kick because of the same score.

DUTIES OF OFFICIALS IN DIAMOND KICKOFF MECHANICS Con't

HEADLINES

- Take position between receiving teams 45 and 50 on the sideline opposite the press box.
- Make sure five or more receiving team players are in front of the 45.
- Count the receiving team's players for eleven. Raise your arm to indicate you are ready.
- After the kickoff move down your sideline making sure to be guardian of your sideline at all times.
- Be alert for blocking below the waist fouls by the receivers and the kicking team player attempting to break up a wedge.
- Be alert to give progress to the Referee.
- If the runner is on your side of the field, you keep him boxed in with the Referee.
- If the runner is on the opposite half of the field, you should go in the field, but never inside the hash marks, and observe action to the front of the runner.

LINE JUDGE

- Take a position on the kicker's free kick line at the sideline... same side as the press box.
- Count kicking team's players for eleven. Raise your arm to indicate you are ready.
- You are "guardian of your sideline" at all times.
- On returns on your side, keep the play boxed in between the Referee and yourself.
- If the runner is on the opposite half of the field, go to but never inside your "hash marks" while observing action around and in front of the runner.

UMPIRE

- Take a position 2 or 3 yards behind the ball.
- Tell the kicker you will alert him when it is okay to kick off. Wait for the Referee to blow his whistle.
- Check both the Linesman and the Line Judge to see that their arms are raised, **then, and only then, raise your arm if ready.**
- Alert the kicker and step a yard or so to the side.
- Observe action of the front five of the receivers if they come forward immediately attempting to block, otherwise move down the center of the field being alert for below the waist blocks from the side, commonly called blind side blocks, as well as any clips or other illegal play.
- If kick goes out of bounds on a sideline hand and arm signals to covering official as to out of bounds spot. One arm above your head means he comes toward you, arm pointing at shoulder height means he backs up, and a chopping motion means stop.

All

- **If an Onsides Kickoff is anticipated, the LJ takes an initial position at the receiving team's 50 on the side opposite the Head Linesman. After the ball is kicked, pinch in to help determine if it crossed the 50, 1ST Touching, and who recovered. The Umpire will be lined up at the kicker's Free Kick line, out of bounds on the Press Box side. The Referee is in the middle of the field at the 25-30 yard line.**

SCRIMMAGE PLAYS

LINE JUDGE & HEADLINES

- In 4-Man Mechanics, the Line Judge and Head Linesman are usually on the line of scrimmage. However, in certain game situations they have the option of one of them playing off the line to provide better coverage. See above for 4 Man Crews.
- On kicking situations the Line Judge is the only one that will play OFF.
- **Both flanks have to remember that without a Back Judge they will have to leave the line of scrimmage sooner than they would in a 5-Man Crew. This is especially true if they are using “ON” Mechanics.**

REFEREE

- If OFF mechanics are used the Referee will adjust his position so that he could be on the same side of the field as the OFF official.

UMPIRE

- **The Umpire will stay over the ball until the Referee marks it Ready For Play. In 4-Man Mechanics the Referee takes over his task on Field Goals and Trys as the Umpire has to be under the Cross Bar.**
- Move left or right ‘till about seven yards deep.
- In passing situations be prepared to move up slowly to the line of scrimmage. Watch for receivers running crossing routes in front of you.
- Vary your routine, keep out of players’ way.
- Check and know ineligible receivers on the line. A deeper position aids in keeping them all in view on pass plays.
- Check initial charge of all linemen for any illegal plays.
- Anytime with short yardage (e.g.: 3rd and 2nd) **keep your eyes on the hand of the center and be alert for squeezing motions to draw offsides.**
- Check on all false starts.
- On punt formation take position head on with the ball and closer to the line (approximately 5 yards deep). Observe interior linemen and backs protecting for the kick on the kicker’s strong side. Allow linemen to go by your position before turning to observe downfield play.
- Remember, the Umpire is in best position to keep the play clean. Sound off. Prevent piling on & unnecessary roughness if possible. Maintain game control.

SCRIMMAGE PLAYS - After the Snap

ALL

- **The duties of the Line Judge, Head Lineman, Umpire and Referee are the same as those in 5-Man Mechanics except for the difference that have been noted.**

FORWARD PASSES

LINE JUDGE & HEADLINES

- **Remember that without a Back Judge you are now responsible for ruling on passes at the Backline.**
- After initial play of linemen, drift side to side (at first) to cover play. After pass is thrown, run quickly to within 5 yards of where the ball will arrive.
- Watch for contact interference by either team downfield before and after the pass has been thrown and before touched by any player.
- You have complete charge of all forward passes thrown beyond the line. Referee stays with the passer.
- Know whether forward pass touches an eligible beyond or behind the line of scrimmage or neutral zone.
- If pass is intercepted and runner downed, sound whistle and give first down signal pointing in direction that team is going that intercepted the pass, so that other officials will know outcome of the play.
- If pass is incomplete and runner downed, sound whistle and give the incomplete pass signal followed by the time out signal. All other officials involved then will give the “time out” signal.
- Be aware if a pass is forward or backward. You might have to be the one to rule on it.

REFEREE

- Stay with the passer; check on legality of the pass as to whether it is a forward or a lateral.
- Know whether or not forward pass was thrown on or behind the line of scrimmage.
- Watch for forward pass touching any ineligible receiver on or behind the line.
- You are responsible for any roughness against the passer.

UMPIRE

- Vary your movements. If you move up to the line of scrimmage on a pass play, be alert for the draw play and a runner coming your way.
- **On short, button-hook, or trap passes, the Umpire has to turn and be in position to assist the flank officials in ruling on the pass if needed.**
- On kicking situations, note the ineligible interior linemen, numbered other than 50 through 79.
- In being responsible for the five ineligible linemen, first locate the tight end and count quickly to the next five linemen inside the end – they are ineligible.
- Assist in whether the pass is beyond or behind the line. Both Flank Officials will also rule on this.

SCRIMMAGE KICKS

REFEREE

- ***Prior to any scrimmage kick (not a try in Federation) all officials should remind themselves, by using the Illegal Procedure Signal #19, that the kick is alive, especially if blocked.***
- Stay with the kicker. Match for roughing the kicker if kicker fakes being roughed and falls down at slight contact, which you do not consider a foul, give hand motion to kicker to get up. (This is a foul NCAA) Remain with the kicker, he is your responsibility.
- Remain behind the scrimmage line after the kick is made and until all players have moved out of the area. Then clean up by observing player action as you move downfield.
- If kick is going out of bounds, quickly get in line with flight of ball to signal to Linesman and Line Judge. Signals to use are:
 - a) Open hand straight above head – move towards you.
 - b) Arm pointing at shoulder level – move away.
 - c) Chopping motion from either (a) or (b) means STOP.
- Following any kick, check for penalty flags. If okay to move the chains, signal the Linesman by a full arm extension and a finger-pointing signal.

UMPIRE

- After all the linemen have moved away from the line, turn and drift away cautiously downfield – alert for all open field fouls.
- On kicks out of bounds be prepared to spot the ball at the inbounds line, and cover the ball until released by the Referee.

LINE JUDGE

- On long kicks (20 yards or more) and on all in-bound kicks inside the 20-yard line, take charge while the ball is in the air above the receiver. Follow receiver all the way to the goal, if required, in the runback.
- Short kicks (20 yards or less) will be covered by the Linesman. In that case, adjust to take over the duties of the official covering the ball and watch for illegal use of hands, arms, defensive holding, clipping, and other fouls.
- **Be aware of action by and against the Fair Catch Signaler.**
- If receiver attempts to play ball on long kicks, be in position to cover both ball and receiver.

HEADLINES & LINE JUDGE

- The LJ is the only flank official that will be off the line in obvious kick situations. **Take a position 5 yards behind the punt receiver and 10 yards to the side, opposite the HL.**
- The HL stays at the line until the kick crosses the line, then move briskly downfield and cover the ball. Stay in front of and to the outside of the receiver.
- **Should have two bean bags to mark spot of First Touching or end of kick. Keep whistle out of your mouth.**
- **Be prepared to judge instantly whether kick crossed goal line or not.** NCAA and Federation Rules differ as to whether it is a touchback or not.
- Following any kick, the HL doesn't move his chains until you have first received the Referee's okay. The "e" may be a reason he has not signaled you.

FIELD GOAL AND TRY COVERAGE

REFEREE

- **Prior to any scrimmage kick** (Not a try Federation) **all officials should remind themselves by using the Illegal Procedure Signal #19, that the kick is alive, especially if blocked.**
- Take a wide position, 10-15 yards from the potential kicker and 2 to 3 yards deeper, on the side opposite the Head Linesman.
- If a fake kick, be ready to assist in covering the sideline on your side of the field.
- You are solely responsible for roughing the place kicker and holder.
- After the kick and there is no roughing, shift your observation to the offensive line. This is an area where cheap shots and personal fouls may occur.
- After you have observed the Line Judge and Umpire's signal on the kick, sound your whistle to end all activity on the line of scrimmage. **Repeat their signal as to the success or failure of the attempt, facing the line of scrimmage to watch for any fouls that might occur while giving signal. Don't face the Press Box.**
- If a fake kick, run or pass, assist on your sideline. The Head Linesman is 100% in charge of the goal line.

LINE JUDGE & UMPIRE

- Take a position 6 ft. or less beyond the end line where you can line up the upright with the ball holder.
- LJ is behind the goal post farthest from the HL.
- Orally communicate with each other as to success or failure of the kick.
- Both withhold any signal, but immediately run to the end line where you both simultaneously give the signal ruling on the kick. If it was unsuccessful, only the official on that side need follow up with arms pointing the direction of the kick that was wide. This follows the incomplete signal. Both officials are responsible to whistle the ball dead as soon as the try is over, and to continue to observe all players for any dead ball personal fouls.
- If the ball strikes the crossbar, the Line Judge is responsible for the ruling.
- On fake field goal attempts, be ready to cover passes on runs as usual.
- Be alert for illegal batting in the end zone.
- After giving signal, move in and continue officiating, watching the line play for any late hits after the whistle.

HEADLINES

- Take your normal position on the line and observe the entire neutral zone from sideline to sideline.
- If it is not a kick, you are solely responsible for the goal line plane.
- If a pass, observe any ineligible lineman downfield.
- If the kick is blocked (Not a try in Fed.) you are responsible to determine if the kick crossed the line.

GOAL LINE PLAYS

ALL

- Remember, an official's touchdown signal does not always make it a touchdown. A foul may cause a replay, and if you called the ball dead because you blew the whistle short of the goal line or saw the runner's knee hit and the ball became dead. ***You should immediately mark the Dead Ball Spot and give progress to the Referee, as this is not a touchdown by rule even if another official gave the touchdown signal.*** Always remember: A dead ball cannot be fumbled or score a TD.

UMPIRE

Play a little closer to the ball than you normally do in other parts of the field. Be four to five yards deep.