

## 14. FIELD JUDGE AND SIDE JUDGE (CREW OF 6D/7/8)

### 14.1 – Free kicks

#### 14.1.a – Priorities

##### Prior to the kick:

1. Being aware of whether the Referee has instructed the crew to switch to onside-kick positions, and moving position (if appropriate) if they have.
2. Counting Team A players and signalling the count [one of Sup3, Sup4 or Sup24] to colleagues. Noting count signals from colleagues. Recounting if your count differs from that of colleagues.
3. Reminding the players to count their number if the team you are responsible for counting does not have precisely 11 players on the field.
4. Checking readiness for play:
  - (a) Checking side areas to ensure that all non-players are out of the restricted areas, that non-participants are off the field of play, and that all team personnel are within the team area.
  - (b) Ensuring that the chain crew (and the alternate down box and line-to-gain marker operators, where provided) have moved themselves and their equipment well out of the way and that the equipment has been placed on the ground outside the team areas and behind the limit lines [at the receiving team's end of the field.](#) <sup>§</sup> Checking that the ball persons are in position.
  - (c) Ensuring that all Team A players are within the nine-yard marks prior to the kick (Rule 6-1-2-c-5) and that nobody other than the kicker is more than five yards behind the ball.
  - (d) Facing the field of play to signal that you are ready. Turning away if something on your sideline becomes no longer clear or you can see that a colleague is clearly not ready. Sounding your whistle, if your area becomes dangerously unclear after the ready for play.
5. Being alert always for short kicks.

##### During the kick play:

6. Observing whether a free kick goes out of bounds nearest to you without being touched by the receiving team. Ruling whether a Team B player near the sideline touches the ball while out of bounds.
7. Watching players for a fair catch signal, and being prepared to rule on any interference with the opportunity to catch the kick.
8. If the kick is short:
  - (a) Knowing where and by whom the ball was first touched.
  - (b) If you are positioned on Team B's restraining line, knowing whether the kick breaks the plane of that line.
  - (c) Observing illegal blocks by Team A (Rule 6-1-12).
  - (d) Marking any spot of illegal touching with a bean bag.
  - (e) Marking the dead-ball spot if you are the nearest official and there is little or no return run.
9. Giving the start the clock signal [S2] only if the ball is first legally touched in the field of play in your area of responsibility.
10. Marking the dead-ball spot [if you are the nearest official when the ball carrier is tackled or goes out of bounds.](#) <sup>†</sup>
11. Ruling a touchdown at Team A's goal line.
12. Observing [fouls/violations](#)<sup>§</sup> by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
  - (a) illegal touching of a short kick
  - (b) infractions of your restraining line

- (c) [WHEN ON TEAM A'S RESTRAINING LINE] kicking team players (other than the kicker) more than 5 yards behind their restraining line after the ready for play
- (d) illegal blocks in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack
- (e) illegal blocks below the waist<sup>x</sup>
- (f) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
- (g) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping, chop blocks, illegal wedges or illegal blind-side blocks
- (h) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
- (i) any player of the kicking team who enters the field of play after the kick or who voluntarily goes out of bounds during the kick [and returns inbounds](#)<sup>§</sup>

### 14.1.b – Initial positioning

#### Normal kicks:

1. If the free kick takes place after a score, proceed along the sideline to your kickoff position, ensuring as you do so that the team on your side of the field is aware of the progress of the one-minute intermission (Rule 3-3-7-f).
2. [FIELD JUDGE]
  - (a) [IN F6 FORMATION (CREW OF 6)] Be in position F (see 26.1) outside the press box sideline on Team A's restraining line.
  - (b) [IN F7-8 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] Be in position D (see 26.1) outside the press box sideline on Team B's restraining line.
3. [SIDE JUDGE] Be in position E (see 26.1) outside the sideline opposite the press box on Team B's restraining line.

#### Onside-kicks:

4. [FIELD JUDGE] Remain in the normal position.
5. [SIDE JUDGE]
  - (a) [IN F6-7 FORMATION (CREW OF 6/7)] Move to position G (see 26.1) outside the sideline opposite the press box on Team A's restraining line.
  - (b) [IN F8 FORMATION (CREW OF 8)] Remain in the normal position.

#### Free kicks after a penalty or safety:

6. When a free kick is taken following a penalty or a safety, the same relative positions should be taken, moving up or down the field as appropriate.

### 14.1.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

#### Prior to the kick:

1. If anything happens that should prevent the kick taking place (e.g. a [non-player](#)<sup>°</sup> enters or approaches the field of play), toot your whistle, give the timeout signal [S3] and deal with the problem.

#### During any kick play:

2. If you see any player of the kicking team voluntarily go out of bounds during the kick, drop your bean bag or hat to mark their exit, and your flag if they return.
3. If the clock should start when the ball is first legally touched in the field of play, give the start the clock signal [S2] if you are the nearest official or the one with the best view.

#### During a kick play that goes deep:

4. After the ball is kicked, observe the players in your area of responsibility (see 26.1). After checking its initial trajectory, do not watch the flight of the ball.
5. Move downfield along the sideline while the kick is in the air. During the return, stay ahead of the ball carrier, keeping them bracketed between you and the downfield official. On a long run, be at Team A's goal line before the ball carrier. [Mark the dead-ball spot if you are the nearest official when the ball carrier is tackled or is out of bounds.](#)<sup>†</sup>
6. If the ball goes out of bounds in your area go to and hold the spot, dropping your flag if appropriate.<sup>x</sup>

**During a kick play where the kick is short:**

7. Maintain a position where you can see the ball and the blocks by Team A players.
8. [IF ON TEAM A'S RESTRAINING LINE] Particularly watch the blocks made by Team A players before they are eligible to touch the ball (Rule 6-1-12).
9. [IF ON TEAM B'S RESTRAINING LINE] Know where and by whom the ball was first touched. Mark any spot of illegal touching with your bean bag (Rule 6-1-3).
10. If you are the nearest official when the ball becomes dead, signal timeout [S3] and mark the dead-ball spot.

**14.1.d – Advanced techniques**

1. Pay particular attention to the blocks made by the two players from Team B's front line who were nearest you at the kick.
2. [IN F6-7 FORMATION (CREW OF 6/7)] [SIDE JUDGE]  
[IN F6 FORMATION (CREW OF 6)] [FIELD JUDGE] If an expected onside kick is instead kicked deep, move into the [field of play](#)<sup>λ</sup> and leave sideline responsibility in your area to the Linesman/Line Judge.

**14.2 – Basic scrimmage plays****14.2.a – Priorities**

1. Knowing the down and distance, and signalling the down to your colleagues. Noting the down signals given by colleagues. Checking that the down box displays the correct number. Not allowing play to start if there is a dispute about the down number.
2. Counting Team B players and signalling the count [one of Sup3, Sup4 or Sup24] to your colleagues. Noting count signals from colleagues. Recounting if your count differs from that of colleagues.
3. [ON-FIELD PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR] If visible stadium play clocks are being used, observing their start on the Referee's ready, and observing whether they count down to zero before the ball is snapped.
4. Identifying your key player(s) (see sections 16.5 and 16.6). If the formation is new or unusual, verbally or visually confirming this with the other officials.
5. Noting eligible receivers and those players who would normally be eligible by position but who are ineligible by number. In addition, noting players (usually tight ends) who would normally be eligible by number but who are not eligible because a player is lined up outside them on the line of scrimmage. <sup>x</sup>
6. Observing substitution infractions by both teams (especially the team on your side of the field). For example:
  - (a) replaced players not leaving the huddle within 3 seconds of an incoming substitute entering it
  - (b) replaced players not being off the field before the snap
  - (c) substitutes coming on to the field, communicating, and then leaving the field
7. Ensuring that coaches and substitutes are behind the coaching box line and that your sideline is clear of any obstructions.

**14.2.b – Initial positioning**

1. [SIDE JUDGE] Be on the same side of the field as the Linesman.
2. [FIELD JUDGE] Be on the same side of the field as the Line Judge.
3. Be in position on or just outside the sideline. Both officials should lineup on the same yard line. [FIELD JUDGE] Match the depth set by the Side Judge.
  - (a) Normally be 20-22 yards from the line of scrimmage. If that position would put you between Team B's 5-yard line and their goal line, instead be on the goal line – then you don't have to move to get there.
  - (b) [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] Do not be as deep as the Back Judge.

**14.2.c – Advanced techniques****Reasons for varying (or not) your initial position:**

1. Your initial position may be varied according to the state of the game. It is appropriate to be deeper if expecting a long pass, and shallower for short-yardage situations.
2. On "take a knee" plays, [you may leave the sideline](#),<sup>§</sup> pinch in closer to the players and use your presence to deter unsportsmanlike acts.

**Signalling the player count:**

3. The latest time to make the player count signal is when the offensive team breaks its huddle (but it can and should be done earlier if possible).
4. Normally the player count signal is shared between the Field Judge, Side Judge and [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] Back Judge.

**14.3 – Running plays****14.3.a – Priorities**

1. Observing action ahead of the ball carrier.
2. Ruling whether a touchdown is scored or not.
3. Marking the forward progress or out of bounds spot if the ball becomes dead on your side of the field between Team B's 2-yard line and the goal line.
4. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
5. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
  - (a) illegal block in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack, especially those made by your key player or any wide receiver, tight end, lead back or pulling line-man
  - (b) illegal block below the waist fouls by your key player and other players in your area
  - (c) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
  - (d) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
6. Getting to the goal line ahead of any ball carrier in order to be able to rule on a touchdown.

**14.3.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)**

1. If you read that a long run is developing, backpedal down the sideline, always keeping the ball carrier in front of you. Try and keep them boxed in between you and the wing official. Take over responsibility for the ball carrier only if they overtake you (unless the wing official is forced to overtake you as well).
2. Stay wide enough to be able to retreat outside the sideline ahead of the players. Never turn your back on the ball.
3. If the play advances far enough to threaten Team B's goal line, be there before the ball carrier.
4. If the run goes to the opposite side of the field, observe action behind the ball carrier and the Umpire. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] It is permissible to move in to near the hash marks to better observe players. However, be alert for reverses or a ball carrier cutting back towards your side. If this happens, be sure to be back on or outside your sideline before the ball or ball carrier reaches it.

**If the ball becomes dead on your side of the field:**

5. Blow your whistle if you clearly see the ball carrier down or out of bounds. If they are out of bounds or the line to gain has been reached, also signal timeout [S3].
6. If you are much closer than the wing official, or the ball becomes dead within 2-yards of Team B's goal line, move to the dead-ball spot once players have cleared the immediate area.
  - (a) If the play ends in bounds, square off, i.e. move parallel to the sideline then in, rather than diagonally.

- (b) If the play ends out of bounds, mark the forward progress and watch any continuing action in the out-of-bounds area. (The wing official should go out-of-bounds to supervise activity in this area. Exceptionally the deep wing could go too, after dropping their bean bag to mark the forward progress.)
  - (c) Be alert to cover the forward progress spot when the ball carrier has been driven back.
  - (d) Do not leap over players to reach the forward progress spot: keep the players in front of you.
  - (e) Once all action has ceased, help retrieve/relay a ball to the Spotter (Mechanic 5.8).
7. If the ball carrier goes out of bounds in the wing official's area, go into the team area as far as the ball carrier and observe any actions against them.

### 14.3.c – Advanced techniques

1. Don't blow your whistle when the ball carrier's back is toward you or you are obscured by other players (or officials) – they may have fumbled the ball without you seeing it. See leather! Be certain that the ball is dead.
2. If a pile-up of players forms, give the timeout signal [S3], converge on the pile, determine who has possession (Mechanic 5.11) and encourage players to unpile safely.
3. If you're not the nearest official to the dead-ball spot, observe for late hits and other illegal acts. It is particularly your responsibility to observe action close to the wing officials as they are concentrating on the forward progress spot.

## 14.4 – Pass plays

### 14.4.a – Priorities

1. Ruling whether the pass is complete or incomplete. While primarily this will be for passes to your side of the field, in practice you may need to rule on any pass where the receiver is facing or at right angles to you, regardless of their position. Similarly, if the receiver has their back to you, you may need to defer to another official with a better view than you.
2. Ruling on touchdowns on passes into the end zone.
3. Observing the initial contact by and against your key player(s).
4. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
  - (a) defensive and offensive pass interference
  - (b) defensive holding and illegal use of hands against eligible receivers
  - (c) illegal block below the waist fouls by players on your side of the formation
  - (d) illegal touching of a forward pass by a player who went out of bounds voluntarily
  - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
  - (f) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
  - (g) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
5. Advising the Referee if the pass was thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver.
6. Watching for players who go out of bounds across the sideline or end line.

Once the pass is complete, apply the same priorities as on a running play (above).

### 14.4.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Your progression on a pass play is: (phase A) your key player; (phase B) your zone; (phase C) the destination of the pass. See also Chapter 16.
2. If you read a short pass, hold your position until the play approaches you. Then or if you read a long pass, backpedal or sidestep down the sideline, always keeping deeper than any potential receiver to your side of the field. If you are forced to turn, keep watching the play by looking back over your shoulder, but that will narrow your field of vision. Ensure that you can see blocking and contact by and against any eligible receivers in your zone of the field.

3. Only watch your key player during the initial action after the snap when there is a threat of illegal contact between receiver and defender. Switch to zone coverage as soon as that threat no longer exists.
4. You have sole responsibility for the sideline from your position to Team B's end line, and joint responsibility for it between you and the wing official. Either of you may declare the ball carrier or ball out of bounds, but unless you are much closer, it should be the wing official who marks the forward progress.
5. Be responsible for the goal line and the end line on your side of the field but do not neglect the middle of the field. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] The Back Judge will assist you with these.
6. If a potential Team A receiver voluntarily goes out of bounds in your area, drop your bean bag or hat to indicate this, and observe them to see whether they touch a forward pass while still ineligible.
7. Once you are aware that the pass has been thrown, move into position to best be able to rule on whether the pass is complete or incomplete, and whether there is interference. While the ball is in flight, watch opposing players who are contesting for the ball, not the ball itself. **Be alert to both offensive and defensive pass interference.**
8. **If the player who attempts to catch the ball has their back to you, before making the call look for help from any official in a better position than you.**
9. If you are not the nearest official, don't just watch the receiver, but particularly watch for defenders slightly away from the ball who come in and target the receiver with the crown of their helmet or above the shoulders. This is **often missed<sup>o</sup>** by the nearest official.
10. If the pass is overthrown, bounces off a player or is otherwise uncatchable, continue to watch the player(s) for personal fouls (hitting a defenseless receiver). Do not ball-watch.
11. Blow your whistle if you see the ball become dead in your area.
12. If the pass is thrown to the opposite side of the field from you, your first responsibility is to clean up action on your side of the field and in the middle of the field. However if you are 100% sure of what you see over there, you may assist with rulings on complete/incomplete, pass interference, illegal helmet contact and forward progress.
13. When ruling on pass receptions involving the sideline, give only one signal. Give the incomplete pass signal [S10] if the pass is ruled incomplete. Give the timeout signal [S3] if the pass is ruled complete and the ball carrier goes out of bounds thereafter (Mechanic 5.9) **or the ball is dead at or beyond the line to gain.** § Give the start the clock signal [S2] if the pass is complete and the ball carrier is declared down inbounds **short of the line to gain.** § Whichever signal is used, it should be given two or three times to maximise the chances of other officials seeing it. Remember to look at the other official on your sideline before giving any signal that indicates a completed pass. Nod your head "yes" to them to indicate a completed pass. Give the incomplete pass signal [S10] if you have it incomplete.
14. When contact that would have been pass interference occurs on a pass that is uncatchable, give the uncatchable pass signal [S17].
15. After an incompleteness, obtain a ball from the ball person (if the wing official has not already done so), and form a relay to return the ball to the Spotter (Mechanic 5.8). Ensure that the thrown ball is removed from the field.
16. If there is a run after the catch, respond as you would on a running play (above).
17. Maintain a position where you can see player activity in fringe areas, particularly on wide-open plays.

#### 14.4.c – Advanced techniques

1. When an airborne player attempts to catch a pass near the sideline or end line, watch their feet first to see whether they come down in bounds. If they do, then look to their hands to see whether they have control of the ball. If you look at their hands first, you may miss the instant when their foot touches the ground (Mechanic 5.17.8). Establish eye contact with any colleague at the end of the play before giving any signal.
2. If the pass is incomplete **in your area:**
  - (a) **If there is no eligible receiver in the area, move quickly towards the Referee to inform them of this. If the ball crossed the neutral zone, give signal [Sup42] by point-**

ing to the ground beyond the neutral zone. If the ball did not cross the neutral zone, move towards the Referee while pointing to the ground behind the neutral zone. §

- (b) If there *is* a receiver in the area, and you believe the Referee may not be aware of that fact, move towards the Referee while pointing towards the eligible receiver. Calling out "Number 34 was in the area of the pass" (for example) is also permissible.
- (c) [USING CREW RADIO] Transmitting this information is also an option@.

## 14.5 – Goal line plays

### 14.5.a – Priorities

Same priorities as on other scrimmage plays, plus:

1. Ruling whether a touchdown is scored or not. This includes all passes into the end zone, plus running plays if the ball is snapped outside Team B's 7-yard line.
2. Observing players' celebrations after a score.

### 14.5.b – Initial positioning

[SNAP FROM BETWEEN TEAM B'S 20 AND 7-YARD LINES]

1. Be **outside**<sup>†</sup> the sideline at the goal line.
2. Check your area for obstacles such as people and the goal line markers. Make sure you are able to move safely outwards on the goal line extended if your pylon is threatened.
3. Be able to see at least half of the goal line, and your sideline in the end zone. When play terminates on or near the goal line you must be on the goal line to rule on penetration of the plane.
4. Be prepared to rule on forward progress within 2 yards of the goal line.
5. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] Also be able to see at least half of the end line.

[SNAP FROM ON OR INSIDE TEAM B'S 7-YARD LINE]

6. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] Be on the sideline extended, approximately 2 yards beyond the end line. If there is no wideout to your side, it is permissible to move to a position where you are 45-degrees to the sideline extended and end line extended.
7. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] Be approximately 2 yards out of bounds 45-degrees to the sideline extended and end line extended.
8. Be able to observe all action in your area of the end zone, and be especially aware of action close to the sideline or end line. The wing officials will be responsible for the goal line.

### 14.5.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If you have goal line responsibility, remain on the line unless you need to move to a position to rule on a pass completion in the end zone.
2. If you have sideline/end line responsibility, on a running play observe lead blockers and on a pass play observe all receivers in your zone. If a receiver in your zone threatens to step out of bounds, observe them – don't rely on the Back Judge to cover the end line alone.
3. Indicate a score by blowing your whistle and giving the touchdown signal [S5] only when you clearly see the ball break the plane of the goal line in player possession or if you see a pass completed in the end zone.
4. If a pile-up forms at the goal line, come into the field of play until you can see the ball. If you are the nearest official, you may need to dig for it. Check with other officials that they did not see the ball carrier down (or fumble the ball) before they reached the goal line.
5. If you have goal line responsibility and it is necessary to move out of the players' way as they come towards you, move wider without leaving the goal line.

6. Do not give a score signal if you have thrown a penalty flag for a foul by the scoring team. Do not blow your whistle or give any signal if you are not sure about the outcome of the play.
7. If you have goal line responsibility, straddle the goal line – don't run after the player into the end zone unless there is a threat of trouble by or against them, but do turn to keep your eyes on them to observe late hits or unsportsmanlike conduct.
8. If another official has sideline responsibility, do not signal touchdown until you have confirmed with them that the ball carrier was not out of bounds. <sup>◊</sup>
9. Maintain the touchdown signal until you know the Referee has seen it, but keep your eyes on the players – don't look to the Referee until all action has ceased. Don't run and signal at the same time. You should not echo the signals of other officials unless the Referee cannot see their signal.
10. It is especially important on goal line plays that all covering officials indicate the same point of forward progress. Communicate if in doubt. Signal only if sure.

#### 14.5.d – Advanced techniques

1. Communicate (preferably verbally)<sup>λ</sup> as to who has the responsibility for the goal line and end line before each down. In noisy situations, point at the line you have responsibility for.
2. If you have sideline/end line responsibility, on a running play towards the goal line pylon, assist the wing official by watching the ball carrier to see if they step out of bounds. This allows the wing official to give priority to the goal line.

## 14.6 – Returns

### 14.6.a – Priorities

1. Observing the ball carrier and action around them while you are the nearest official.
2. Marking the forward progress or out of bounds spot if the ball becomes dead on your side of the field. This responsibility extends up to Team A's 2-yard line. If the ball goes to the other side of the field, backing up your colleague on the other side of the field by either estimating the dead-ball spot or mirroring their spot.
3. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag. <sup>×</sup>
4. Observing blocks by players in your area of responsibility ahead of and around the ball carrier, particularly:
  - (a) illegal block in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack
  - (b) illegal block below the waist fouls anywhere
  - (c) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
  - (d) assisting the runner<sup>§</sup>
  - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
  - (f) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
5. Observing any hand-off or pass where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
6. Observing any *illegal* forward pass or forward handing, especially if you have a view that is level or nearly level with the ball carrier. <sup>◊</sup>

### 14.6.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Keep out of the players' way.
2. Move towards Team A's goal line following the play.
3. Observe the ball carrier while they remain on your side of the field or towards the middle. Try and keep them boxed in between you and the wing official. Be prepared to close in<sup>◊</sup> when the ball becomes dead and mark the forward progress spot. The wing official may be in a better position than you to cover the ball carrier, in which case they will normally be the one to declare the ball dead and mark the forward progress.

4. If the ball carrier is on the opposite side of the field, observe players in the middle of the field as well as on your side.
5. If you are watching a block develop, stay with it before switching to the ball carrier or another block. Even if you expect another official to take responsibility for it, stay with the block until you are confident it is legal.
6. If the ball becomes dead in your area of responsibility, blow your whistle, give the time-out signal [S3], and then signal first down [S8] to show which team is in possession. Hold the signal until you know the Referee has seen it.

## 14.7 – Punts

### 14.7.a – Priorities

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] Marking the end of the kick (if inbounds) with a bean bag.
2. Marking the dead-ball spot for any kick that goes out of bounds in your area.
3. Ruling whether players touched the ball or not.
4. Observing any fair catch signals by players in your area.
5. Observing kick-catch interference against a player in position to catch the kick, if the kick comes down in your area.
6. If the kick does not come down in your area, observing players who have *not* committed kick-catch interference because they were blocked by an opponent into the returner.
7. Marking all spots of illegal touching with a bean bag.
8. Ruling whether a momentum exception applies or not near the goal line.
9. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
  - (a) illegal blocks below the waist, especially by players on your side of the field
  - (b) during the kick, illegal block in the back and holding fouls against Team A players trying to get down the field
  - (c) a Team A player returning inbounds after voluntarily going out of bounds during the down (drop your bean bag or hat to mark their exit, and your flag if they return)
  - (d) kick catch interference when the kicked ball will land in your area<sup>§</sup>
  - (e) illegal blocks made by players who have signalled for a fair catch
  - (f) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
  - (g) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
  - (h) unnecessary roughness fouls away from the ball
  - (i) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
10. Noting the numbers of players in eligible receiver positions on your side of the formation, and observing whether anyone else is the first to touch the ball or is ineligibly downfield if the play develops into a pass play.
11. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate. <sup>×</sup>

During a punt return, applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

### 14.7.b – Initial positioning

1. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)]
  - (a) Be on or outside the sideline slightly deeper than the deepest returner. Be level with the other deep official(s).
  - (b) Ensure you can see any shallow returner(s) in your half of the field, or, if none, the deepest potential blockers.
2. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)]
  - (a) Be behind and to the side of the deepest returner. Behind so that you can look through them and see the ball kicked. To the side so that you are out of their way,

but still close enough to observe whether they touch the ball or not, or whether any opponent interferes with their opportunity to catch the kick. About 5 yards behind is the appropriate depth. [FIELD JUDGE] Remain between the returner and your sideline. About 10 yards away from the returner is an appropriate lateral position, unless you are at or near the goal line, in which case be at your goal line pylon. [SIDE JUDGE] Remain on the sideline.

- (b) If there is more than one returner deep, take position between your sideline and the nearer of them, keeping well outside the nearest returner until it is clear that returner will not handle the ball.
3. [SNAP FROM INSIDE TEAM B'S 40-YARD LINE OR THE PUNT RETURNER IS INSIDE TEAM B'S 10-YARD LINE] Be in an initial position **out of bounds near the goal line pylon. Stand where you can see in a straight line over the pylon towards where the kick will come from.** † Be prepared to rule on whether the kick goes out of bounds in the field of play or in the end zone. **Once it is obvious that your pylon will not be threatened by the loose ball, move to be on the goal line extended.** §
4. Be prepared to adjust your position according to the strength and direction of the wind, and the ability of the kicker.
5. Have a bean bag readily available and a second one to hand.
6. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] The Back Judge will have responsibility for the end of the kick, unless it ends very close to a sideline, in which case it is the responsibility of the nearest sideline official.
7. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] The Field Judge is responsible for the deepest returner and kicks that end near them, and the Side Judge is responsible for all shallower returners except those near the Line Judge. If there are two deep returners, the Field Judge and Side Judge each take responsibility for their nearest returner and kicks that end near them. If there are more than two, the Field Judge will normally take responsibility for the two nearest them. The Field Judge and Side Judge always work from the outside in.

#### 14.7.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. When the ball is kicked, observe its initial trajectory, but do not watch the flight of the ball. Observe players in your area of responsibility (defined by the diagrams in section 26.4) – their eyes will tell you where the ball is going. However, if the returner moves as a decoy, do not follow them - observe the area where the ball will come down.
2. When it appears obvious that the kicked ball will *not* land in your area:
  - (a) Hold your original lateral position. This will assist in signalling to other officials that you are covering action in front of the returner.
  - (b) Maintain a position where you can cover action in front of and around the returner. If you are the nearest official *other than* the official covering the punt returner, move to where you can observe players blocking in the vicinity of any returner who is in position to catch the kick. In particular, observe those *blocked by an opponent* into interfering and therefore immune to penalty (Rule 6-4-1-d).
  - (c) Move so that you can observe action around the ball carrier if the play is away from you. Be prepared to take over responsibility for the ball carrier if they cut back to your side. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] Move into a Back Judge role in the centre of the field if the play remains on the opposite side, but be prepared to get back to your sideline ahead of the play if its direction changes back towards you.
  - (d) If a player in your area signals for a fair catch, watch that they do not block before they touch the ball (Rule 6-5-4).
  - (e) Do not hesitate to call a foul if you clearly see one occur in the area where you are the cleanup official even though you may be a considerable distance away from the action. Communicate with your colleagues to find out their view of the action.

3. When it appears obvious that the kicked ball *will* land in your area:
- (a) Unless you are responsible for the deepest returner, give a punch signal [Sup28] to your colleagues to indicate that you are assuming responsibility for the kick and the nearest returner.
  - (b) Move into position wide of and behind the returner aiming to be at a 45 degree angle to rule on the validity of the catch.
  - (c) If the kick is first muffed (but not possessed) by a member of Team B<sup>◊</sup> beyond the neutral zone, you may give the ball touched signal [S11] to signify that Team A is now eligible to touch it.<sup>◊</sup>
  - (d) Use bean bags to mark any spots of illegal touching and/or the spot where the kick ends. Only one official, the Coverer in each case, should mark each spot and give each signal. If you have more spots than bean bags, prioritise the spot most advantageous to Team B.
  - (e) If the ball becomes dead because it is caught or recovered by Team B after a fair catch signal, or caught or recovered by Team A after being touched by Team B,<sup>§</sup> blow your whistle and give the timeout signal [S3]. Give the first down signal [S8] in the appropriate direction.<sup>§</sup>
  - (f) If the ball is not caught and goes deeper than the returner, follow the ball and be prepared to rule on its status. Stay far enough away from it that there is no danger of it touching you.
  - (g) If the ball approaches the goal line, be on the goal line to rule on whether it enters the end zone. Other officials will cover the players.
  - (h) If the ball does enter the end zone (untouched by Team B beyond the neutral zone) and touches the ground<sup>◊</sup> or is downed by Team B in the end zone, blow your whistle and signal touchback [S7], repeating the signal until you know the Referee has seen it.
  - (i) If the kick is recovered by Team A without it being touched by Team B,<sup>§</sup> blow your whistle, signal timeout [S3] and give the illegal touching signal [S16] and the first down signal [S8]. Momentary touching of the ball by a player of the kicking team should not be interpreted as control of the ball.
  - (j) If the kick goes out of bounds in your area, blow your whistle and signal timeout [S3] immediately.
    - (i) If the ball touches anything (e.g. the ground or a player) in bounds and then goes out of bounds, move directly to the spot where you judge the ball crossed the sideline.
    - (ii) If the ball goes out of bounds in flight, the Referee or Centre Judge *may* be able to assist by directing you to the spot. Look back to the Referee or Centre Judge to see if either can help. If either can, signal [Sup16] and respond to the instructions they give you using signals [Sup17, Sup18 & Sup19] to direct you to the crossing point. If they can't, move directly to the spot where your best judgement tells you the ball crossed the sideline.
    - (iii) Hold the spot, but do not place a ball at it unless a spare is at hand. Other officials will retrieve/relay a ball to the Spotter.
  - (k) If the ball rolls to a stop in your area, ensure no player is attempting to recover it before blowing your whistle and signalling timeout [S3].

During the punt return,<sup>◊</sup> respond as in the section "Returns" (above).

#### 14.7.d – Advanced techniques

1. If the ball is snapped on or inside Team B's 40-yard line, there will be [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] two or [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] three officials on the goal line. The officials boxing in the ball should together rule on whether it crosses the goal line (communicating well to avoid conflicting calls), while [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] the other official rules on the actions of the players around it. Stay on the goal line until you are certain the ball will not cross it.
2. If Team B does not line up in a punt return formation (i.e. no deep returner), adopt your normal scrimmage down position. This is justified because if Team A does kick the ball deep, there will be no players there for you to have to cover. If the ball is kicked deep,

adjust your position accordingly, but only the nearest official to the ball should need to observe it. The other officials should observe the players.

3. Be alert for cases where the kick is blocked or where there is a bad snap. This also applies if Team A switches to a run or pass formation. <sup>◇</sup>
  - (a) If the play turns into a run or pass, respond as you would do normally for that type of play.
  - (b) Cover the goal line and end line as appropriate.
  - (c) Be aware of the jersey numbers of the eligible receivers.

## 14.8 – Field goal & try attempts

### 14.8.a – Priorities

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D) OR THE FIELD JUDGE ON A CREW OF 7/8] Ruling the success or failure of the field goal attempt. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] The Field Judge and Side Judge share this responsibility. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] The Field Judge shares this responsibility with the Back Judge.
2. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] [SIDE JUDGE]
  - (a) Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
    - (i) illegal block in the back and holding fouls by linemen and backs protecting the kicker, especially the end and/or wing back on your side
    - (ii) defensive players illegally attempting to block the kick (defensive restrictions)
    - (iii) illegal blocks below the waist
    - (iv) any action against the snapper that might be roughing
    - (v) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
    - (vi) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
    - (vii) players meeting opponents with a knee
    - (viii) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
    - (ix) illegal formation
  - (b) After the ball is kicked, continuing to observe players until they are totally separated. Never turning around to see whether the kick is successful or not, never echoing the success/failure signals made by the official(s) ruling on the kick, never writing down the score, never getting a new ball, never doing anything other than observing the players until there is no possible threat of trouble.
3. Observing illegal touching or batting of the ball.
4. Observing players' celebrations after a score.
5. Noting the numbers of players in eligible receiver positions on your side of the formation and observing whether anyone else is the first to touch the ball or is ineligibly downfield if the play develops into a pass play.
6. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate.

During a field goal return, <sup>◇</sup> applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

### 14.8.b – Initial positioning

1. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D) OR THE FIELD JUDGE ON A CREW OF 7/8] Take position about one yard behind the goal post on your side of the field. You are responsible for ruling whether the ball passes inside your upright. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] [FIELD JUDGE] In addition you are responsible for ruling whether the ball passes above the crossbar.
2. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] [SIDE JUDGE] Be in a double umpire position. Watch defensive players who may violate rules related to gaining leverage to block a kick.

**14.8.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)**

1. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D) OR FIELD JUDGE ON A CREW OF 7/8]
  - (a) Observe the ball from kick to when it becomes obvious whether the attempt will be successful or not.
  - (b) If you consider the kick to be successful, communicate ("good", nod) with your colleague behind the posts and together come out between the uprights (approximately one yard into the end zone) giving the score signal [S5] as you come to a stop.
  - (c) If you consider the kick to have failed, give the no score signal [S10]. If the kick is wide to your side, you may also give the kick wide signal [Sup15]. Do *not* signal a touchback.
  - (d) Hold either signal for at least five seconds and until you know the Referee has seen it.
  - (e) [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] [FIELD JUDGE] Blow your whistle when the result of the kick is obvious. There is no need to wait until the ball touches the ground (or something else) provided it is clear what the result of the kick is/will be.
  - (f) If the kick is short or blocked and the ball is possessed by Team B, move into position to officiate the kick play as a punt.
2. [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] [SIDE JUDGE] Maintain a position where you can watch the initial charge, check blocking by the offense and action by defensive players, particularly the end player and wing back on your side of the offensive formation.

**14.8.d – Advanced techniques**

1. Be alert for cases where the kick is blocked or where there is a bad snap. This also applies if Team A switches to a run or pass formation.
  - (a) [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D) OR FIELD JUDGE ON A CREW OF 7/8] Stay in position as long as there is the possibility of a drop kick attempt. If a run or pass develops, read the play and respond as appropriate.
    - (i) If the play develops to one side of the field and you are the nearer of the two officials behind the goal, move towards the sideline.
    - (ii) On an obvious running play or pass play short of the goal line, you may need to come infield and cover the goal line.
    - (iii) Stay on the end line if a pass into the end zone is possible.
  - (b) [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] [SIDE JUDGE] Stay in your position and observe the actions against Team A players on your side of the formation.
  - (c) If the ball is recovered and advanced by Team B, follow the return up the field.
2. If Team A switches to a run or pass formation, move to assume your normal scrimmage position.
  - (a) [SIDE JUDGE] [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] Stay in the double umpire position unless you have time to get to the goal line pylon before the ball is snapped and without turning your back to the players. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] Do as the Field Judge does (below).<sup>◇</sup>
  - (b) [FIELD JUDGE] You need to get to your goal line pylon as quickly as possible (diagonally across the end zone if safe to do so). During the play, be aware of the wing official's position and if they are going to get to the goal line first, you should divert to the end line pylon.<sup>◇</sup> At all times cover play in the end zone.
3. Be aware of the jersey numbers of the eligible receivers.

**14.9 – After each down****14.9.a – Priorities**

1. Observing dead-ball action by players of both teams.
2. Encouraging the players to unpile safely, and either return the ball to an official or leave it near the dead-ball spot, as appropriate.
3. Checking whether the line to gain has been reached or is close, and signalling appropriately.

4. Checking whether any penalty flags have been thrown, and, if so:
  - (a) Giving the timeout signal [S3].
  - (b) Reporting any fouls you have called to the Referee and Umpire.
  - (c) Covering penalty flags (and bean bags, if appropriate) thrown by colleagues.
  - (d) Ensuring that all penalties are enforced correctly.
5. Checking for injured players or other occurrences that may delay play.
6. [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER] Stopping and starting the clock when necessary.
7. [ON-FIELD PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR] Starting the play clock when necessary, giving a 10-second warning, and throwing a delay of game flag if the clock reaches 0 before the ball is put in play.
8. Allowing legitimate requests for timeouts. Checking that a request coming from the coaching box or team area was made by the Head Coach.
9. Echoing all timeout signals [S3] of your colleagues.
10. Knowing whether the play ended inbounds, and informing the Referee that the clock (if stopped) should start on the ready by giving them the clock running signal [Sup12].
11. Assisting in relaying the dead ball or a new ball to the succeeding spot.
12. If you are not covering the play, assisting in maintaining order on the field by moving towards where the play ended.

#### 14.9.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If you are the Coverer, check whether the line to gain has been reached.
  - (a) If it has, give the timeout signal [S3]. After all action has ceased, signal first down [S8 or Sup35]. Hold the signal until you know the Referee is aware of it.
  - (b) If you are not sure whether the line to gain has been reached or not, signal timeout [S3] and yell "close". Encourage the Referee to come and look for themselves.
  - (c) Only place a ball on the ground at the *actual* dead-ball spot – never at a spot level with it.
  - (d) If the play ended inbounds, inform the Referee that the clock should start on the ready by giving them the clock running signal [Sup12].
2. × If you are the Coverer, signal that the ball is dead. This will be using the dead-ball signal [S7] unless the timeout signal [S3], touchdown/field-goal signal [S5], safety signal [S6], wind the clock signal [S2] or incomplete pass/unsuccessful field-goal signal [S10] is appropriate instead. Give only *one* signal.
3. If a penalty flag has been thrown, follow the procedure in chapter 19. If a team or injury timeout has been called, follow the procedure in chapter 17. If a period has ended, follow the procedure in chapter 20.
4. [ON-FIELD PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR] If a 40-second clock should start by rule:
  - (a) If there is a stadium play clock, check that it started shortly after the end of the play.
  - (b) If there is no stadium play clock, start a 40-second count shortly after the end of the play.

#### Relaying the ball:

5. If you have the ball, but another official has the dead-ball spot and it is close to the line to gain, hand the ball to that official and allow them to spot it at the precise location (yard line *and* lateral position) where the ball became dead.
6. Unless you are the Coverer, assist in relaying a ball to the official who will place it at the succeeding spot (Mechanic 5.8).
7. If a ball has been placed at the dead-ball spot in a side zone, and another ball is being relayed in to the succeeding spot, do not move the ball at the dead-ball spot until the replacement ball has been positioned at the correct location on the inbounds line.

#### Getting ready for the next down:

8. Maintain order at the sideline and in the team areas.
9. [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER] Remind the Referee of the clock status and, if stopped, remind them whether it should start on the snap or on the ready.
  - (a) If the clock has stopped for a foul, injury or helmet coming off and there is less than one minute in the half, make sure the Referee knows that there is a possible 10-second runoff. <sup>λ</sup>

- (b) Be prepared for a ruling by the Referee on when the clock should start in unfair clock tactics situations.
  - (c) Start the clock when the Referee gives (or should give) the start the clock signal [S2], unless you are sure that by rule the clock should start on the snap, **or the ball is obviously not ready for play (e.g. because ball, chains, down box or officials are not in position).** § Do *not* echo the Referee's signal, but use the clock-on-ready signal [Sup12] if necessary to confirm that the clock has started.
  - (d) If the game clock should start on the snap, start it when you see the ball legally snapped. There is no need to give a signal to confirm this.
10. If there are stadium game clocks, check to see that they have stopped and started correctly.
  11. If substitutions are made from your side of the field, check that Team A players fulfil the nine-yard mark requirements (Rule 7-1-3-b).
  12. Move into position for the next down. If the **ball is ready for play (or will be imminently),**<sup>λ</sup> backpedal to keep your eyes on the ball. Do not take your eyes off it for long in case the play starts while you are not looking.
  13. [ON-FIELD PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR]
    - (a) If the ball is not ready for play 20 seconds into the play count (Rule 3-2-4-b-3), signal to the Referee [Sup29] that the play clock should be reset to 25 seconds.
    - (b) If there is no visible play clock, when approximately 10 seconds remain on the play clock, raise a hand high in the air [signal S7] until either the ball is snapped or a delay of game flag is thrown. Do not give any additional signal (e.g. a countdown).
    - (c) **When the play clock reaches 0, look at the snapper. If the ball is already moving, there is no foul. Otherwise, blow your whistle and throw your flag for delay of game.** §

#### 14.9.c – Advanced techniques

1. The priority at the end of a play is to get into position ready for the next one. Only if a serious incident occurs (such as a foul or misconduct, an injury, or a breakage of the chain) should your routine be interrupted.
2. If Team A makes substitutions **while the snapper is at, near or moving towards** their position at the line of scrimmage:
  - (a) Any official should be prepared to step in and shut down a play that violates the substitution rule.
  - (b) Give the matching substitutes signal [Sup36] to the Referee and shout "subs on".
  - (c) Hold the signal until the Referee has taken control of the process.
3. If you want to speak to a player on the field (e.g. to warn them that they are close to fouling), it often saves time to relay the message via the Referee **or Centre Judge**<sup>§</sup> (for a Team A player) or the Umpire or Back Judge (for a Team B player). Don't delay the game unnecessarily by entering either team's huddle, unless a timeout is still in progress. **Never attempt to speak to a player during a hurry-up or no-huddle offense.** §
4. Maintain your concentration, and think about the next play.