

Rule 15 Officials: Jurisdiction and Duties

Section 1 Officials

OFFICIALS' MANUAL

Article 1 By League action, the officials' manual is an integral part of the Official rules, especially in regard to the specific duties, mechanics and procedures for each official during any play situations. For that reason, many such specific items are omitted in Sections 1 to 8 to avoid needless repetition, and only the primary duties of each official are stated. Some of the technical terms used hereafter are defined only in the manual.

Note: The terms "On Ball" or "Cover" imply that an official is nearest or in close proximity to a loose ball or runner and is in position to declare the ball dead when the down ends by rule. See 15-1-11-S.N. 1-3.

GAME OFFICIALS

Article 2 The game officials are: Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, Line Judge, Field Judge, Side Judge, and Back Judge.

Note: In the absence of seven officials, the crew is to be rearranged, on the most feasible basis, according to the other members of the crew.

Article 3 All officials are to wear uniforms prescribed by the League (including a black cap with visor and piping for all except the Referee, who will wear a white cap). All officials will carry a whistle and a weighted bright gold flag.

BLOW WHISTLE

Article 4 An official is to blow his whistle:

- (a) for any foul for which the ball remains dead or is dead immediately;
- (b) to signal timeout at the end of a down, during which he has indicated a foul, by means of dropping his flag and provided no other official signaled timeout at the end of a down;
- (c) to indicate dead ball when he is covering a runner. See 7-2-1.
- (d) at any other time, when he is nearest to ball, when a down ends. See 15-8-3.

Note: The flag is to be used to indicate a foul.

CREW MEETING

Article 5 Members of the crew are required to meet in their dressing quarters at least 2 hours and 15 minutes before game time.

OFFICIALS' DRESSING ROOM

Note: By order of the Commissioner, from the time any official first enters the dressing room, and until all officials have left it at the end of the game, no person other than clubhouse attendants or those invited by the Referee shall be allowed to enter it. This prohibition includes coaches, players, owners, and other management personnel.

OFFICIALS' RESPONSIBILITY AND CREW CONFERENCE

Article 6 All officials are responsible for any decision involving the application of a rule, its interpretation or enforcement. If an official errs in his interpretation of a rule, the other officials must check him before play is resumed, otherwise they are equally responsible. In the event of a disagreement, the crew should draw aside for a conference.

Note: If there is a disagreement, the Referee's decision will be the deciding factor. Any dissenting opinion is to be reported to the supervisor.

Article 7 All officials have concurrent jurisdiction over any foul, and there is no fixed territorial division in this respect. When an official signals a foul, he must report it to the Referee, informing him of its nature, the position of the ball at the time of foul, the offender (when known), the penalty and the spot of enforcement.

RECORDING FOULS

Article 8 Each official is to record every foul he signals and the total number of officials signaling the same foul. During the game, these are to be recorded on game cards provided by the League. They are to be preserved after each game in case they should be needed to revise an official's final game card.

LEAGUE GAME REPORTS

Article 9 At the end of the game, the officials are to record their own fouls on game cards provided by the League, and are to check them with other officials for duplications, before leaving the dressing room.

Note: Game cards are to be made out in accordance with the yearly bulletin issued for that purpose.

CREW ERRORS

Article 10 All members of a crew are equally responsible for any errors in Officiating Mechanics as prescribed by the Manual, and are required to call the attention of this fact to an official who had been remiss.

Note: This applies to such errors, in mechanics or applications of rules, as those tend to increase the length of the game (elapsed time) and particularly so to those which result in undue loss of playing time (Crew Time). In the latter case, if the Referee has clearly failed to signal a Referee's timeout as specified by rule, any official should do so. See 4-5-5 and 4-5-6.

COIN TOSS

Article 11 Ten minutes before the opening kickoff, the entire crew is to appear on the field. Three minutes prior to the kickoff, the Referee is to make the toss of the coin. He is to indicate which team is to receive and is to do the same when teams first appear on the field prior to the start of the second half. See 4-2-2.

Note: All officials record the results of the coin toss and options chosen.

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

- (1) During any running play (includes runbacks), or a loose ball, the nearest official is to cover and remain with the ball or runner, unless outdistanced until end of down. In such case any nearer official is to cover. See 15-2-9-Note, for Referee entering a side zone and 15-3-4 for Umpire.
- (2) When a ball is dead inbounds near a sideline, during time in, the official covering is to use the clock signal to indicate this fact.
- (3) Any officials not involved in an enforcement are to see that all players other than the captains remain aside during any conference between the Referee and the captains. See 15-2-5.

RECORDING TIMEOUTS

Article 12 All officials must record charged team timeouts.

Section 2 Referee

REFEREE'S AUTHORITY

Article 1 The Referee is to have general oversight and control of game. He is the final authority for the score, and the number of a down in case of a disagreement. His decisions upon all matters not specifically placed under the jurisdiction of other officials, either by rule or the officials' manual, are to be final. See 15-1-6-Note and 15-1-10.

Article 2 Prior to the kickoff to start each half and after every timeout, the Referee shall sound his whistle for play to start without asking captains if they are ready. In such cases where time is in with his whistle, he is to indicate it by use of clock signal.

BALL PUT IN PLAY

Article 3 He is to see that the ball is properly put in play and shall decide on all matters pertaining to its position and disposition at the end of a down. If any official sounds his whistle, the ball is dead (7-2-1). In case the Referee is informed or believes that ball was dead before such signal or down ends, he has the authority to make a retroactive ruling after consulting the crew or the official involved.

Article 4 The Referee must notify the coach and the field captain when his team has used its three charged timeouts; signal both coaches when two minutes remain in a half; and positively inform the coach of any disqualified player. He may not delegate any such notifications to any other person. He will announce on the microphone when each period is ended.

FOUL OPTIONS

Article 5 After a foul, the Referee (in the presence of both captains) must announce the penalty and explain to the offended captain the decision and choice (if any) as well as the number of the next down and distance (usually approximate) to the necessary line for any possible positions of the ball. See 7-3-3. The Referee is to designate the offending player, when known. After an enforcement, he shall signal to spectators the nature of penalty by means of the visual signals specifically provided for herein.

Note: It is not necessary for the Referee to explain to both captains the decision and distance to the necessary line in such cases when: the enforcement is entirely automatic and/or when the choice is obvious. Field captains only may appeal to the Referee, and then solely on questions of interpretation of the rules. They shall not be allowed to question the judgment or jurisdiction of any particular official in regard to a foul or in signaling dead ball.

REFEREE'S POSITION

Article 6 Prior to the snap, the Referee shall assume such a stance that he is in the clear of and behind any backfield player. This is also to be construed as including the normal path of any player in motion behind the line as well as the line of vision between such a player and the maker of a pass (forward or backward). He shall also favor the right side (if the passer is right-handed). He will count the offensive players.

MEASUREMENT

Article 7 At the end of any down, the Referee may (when in doubt or at the request of a captain unless obviously unnecessary) request the linesman and his assistants to bring the yardage chains on field to determine whether the ball has reached the necessary line. See 4-5-5-a.

Article 8 Prior to each snap, the Referee is to positively check the number of the ensuing down and distance to be gained with the Linesman, signal the Back Judge when to start his watch for the timing of 25 seconds (when appropriate), and know the eligible pass receivers.

SPOTTING BALL

Article 9 He is primarily responsible for spotting the ball at the inbounds spot on plays from scrimmage, and should not enter a side zone to cover a runner (other than the quarterback) when the Linesman or Line Judge is in position to do so. See 15-1-11-S.N. 1.

Note: When the ball is dead near the sideline during time in, he is not to assist in a relay to the inbound spot, unless the umpire has been remiss or delayed in doing so (15-1-10-Note and 15-3-4). In such a case, the Umpire is to spot. See Rule 2-2 in regard to using a new ball at the request of the offensive team's center in case of rain or a wet, muddy, or slippery field.

Section 3 Umpire

Article 1 The Umpire has primary jurisdiction over the equipment and the conduct and actions of players on the scrimmage line.

EQUIPMENT INSPECTION

Article 2 Before the game, the Umpire, with assistance of other officials, shall inspect the equipment of players. He may order any changes he deems necessary to any proposed equipment which is considered dangerous or confusing (5-4). This authority extends throughout the game.

Article 3 He shall assist in relaying the ball:

- (a) to the inbound spot when it is dead near a sideline during time in when feasible (15-2-9-Note);
- (b) to the previous spot after an incompletion; and
- (c) to the spot of a free kick when indicated. See 15-1-11-S.N.

UMPIRE'S DUTIES

Article 4 The Umpire shall record:

- (a) all charged team timeouts during the game;
- (b) the winner of the toss; and
- (c) the score.

He is to assist the Referee on decisions involving possession of the ball in close proximity to the line, after a loose ball or runner has crossed it. He and the Line Judge are to determine whether ineligible linemen illegally cross the line prior to a pass, and he must wipe a wet ball in accordance with the proper timing. He should count the offensive players on the field at the snap.

Section 4 Head Linesman

HEAD LINESMAN'S POSITION

Article 1 The Linesman operates on the visitor's side of the field designated by the Referee during the first half and on the opposite side during the second half unless ordered otherwise. See 1-4-Note for exception.

Article 2 He is responsible for illegal motion, offside, encroaching, and any actions pertaining to the scrimmage line prior to or at the snap; and for covering in his side zone. See 15-1-11-S.N. 1; 15-2-9; and 15-3-4. He will count the offensive players.

Article 3 Prior to the game, he shall see that his chain crew is properly instructed as to their specific duties and mechanics.

Note: Each home team appoints the official chain crew (boxman, two rodmen, and alternate, drive start and forward stake indicator) subject to approval by the League office. Each member carries a working pass to that effect and it is prohibited for anyone else to work as such. The standardized yardage chains and downs box must be used and if any others are furnished, this fact is to be reported to the Commissioner.

Article 4 The Linesman shall use a clamp on the chain when measuring for a first down.

MARKING AND CHAINS

Article 5 The Linesman is to mark with his foot (when up with the ball) the yard line touched by the forward point of the ball at the end of each scrimmage down. At the start of each new series of downs, he and the rodmen set the yardage chains when the Referee so signals. He positively must check with the Referee as to the number of each down that is about to start.

Note: It is mandatory for the Linesman to personally see that the rear rod is accurately set and also to see that the forward rodman and boxman have set the safety markers for the forward rod and the previous spot, during any series of downs, as prescribed by the officials' manual.

LINESMAN'S DUTIES

Article 6 On his own side, he is to assist the Line Judge as to illegal motion or a shift and the umpire in regard to holding or illegal use of hands on the end of the line (especially during kicks or passes), and know eligible pass receivers.

Article 7 He is to mark the out-of-bounds spot on his side of the field when within his range and is to supervise substitutions made by the team located on his side of the field during either half.

Note: See 15-1-11-S.N. 1; 15-2-9; and 15-3-4.

Section 5 Line Judge

LINE JUDGE'S DUTIES

Article 1 The Line Judge is to operate on the side of the field opposite the Linesman.

Article 2 He is responsible for the timing of the game. He also is responsible for illegal motion, illegal shift, and for covering in his side zone. See 15-1-11-S.N. 1 and 15-2-9. He will count the offensive players.

Article 3 He is responsible for the supervision of the timing and in case the game clock becomes inoperative, or for any other reason is not being operated correctly, he shall take over the official timing on the field.

Article 4 He is to time each period and (4-1-3, 4), signal the Referee when two minutes remain in a half and leave in ample time with the Field Judge to notify their respective teams of five minutes before the start of the second half.

Article 5 He shall advise the Referee when time has expired at the end of a period.

Article 6 He must notify both captains, through the Referee, of the time remaining for play not more than 10 or less than five minutes before the end of each half and must signal the Referee when two minutes remain in each half. In the event that the stadium clock is inoperable, he must notify both captains, through the Referee, of the time remaining for play not more than 10 or less than 5 minutes before the end of each half and must signal the Referee when two minutes remain in each half.

Note: Upon inquiry of a field captain, he may state the approximate time remaining for play at any time during the game, provided he does not comply with such request more than three times during the last five minutes of either half, and provided it will not affect playing time near the end of a half (4-7-1).

Article 7 On his own side, he is to:

- (a) assist the Linesman as to offside or encroachment;
- (b) assist the Umpire as to holding or illegal use of hands on the end of the line (especially during kicks or passes);
- (c) assist the Referee as to whether a pass is forward or backward behind the line and false starts; and
- (d) be responsible for knowing the eligible pass receivers;
- (e) mark the out-of-bounds spot of all plays on his side, when within his range (See 15-1-11-S.N. 1-3 and 15-2-9);
- (f) supervise substitutions made by the team seated on his side of the field during either half (see 5-2-2);
- (g) notify the home team head coach with the Field Judge five minutes before the start of the second half.

Section 6 Field Judge

FIELD JUDGE'S POSITION AND DUTIES

Article 1 The Field Judge will operate on the same side of the field as the Line Judge, 20 yards deep.

Article 2 The Field Judge shall count the number of defensive players on the field at the snap.

Article 3 He shall be responsible for all eligible receivers on his side of the field.

Article 4 After receivers have cleared line of scrimmage, the Field Judge will concentrate on action in the area between the Umpire and Back Judge.

Article 5 In addition to the specified use of the whistle by all officials (15-1-4), the Field Judge is also to use his whistle when upon his positive knowledge he knows:

- (a) that ball is dead;
- (b) that time is out;
- (c) that time is out at the end of a down, during which a foul was signaled by a marker, no whistle has sounded in such cases; and
- (d) that even in the presence of a whistle up or down field, he is to sound his whistle when players are some distance from such signal. This will help prevent dead ball fouls.

Article 6 The Field Judge will assist the Referee in decisions involving any catching, recovery, out-of-bounds spot, or illegal touching, of a loose ball, after it has crossed scrimmage line and particularly so for such actions that are out of the range of the Line Judge and Umpire.

POSITION ON FIELD-GOAL ATTEMPT AND TRY

Article 7 On field-goal attempts or Try-kick attempts, the Field Judge will station himself on the end line and cover the upright opposite the Back Judge. He, along with the Back Judge, is responsible for indication to the Referee whether the kick is high enough and through the uprights.

Section 7 Side Judge

SIDE JUDGE'S POSITION AND DUTIES

Article 1 The Side Judge will operate on the same side of the field as the Head Linesman, 20 yards deep.

Article 2 The Side Judge shall count the number of defensive players on the field at the snap.

Article 3 He shall be responsible for all eligible receivers on his side of the field.

Article 4 After receivers have cleared the line of scrimmage, the Side Judge will concentrate on the action in the area between the Umpire and Back Judge.

Article 5 In addition to the specified use of the whistle by all officials (15-1-4), the Side Judge is also to use his whistle when upon his positive knowledge he knows that the:

- (a) ball is dead;
- (b) time is out;

- (c) time is out at the end of a down, during which a foul was signaled by a marker, no whistle has sounded in such cases; and
- (d) even in the presence of a whistle up or down field, he is to sound his when players are some distance from such signal. This will help prevent dead ball fouls.

Article 6 The Side Judge will assist the Referee in decisions involving any catching, recovery, out-of-bounds spot, or illegal touching, of a loose ball, after it has crossed scrimmage line and particularly so for such actions that are out of the range of the Head Linesman and Umpire.

POSITION ON FIELD-GOAL ATTEMPT AND TRY

Article 7 The Side Judge will line up in a position laterally from the Umpire on field goals and Try-kick attempts.

Section 8 Back Judge

BACK JUDGE'S DUTIES

Article 1 The Back Judge is primarily responsible in regard to covering kicks from scrimmage (unless a Try-kick) or forward passes crossing the defensive goal line and all such loose balls, out of the range of the Umpire, Field Judge, and Linesman, noting an illegal substitution or withdrawal during dead ball with time in (see 5-2-11), and a foul signaled by a flag or cap during down. He will count the defensive team.

Article 2 He is to time the intermission between the two periods of each half (4-1-2), the length of all team timeouts (4-5-1-Item 2), and the 40/25 seconds permitted Team A to put ball in play (4-6-1 and 4-6-2). He is to utilize the 40/25 second clock provided by the home team. If this clock is inoperative, he should take over the official timing of the 40/25 seconds on the field.

Article 3 In addition to the specified use of the whistle by all officials (15-1-4), the Back Judge is also to use his whistle, when upon his positive knowledge he knows that the:

- (a) ball is dead;
- (b) time is out; or
- (c) time is out at the end of down, during which a foul was signaled by a flag or cap, and no whistle has sounded in such cases; and
- (d) even in the presence of a whistle upfield, he is to sound his when downfield players are some distance away from such signal. This will help prevent dead ball fouls. He should be particularly alert for item (c).

Article 4 He shall assist the Referee in decisions involving any catching, recovery, out-of-bounds spot, or illegal touching, of a loose ball, after it has crossed scrimmage line and particularly so for such actions as are out of the range of the Field Judge, Linesman, and Umpire. See 15-1-11-S.N. 1. He should count the defensive players on the field at the snap.

Article 5 The Back Judge has the absolute responsibility:

- (a) to instruct kicker and/or placekicker that "kickoff" must be made by placekick or dropkick.
- (b) that the height of the tee (artificial or natural) used for the kickoff conforms to the governing rules.

Note: He is to notify the visiting team at least five minutes before the start of the second half.

Section 9 Instant Replay

INSTANT REPLAY

The League will employ a system of Instant Replay Review to aid officiating as defined below. The following procedures will be used:

Article 1 Coaches' Challenge. In each game, a team will be permitted two challenges that will initiate Instant Replay reviews. **The Head Coach will initiate a challenge by throwing a red flag onto the field of play before the next legal snap or kick.** Each challenge will require the use of a team timeout. If a challenge is upheld, the timeout will be restored. A challenge will only be restored if a team is successful on both of its challenges, in which case it shall be awarded a third challenge, but a fourth challenge will not be permitted under any circumstances.

Note 1: If there is a foul that delays the next snap, the team committing that foul will no longer be able to challenge the previous ruling. A team may challenge any reviewable play (see Article 4 below) except when the on-field ruling is a score for either team, an interception, a fumble or backward pass that is recovered by an opponent or goes out of bounds through an opponent's end zone, or a muffed scrimmage kick recovered by the kicking team. A team is also prohibited from challenging any ruling after the two-minute warning of each half, and throughout any overtime period.

Note 2: A team that is out of timeouts or has used all of its available challenges may not attempt to initiate an additional challenge. If a team initiates a challenge when it is not permitted to do so, it will be charged a timeout.

Penalty: For initiating a challenge when a team has exhausted its timeouts: Loss of 15 yards.

Article 2 Replay Official's Request for Review. After all scoring plays, interceptions, fumbles and backward passes that are recovered by an opponent or go out of bounds through an opponent's end zone, muffed scrimmage kicks recovered by the kicking team, after the two-minute warning of each half, and throughout any overtime period, any Replay Review will be initiated by a Replay Official from a Replay Booth comparable to the location of the coaches' booth or Press Box.

Note 1: There is no limit to the number of Replay Reviews that may be initiated by the Replay Official. The ability to initiate a review will be unrelated to the number of timeouts that either team has remaining, and no timeout will be charged for any review initiated by the Replay Official.

Note 2: The Replay Official must initiate a review before the ball is next legally put in play.

Article 3 Reviews by Referee. All Replay Reviews will be conducted by the Referee on a field-level monitor after consultation with the covering official(s), prior to review. A decision will be reversed only when the Referee has *indisputable visual evidence* available to him that warrants the change.

Note 1: Time Limit. Each review will be a maximum of 60 seconds in length, timed from when the Referee begins his review of the replay at the field-level monitor.

Note 2: All reviewable aspects of the play may be examined and are subject to reversal, even if not identified in a coach's challenge or if not the specific reason for a Replay Official's request for review.

Article 4 Reviewable Plays. The Replay System will cover the following play situations only:

- (a) **When the on-field ruling is** governed by the Sideline, Goal Line, End Zone, and End Line:
 1. Scoring plays, including the ball breaking the plane of the goal line.
 2. Pass complete/incomplete/intercepted at sideline, goal line, end zone, and end line.
 3. Runner/receiver in or out of bounds.
 4. Recovery of loose ball in or out of bounds.
 5. **Whether there has been a touchback, when the on-field ruling involves a runner's momentum, or whether a kick touched the pylon.**
- (b) **Passing plays:**
 1. Whether a pass was complete, incomplete or intercepted in the field of play.
 2. Whether a fumble by a Quarterback (Passer) was a pass.
 3. Whether a forward pass has been touched by any player.
 4. Whether a pass has been thrown forward or backward.
 5. Whether a forward pass has been thrown from beyond or behind the line of scrimmage.
 6. Whether a forward pass has been thrown from behind the line of scrimmage after the ball has been beyond the line.
- (c) **Dead Ball: When the on-field ruling is:**
 1. a runner down by defensive contact, **and** the recovery of a fumble by an opponent or a teammate occurs in the action that happens following the fumble;
 2. a runner out of bounds, **and** the recovery of a fumble by an opponent or teammate occurs in the action that happens following the fumble;
 3. **an** incomplete forward pass, **and** the recovery of a fumble, or the recovery of a backward pass, by an opponent or a teammate occurs in the action following the fumble or backward pass; **or**
 4. a loose ball out of bounds, **and** it is recovered in the field of play by an opponent or a teammate in the action after the ball hits the ground.

Note 1: If the on-field ruling of down by contact, out of bounds, or incomplete forward pass is changed, the ball belongs to the recovering player at the spot of the recovery and any advance is nullified. If the ball goes out of bounds in an end zone, the result of the play will be either a touchback or a safety.

Note 2: If the Referee does not have indisputable visual evidence as to which player recovered the loose ball, or that the ball went out of bounds, the ruling on the field will stand.

- (d) **Other reviewable plays:**
 1. When the on-field ruling is a runner not down by defensive contact.
 2. The position of the ball with respect to a first down.
 3. Whether a kick has been touched.
 4. Whether a Field Goal or Try attempt has crossed below or above the crossbar, inside or outside the uprights when it is lower than the top of the uprights, or has touched anything.
 5. Whether more than 11 players were on the field at the snap.
 6. Whether there has been an illegal forward handoff.
 7. Whether a loose ball in play has struck a video board, guide wire, sky cam, or any other object.

Article 5 Non-Reviewable Plays include, but are not limited to:

1. Status of the **play or game** clock.
2. Proper down.
3. Penalty administration.
4. Runner ruled down by defensive contact (not involving fumbles).
5. **The position of the ball** not relating to first down or goal line.
6. Recovery of a loose ball that does not involve a boundary line or the end zone.
7. Field-goal or Try attempts that cross above either upright without touching anything.
8. Inadvertent/**Erroneous** Whistle.
9. **Quarterback "spike" to kill clock.**