

23. MECHANICS FOR 3-MAN CREWS

The fewer officials there are the more likely it is that some play action or foul is going to go unobserved. The key to 3-man officiating is to recognise what duties are of highest priority and be prepared to omit lower priority ones when time is short.

23.1 – General

1. The officials must decide among themselves who is going to be responsible for briefing stadium clock operators, commentators, chain crew, alternate crew and ball persons.
2. The officials should agree clock operation duties. Normally the Line Judge will run the game clock and the Referee the play clock and timeouts.
3. All officials must be prepared to adapt to play circumstances. The crucial aim is to keep the play boxed in so that it can be observed from more than one angle.
4. On measurements, the Line Judge must take the front stake and the Linesman position the clip. The Referee must ensure the ball is not moved, before moving to rule on the measurement.

23.2 – Free kicks

1. The Line Judge should be on the press box sideline on Team A's restraining line. The Linesman should be on the opposite sideline on Team B's restraining line. These two have responsibility for their respective sideline, and for marking forward progress on the return. The Referee should be downfield in the centre of the field covering the goal line.

23.3 – Scrimmage downs

1. This formation has the advantage that it incorporates the normal positioning adopted by officials on a 4-man crew, except that it omits one of those officials (usually the Umpire).
2. The Linesman and Line Judge begin in their normal positions. They are jointly responsible for the line of scrimmage. They are responsible for their sideline on both running and pass plays, and must move to either goal line if that is threatened. On pass plays they may go downfield to observe receivers and whether the pass is complete or not on their side of the field.
3. The Referee begins in his normal position, except that he may choose to begin in the Umpire's normal position if it is necessary to observe interior line play from the defensive side of the neutral zone. On running plays he should observe blocking from the inside out. On pass plays he is entirely responsible for action in the vicinity of the passer. After the ball is thrown he is responsible for the protection of the passer and must not turn to observe the pass (even if in the Umpire position).

23.4 – Goal line plays

1. On goal line plays, the Linesman and the Line Judge should be in position to move to the goal line at the sideline, officiating the play from the outside in. The Referee should observe the play from the inside out.

23.5 – Punts

1. The Linesman begins in his normal position and performs his normal duties.
2. The Line Judge must drop deep downfield to the position normally adopted on a punt play on a 4-man crew. He must be prepared to rule on the end of the kick and the ensuing return.
3. The Referee should favour the press box side of the field and observe action against the snapper and then the kicker.

23.6 – Field goal & try attempts

1. One official, normally the Line Judge, should be behind the goal and is entirely responsible for ruling on the success or failure of the attempt.
2. The Referee must favour the press box side of the field and be responsible for that sideline should a run or pass develop. He should observe action against the kicker and holder.
3. The Linesman is responsible for action against the snapper and may come infield after the ball is snapped to better observe this.