



# **IAFOA mechanics changes 2026 (MOFO 20<sup>th</sup> edition)**

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# Introduction

- 20<sup>th</sup> edition published in January 2026
  - Changes from 19<sup>th</sup> edition marked in blue text
  - Major changes have a box around them
  - 27 major changes; 537 other changes
- Reminder of change marks
  - † mechanic changed for better coverage
  - § fill gap in existing mechanic
  - ◇ clarification or enhancement of existing mechanic
  - @ change for better communication
  - ® change due to rule change
  - λ editorial amendment
  - x previous text deleted

## Some broad changes and restructuring

- "Linesman (H)" is now "Down Judge (D)"
- Chapters 3, 5 and 6 have been rearranged
  - "When in doubt" moved from Ch 6, "Axioms of Officiating" to Ch 3, Rules Application
  - Ch 5 ("General principles") gained rest of Ch 6
  - But lost sections that were "General mechanics" - now Ch 6
  - This separates "principles" (what you think) from "mechanics" (what you do)

# Inadvertent whistles

- New philosophies (3.8.7, 3.9.46)
  - Overall: reset game as closely as possible to what it would have been had the inadvertent whistle not been blown
    - do not want officiating mistake to cancel out exceptionally good or exceptionally bad play by players, if possible
    - inadvertent whistle should be as inconsequential as possible
  - IW just before dead anyway - 4-1-2-b covers this
  - If plausible, apply 4-1-3-s (players stop playing) over 4-1-2-b
    - if in doubt, ball dead rather than IW (3.9.46)
  - IW early or in middle of play - use 4-1-2-b (often, repeat down)
- Mechanic coverage now in 6.15
  - standardise crew communication
  - standardise announcements

# Timeouts

- Charging timeouts for injuries:
  - WID an injury was observed before ball was spotted (3.9.60)
  - If injury observed before ball spotted, even if timeout granted *after* ball spotted, don't charge timeout to team (6.2.6.h)
    - Needs good crew communication
  - U/R/C: when spotting ball, quickly check for injured players (10.9.c.12.a, 9.9.c.6.a)
- During all timeouts (17.1, 17.2):
  - U/C stay with ball until R says nearly RFP
  - R/U/C be aware of teams ready to play early
  - R informs U/C to move to position THEN declares ball RFP
  - Implements Rule 2-2-4

## End of periods (emphasise)

- At 2-minute warning (20.2.3):
  - D/L/F/S nearest to each Head Coach inform them of:
    - exact time remaining (if no visible game clock) and
    - number of timeouts remaining
- Half-time notifications at start of half time (20.5.1):
  - Timekeeper confirms to Referee duration of interval, correct time of day, and correct time second half will commence
  - Inform teams duration of interval and time kickoff will be
    - R/C tell offensive team/captain
    - U/B tell defensive team/captain
    - D/L/F/S tell head coach on their side

## New principles and when in doubts

- New WID near the end zone:
  - Team B caught/recovered kick in own EZ rather than field of play (3.9.56)
  - kick touched in Team B's EZ rather than in field of play (3.9.57)
  - if there is a change of possession in EZ (or momentum exception applies), during return, ball has not left EZ (3.9.58)
- New principles:
  - recognise pivotal plays (5.10.16)
  - communicate with colleagues when in doubt (5.10.32, 6.1.14, 6.4.13)

## First impressions (5.2)

- First impressions of you will often stick. Look the part, including:
  - turning up on time
  - uniform and equipment being complete and clean
  - physical appearance being reasonable
  - appearing friendly and approachable
  - acting like an official at all times when on duty
- Think about how your actions will look on video:
  - Not trying to make everyone look the same
  - Not saying that emotions can't be displayed
  - But it sometimes does not take much to provoke a negative reaction from observers
- Possibly undesirable actions include:
  - Gestures to anyone (including other officials) that are open to negative interpretation
  - Touching a player, coach or sideline personnel
  - Fidgeting or unusual habits
  - Showing anger, for example when throwing a flag
  - Inappropriate speech that might be picked up by a microphone
- New points to ponder (5.9):
  - you spend far more time officiating when the ball is dead than when it is live
  - if you don't deal with inappropriate behaviour, someone else will have to do it later and by then it might be worse



# Kicking

- On all kicks:
  - R/U/C to note numbering exceptions (9.7, 9.8, 10.7, 10.8)
- On field goal attempts:
  - everyone note eligible receivers (9.8-15.8)
  - C6 does what F would otherwise do if kick blocked or Team A changes formation (9.8.d.4)

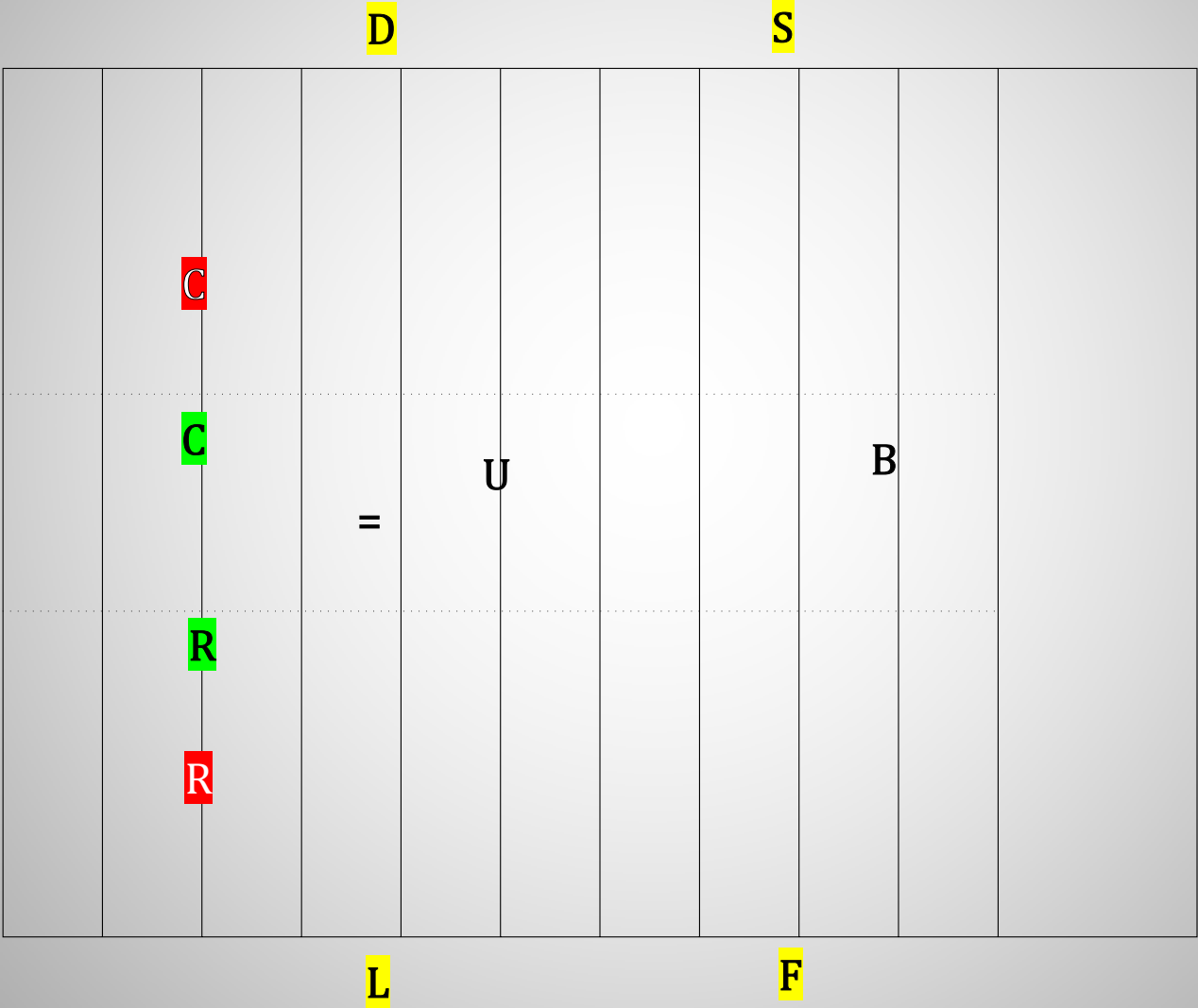
# Penalty enforcement

- What to record about a foul?
  - quarter, time, team, player, foul code, calling official(s) and whether penalty accepted/declined/offset/cancelled/waved off (6.11.3)
- R announcements
  - announce live ball fouls before dead ball ones (19.3.8)
  - a lot of the process (in 19.3) has been clarified, though not changed

# Positioning

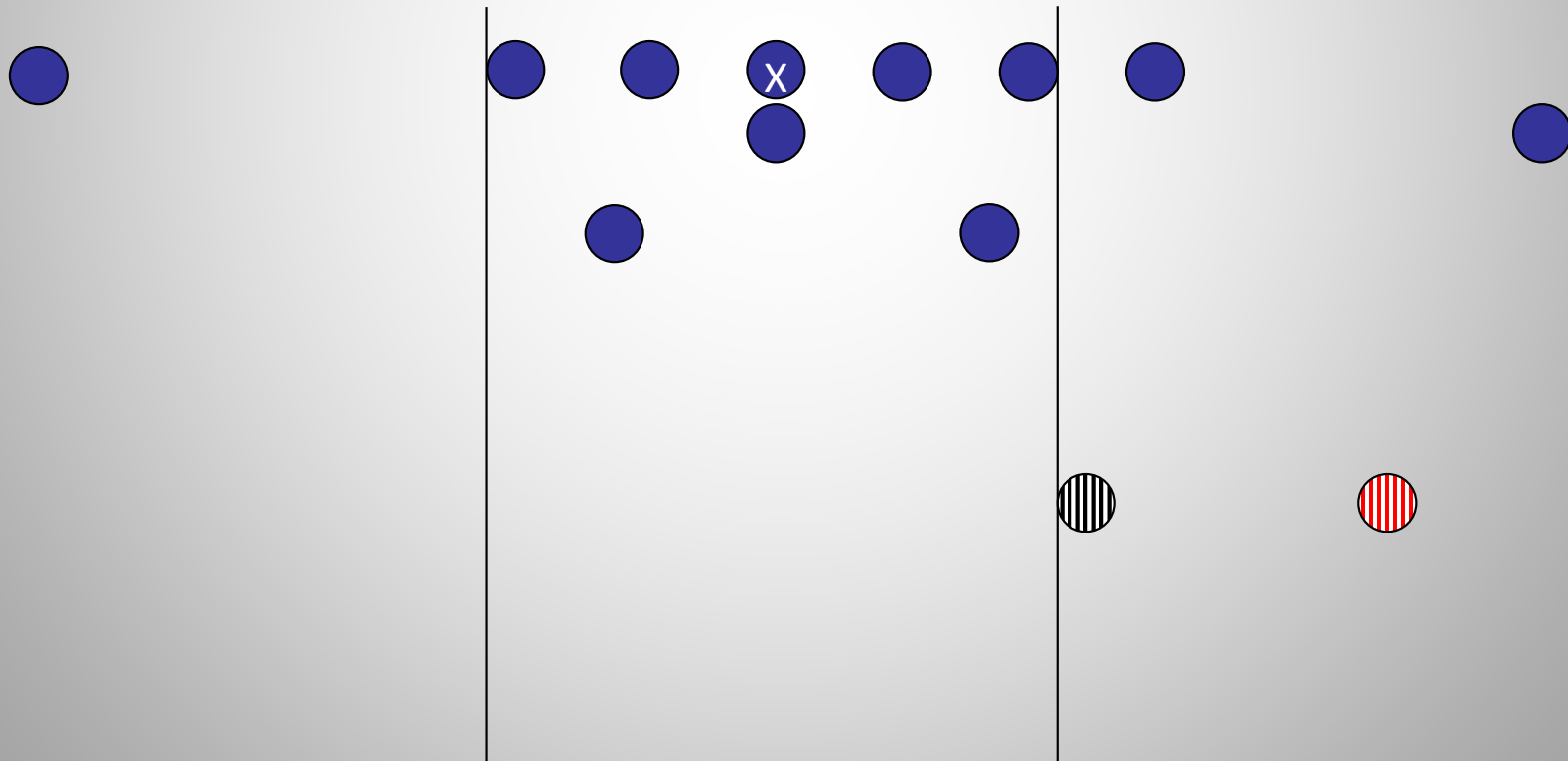
- R & C positioning on scrimmage plays:
  - 5-7 yards behind deepest back (or 13-15 yards behind LOS)
  - normally behind the normal position of the tackle or tight end on that side
    - we noticed too many Rs lining up too wide
  - Should place you 5-10 yards wide of snapper
    - This gives best chance of judging extent of tackle box
- Wing and deep wing officials on scrimmage plays:
  - always start at least 1 yard outside sideline

# Initial positioning diagram



## Referee position in formation

- Provides better coverage of tackle box
- C (if present) mirrors on other side of formation



## After the snap (deep officials)

- B/F/S:
  - read play before moving backwards at snap
  - if play is not deep one, you do not need to move deeper to cover it

## Pre-game

- On 6D, F responsible for balls pre-game
- If time permits:
  - If on-field play clock, R brief QBs and kickers on how they know 10 secs remain
  - B/F brief punt returners about fair catch signals
  - Don't interrupt drills/preparation players and coaches do
- All: notify colleagues when you have completed your pre-game duties
- All: record result of coin toss:
  - U immediately options are selected
  - rest of crew - after ceremony is finished



# Radio

- When discussing a call face-to-face:
  - exactly ONE official must switch their radio on so that the rest of the crew can hear what is being discussed

# Signals

- Give normal timing signals during a running clock session
  - timekeeper will know which to ignore
  - doesn't matter if it takes a few seconds to find out

## New points of emphasis 1

- Keeping the safety zone clear (Rule 1-2-3-d)
- Recognising pivotal plays (MOFO 5.7)
  - that might be what you are remembered for
- Communication when in doubt (MOFO 5.8)
  - we keep stressing this
- Signalling at the end of a play (MOFO 6.5)
  - makes you look more authoritative
  - otherwise, you look like you don't know what you're doing
  - keep your eyes on the players (out of bounds, after incomplete)

## New points of emphasis 2

- Stay at the dead-ball spot, if you are the coverer - never lose it!
- Relaying the ball effectively and when to put it on the ground (MOFO 6.7)
- Only one ball on ground during penalty enforcement (MOFO 19.3)
  - dead-ball spot until penalty enforced; succeeding spot after
- Zones of coverage - chapter 26 diagrams don't remain fixed (MOFO 26)

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**THANK YOU**

