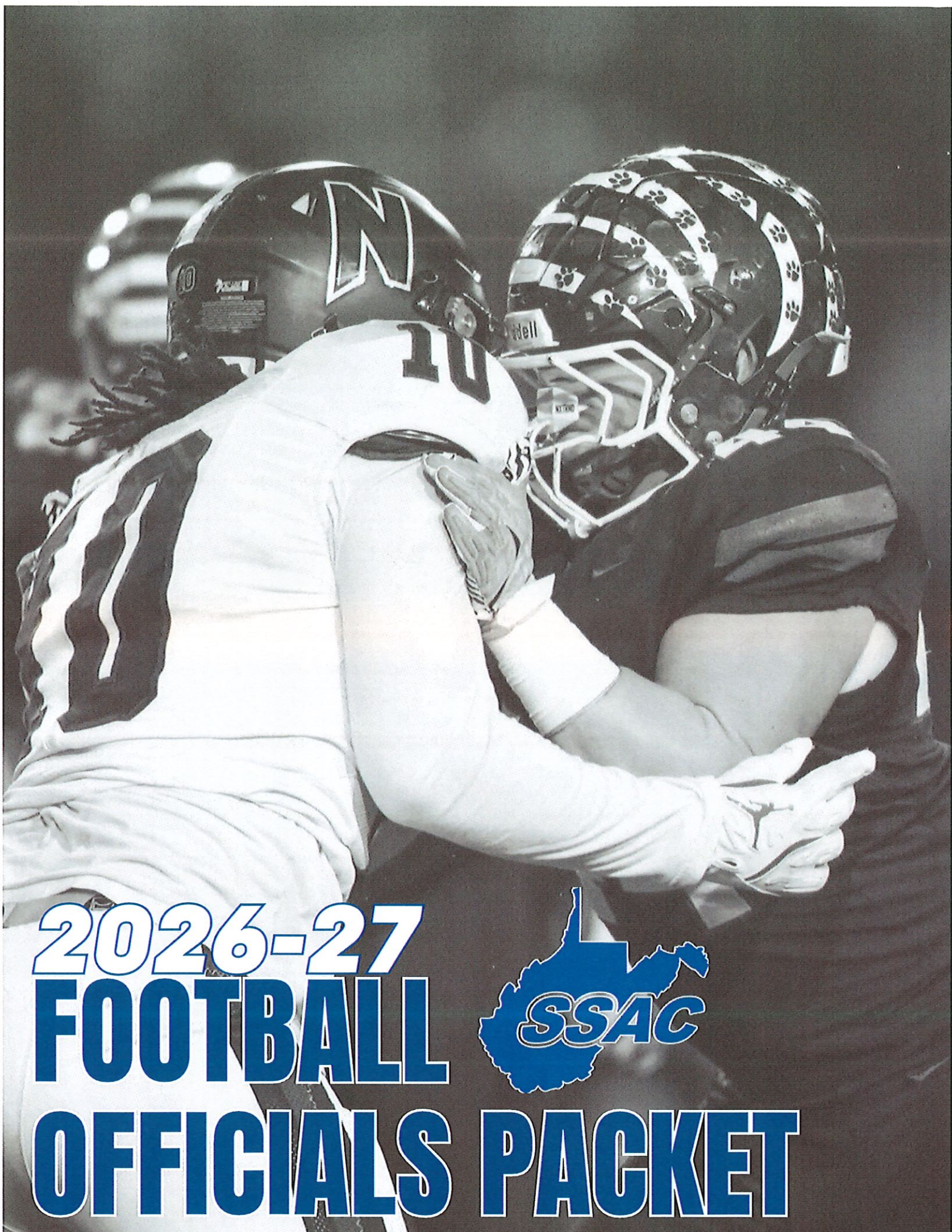




**2026-27**  
**FOOTBALL**  
**OFFICIALS PACKET**





## 2026-2027 FOOTBALL CLINICS

| <u>DATE</u> | <u>LOCATION</u>                            | <u>TIME</u> | <u>COORDINATOR</u> |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| July 19     | Interpreters' Clinic<br>WVSSAC Office      | 10:00 a.m.  | Chris Wells        |
| July 22     | Stonewall Resort<br>(Roanoke Event Center) | 10:00 a.m.  | Mike Rogers        |
| July 27     | Chapmanville Regional HS                   | 6:00 p.m.   | George Barker      |
| July 28     | Parkersburg HS                             | 6:00 p.m.   | Chris Way          |
| July 29     | John Marshall HS                           | 6:00 p.m.   | Roger Simmons      |
| July 30     | Huntington HS                              | 6:00 p.m.   | Bruce Senior       |
| Aug 3       | Woodrow Wilson HS<br>(Beckley)             | 6:00 p.m.   | Andrew Pinnick     |
| Aug. 4      | Herbert Hoover HS                          | 6:00 p.m.   | Richard Parsons    |
| Aug. 6      | East Fairmont HS                           | 6:00 p.m.   | James Beckman      |
| Aug. 7      | Spring Mills HS                            | 6:00 p.m.   | Glenn Simpson      |
| Aug. 8      | Frankfort HS                               | 9:00 a.m.   | Jay Hesse          |
| Aug. 11     | WVSSAC Office<br>Make-up Clinic            | 6:00 p.m.   | Chris Wells        |

**SCHOOLS:** The **Head Coach** shall be **required** to attend any sports rules clinics which are sponsored by this Commission in his/her coaching assignment. Schools failing to have a head coaching position filled at the time of the clinic will be required to have a school representative present at the rules clinic. An individual can only represent one school unless he/she is head coach at both schools. In a 9-12 school, both the varsity and 9th grade coach are required to attend. Failure to have a representative at one of the above clinics will result in a \$50.00 fine.

***The clinic attendance requirement may not be granted if the coach or representative is late in excess of 10 minutes.***



## **2026–2027 WVSSAC Sports Officials Testing Dates**

### **Football, Volleyball, and Soccer**

**Testing Window:** Monday, August 3 – Monday, August 24

### **Swimming**

**Testing Window:** Monday, October 26 – Monday, November 16

### **Basketball and Wrestling**

**Testing Window:** Monday, November 9 – Monday, November 30

### **Baseball, Softball, and Track**

**Testing Window:** Monday, March 1 – Monday, March 22



**2026-2027 Self-Nomination Dates**

**Fall Sports**

**Football August 31<sup>st</sup> through October 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Soccer August 24<sup>th</sup> through September 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Volleyball August 31<sup>st</sup> through October 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Winter Sports**

**Basketball November 16<sup>th</sup> through January 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Wrestling November 16<sup>th</sup> through January 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Swimming November 16<sup>th</sup> through January 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Spring Sports**

**Baseball March 29<sup>th</sup> through May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Softball March 29<sup>th</sup> through May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Please note that the process for self-nominations this year will be changing with our change to Arbiter 360 and updates to do this will be provided later.**





## Protocols for the 40/:25 Second Play Clock

The 40- second play clock will provide more consistency as the ball must be snapped within 40 seconds after the end of the previous play and is not dependent on the referees' subjective signal.

In the case where play is continuing with no stoppage or interruption, the offense will have 40 seconds from the end of the previous play to snap the ball. If play has been stopped (timeout or penalty), the offense will have 25 – seconds from the time the umpire sets the ball and the referee starts the ready for play following the administration of the timeout or penalty.

Basic Premise: The play clock will **ALWAYS** start at :40 seconds (started by BJ or stadium clock operator within 3 seconds of the end of the previous play) unless there is an administrative stoppage. The following administrative stoppage situations are when the play clock will be set at :25 seconds under varsity timing rules.

| <u>Situation</u>                            | <u>Play Clock</u> | <u>Referee Signal</u> |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Administration of a foul & penalty (Team A) | 25 Seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| At the start of a period                    | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Measurement                                 | 25 Seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| Helmet Comes Off Team A                     | 25 Seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| Injury Or Equipment Team A                  | 25 Seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| After any score                             | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Start of Team A's possession in OT          | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Inadvertent whistle                         | 25 Seconds        | Wind                  |
| Timeout by either team                      | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Timeout by official                         | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Touchback                                   | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Untimed down                                | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Period Extension                            | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |
| Following a change of team possession       | 25 Seconds        | Chop                  |

**Notes:**

- This change only affects the play clock, not the game clock.
  - The Back Judge has primary responsibility for the play clock and will signal at :05 left by raising arm
  - Following the end of a down the Back Judge will (after seeing there are no penalties or other delays) start the 40-second play clock.
  - All members of the crew will react to ball movement and ball placement as efficiently and as accurately as possible. (there are no warnings for waiting on the ready for play)
  - If the: 40 - second play clock has started and runs down below :25 seconds remaining and the ball is not yet placed on the ground and ready for play through no fault of the players (long run, long pass and ball is being relayed back, etc.), the referee shall sound the whistle, reset the play clock to :25 seconds and start the play clock (and possibly the game clock) on his whistle/signal.
  - If the referee is re-setting the :40 play clock, he will signal with both palms open in an over-the-head pumping motion to the back judge to reset the :40 play clock. If the referee is re-setting the :25 play clock, he will signal with one palm open in an over-the-head pumping motion to the back judge to reset the :25 play clock.
- The ball is ready for play with the 40 second clock running when the ball has been spotted by the official and they have stepped away to position.
- Pre-game discussion is a must. Discuss procedures and 40-second clock start signals with head coaches. Identify that the play clock will start within 3 seconds after the previous play ends.
  - Be consistent in starting the 40-second play clock, ball movement, spotting the ball and being in position for the snap.

**Larry McCloy**  
**WVSSAC**  
**Football Clinician**

## WEST VIRGINIA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES COMMISSION

### FOOTBALL ALERTS - - 2026

#### Modifications and Points of Special Emphasis

1. **Mouthpiece** – Rule 1-5-1d,5: The only exception to the mouth and tooth protector rule is by a dentist's written exclusion on file in the WVSSAC office.
2. **Artificial Limb** – Rule 1-7: Requires WVSSAC authorization (see enclosed policy, ATTACHMENT A).
3. **Game Ball** – Rule 1-3-1 Note and Table 1-3-1; the small ball for players below the 9<sup>th</sup> grade shall be used (GST-TDY). Rule 1-3-2 Note; for varsity playoffs a Wilson GST or GRT football shall be used.
4. **Length of Quarters** - Rule 3-1; Table 3-1: Note: WVSSAC adoption; games involving only students below the 9<sup>th</sup> grade shall be played in 8-minute quarters.
5. **Half-time** - Rule 3-1 Table, Intermission: All HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY games involving WVSSAC member schools played in West Virginia will have a maximum 20 minute half-time. This includes regular season and playoff games. Notification to coaches of the end of half-time by officials is permissible, but not required. Coaches are responsible for teams being on the field for the mandatory warm-up at the end of the half-time. Out-of-state varsity opponents must be notified of the 20 minute half-time. The half-time length shall not be lengthened.
6. **Interrupted Games** - Rule 3-1-4 & 3-1-5: For any interruption continued the same day, resume from the point of interruption and complete the game. If both schools agree not to resume, Rule 3-1-4 may be used to declare the interrupted game as a completed contest.  
For interrupted games to be resumed at a later date: "If the interruption is in the 1<sup>st</sup> (including the coin toss), 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters, resume from the point of interruption; if in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, the game is over and the score stands".
7. **Game shortening Rule: Rule 3-1-2. 42 Points Halftime/3<sup>rd</sup> quarter or 35-point differential in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Clock runs; see also 3-1-3: "By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time or the game terminated."**
8. **Overtime:** Rule 3-1-1 NOTE: By state adoption, all varsity/middle school regular season games that end in a tie after regulation time, shall use the 20-yard line overtime procedure until a winner is determined. There is NO overtime in JV contests  
There shall be no PSK applications in overtime periods.
9. **Heat and Humidity Problems** – Rule 3-5-7g: Coaches need to be aware of the HEAT INDEX during practices. During games if, in the opinion of the officials, heat and/or humidity may cause problems for the players, an official's time-out may be taken and water administered to the teams. An authorized conference may be held during this official's time-out, outside the numbers and in front of the team box.



**2026**

## WVSSAC 20-YARD LINE OVERTIME PROCEDURE

### REGULAR SEASON OVERTIME PROCEDURE

Regular season high school football games, which are tied at the end of regulation time shall be continued by using the 20-yard line overtime procedure. Overtime periods will be played until a winner is determined.

*Overtime for middle schools will be played until a winner is determined. No overtime will be played in JV Games. PSK shall not be used in overtime periods.*

### PLAYOFF OVERTIME PROCEDURE

The 20-yard line overtime procedure shall be used and a winner shall be determined.

### **PROCEDURE:**

Modify the 10-yard overtime procedure in the Rules Book to have Team A put the ball in play at their 20-yard line, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10. A first down may be gained and Team A shall continue to attempt to score.



**SCOREROA**

**TIME: 00:00**  
**HOME.**

**PERIOD**  
**A**



Revise National Federation 2025 Football Rules Book - pages 87-90.

1<sup>st</sup> & 10 from the 20 yard line procedure will be used in WV for OT procedure (unless moved by penalty).

A three-minute intermission shall precede the first overtime period. All other overtime periods shall be preceded with a two-minute intermission. Team captains come out to begin each OT period. The overtime is considered as an extension of the 4<sup>th</sup> period.

Only 1 coin toss will be conducted prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> overtime. If a 2<sup>nd</sup> overtime is played, the loser of the coin flip from the 1<sup>st</sup> overtime, will have choice to begin the 2<sup>nd</sup> overtime. No more coin flips will take place no matter how many overtimes are played.

Larry McCloy,  
WVSSAC Football Clinician  
June 15, 2026



**To:** Head Football Coaches

Junior Varsity, Freshmen, Middle School

**Subject:** Numbering Requirements for Sub Varsity Contests for 11-man football.

*The NFHS Football Rules regarding number requirements*

*(Rule 7-2-5) and pass eligibility requirements (7-5-6a) will be in effect for all Sub Varsity Contests beginning with the 2019 Football season.*

*Unless in scrimmage kick formation, at least 5 offensive linemen must be numbered 50-79 for a scrimmage down. To be an eligible pass receiver, the player must be eligible by both position and number (1-49 or 80-99).*

*Please make note when equipping players for Sub Varsity contests.*

**Larry McCloy**

**WVSSAC Football Clinician**



**To:** All Junior Varsity, Freshmen & Middle School Football Coaches

**Subject:** Eight-Player Football

**At the sub varsity level, by agreement of both head coaches, teams are permitted to play 8 player football contests in lieu of 11 player contests.**

### **EIGHT-PLAYER**

**GENERAL:** Eleven-player rules are used for eight-player football with the following modifications.

**RULE 7:** a. At least five A players shall be on their line at the snap and may have any legal jersey number.

c. Each A player (regardless of jersey number) who at the snap was on the end of the scrimmage line (total of two) and each A player who at the snap was legally behind the scrimmage line (possible total of three) is eligible.

Wayne Ryan, Executive Director  
wayne.ryan@wvssac.org

Larry McCloy  
WVSSAC Football Clinician  
refrules90@gmail.com



# 2026 Football Bulletin

## WVSSAC Football Game Shortening Rule:

Re: NFHS Football Rule 3-1-2

**42 Point Differential at Halftime or in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, game shortening procedures will take effect for the remainder of the contest**

Beginning with the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> period if a 35 point differential has been reached the clock operator will keep the game clock running except for the following situations:

- Clock stopped for an injured player
- A charged Team timeout is awarded
- There is a change of possession
- There is a score
- For a try after touchdown
- Any extended delay

When these instances occur the **Referee** will face the clock operator and give the Stop the Clock signal (**signal 3**).

When the clock is stopped for any of the above reasons the clock will start on the Ready-for-Play by the Referee. The **Referee** will face the clock operator and give the start the clock signal (**signal 2**).

The game clock will run during the following:

- ☐ Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass
- ☐ Runner goes out of bounds
- ☐ For Penalty Administration including delay of game fouls
- ☐ When a first down is gained with no change of team possession
- ☐ When there is a change of possession and the team that had possession at the beginning of the down has possession at the end of the down.

Game officials will use all normal mechanics within the Game Shortening Period. The remainder of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and/or 4<sup>th</sup> period will be under this rule even if the differential is lessened.

**NFHS Rule 3-1-3** may still may be utilized. "A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time or the game terminated."

Larry  
McCloy  
WVSSAC  
Football Clinician



## **Microphone Instructions**

### USE OF THE MICROPHONE

The Referee's use of a field microphone adds a positive dimension to communication when used properly. The microphone should be used to explain penalties and unusual situations. The Referee should have control (on/off switch) of the microphone.

If used, the microphone should be tested prior to the start of the contest and the following guidelines should be followed.

#### The Referee will:

- I. Move to an open area on the field, face the press box, and stand still.
- II. After the penalty is accepted or declined, the Referee will give the signal with the microphone.
- III. Do not turn on the microphone until any crew conference on a foul is concluded. The Referee will have all pertinent information before turning on microphone (e.g. whether or not the penalty will result in a first down).
- IV. Use normal voice quality when speaking with the microphone. Shouting is not necessary.
- V. Be aware that there often is a delay between speaking and hearing over the loud speakers.
- VI. Say "dead ball" rather than "Prior to the snap."
- VII. Do not announce the colors of the teams. Say "Offense" or "Defense".
- VIII. Speak in short phrases and pause briefly between phrases.

IX. Announce the number of the player who committed the foul while referencing the team by position on the field (e.g. Offense/Defense, Kicking Team/Receiving Team). The Referee will use team names only for unusual situations

*Example of Proper Announcement:*

"Holding, Offense, Number 74. 10 Yard Penalty From The Previous Spot, Replay 2<sup>nd</sup> Down"

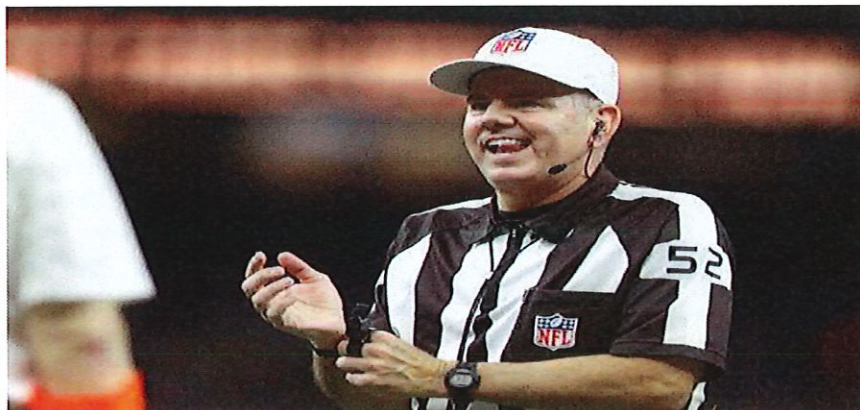
Larry McCloy

WVSSAC Football Clinician



# Microphone Usage/Referees

- **2026- Referees will be required to use the field mic if stadiums provide one prior to the game.**
- **2026 Reminder/Field Mics are required to host playoffs.**
- **Instructions on how to use are provided in your Official's Packet**





## WEST VIRGINIA MECHANICS – 2026



These pages dictate the commonalities with the NFHS Football Officials Manual and some add-ons that make the mechanics more efficient. **We need greater consistency across the State. Work at it.**

### 1. PRE-GAME MEETING WITH COACHES AND THE COINTOSS:

The Coaches Pre-game meetings shall occur between 1 1/2 to 1 1/4 hours prior to the kickoff in or near a team locker room. The coin toss shall be conducted 3 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff in the center of the field. Only 4 captains from each team shall be on the field. All other team members shall be off the field of play. Any request to send other players on the field shall be denied. Sportsmanship shall be addressed with the captains at this time. The LJ and BJ shall be at their respective hashes with a ball from the team on their side of the field. For 2<sup>nd</sup> half, take captains out for options (can take out all 4 captains or just one).

### 2. KICKOFF (5-man):

- The Referee shall take a position near the hash mark opposite the press box. Depth will vary with the ability of the kickers. Check K's formation.
- The Line Judge shall assist in counting the kicking team.
- If a kickoff goes out of bounds and has been touched by the receivers, the covering official shall go to the spot, no need in using a bean bag.
- BJ has kicking line, LJ has receiving line. After kick, both BJ/LJ officiate the play remaining on the sideline using the accordion effect as the HLJ/LJ do on a regular scrimmage play.

### 3. SCRIMMAGE DOWN:

- The wings will give a hand signal for the closest wide-out near them OFF the LOS ONLY. DO NOT PUNCH ON THE LOS.
- The covering official on out of bounds plays will hold the out-of-bounds spot and continue to observe action from that vantage point. Wings must be aware to assist Umpires with ineligible downfield.
- The chain clip shall be placed in the middle of the yard line closest to the back stake.
- 6-man: New: Deep judges, start on sideline for scrimmage plays. Distance yourself 20 yards downfield from LJ & HLJ**

### 4. Types of formations will determine how the referee will give the ready-for-play and take his position to cover the play.

- If the offense has a normal huddle the referee should always be near the line of scrimmage to help with ball exchanges. Be sure your Back Judge and Timer can see you give the ready signal and always face the line of scrimmage.
- If the offense is a no-huddle set, the Referee may drop back 12-15 yards to give the ready signal. (when needed). Always face the line of scrimmage.

### 5. ~~SHORT FREE KICK MECHANICS~~ (5-man):

- Kick comes to BJ/HLJ side of the field, focus on touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. LJ/U key on blocking by K players and the ball traveling 10 yards.
- Kick comes to LJ/U side of the field, focus on touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. BJ/HLJ key on blocking by K players and the ball traveling 10 yards.

#### **For an unexpected Short Free Kick:**

- BJ-Team K's Free Kick Line — LJ- Team R's Free Kick Line, others in **normal** free kick positions.
- Kick comes to BJ side of the field, BJ takes touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. LJ keys on blocking by K players and on the ball traveling 10 yards.
- Kick comes to LJ side of the field, LJ takes touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. BJ keys on blocking by K players and on the ball traveling 10 yards.



**6. PUNT COVERAGE DOWN FIELD (5-man)**

- a. The Back Judge will cover his 2/3 of the field favoring the Line Judge's side. If the Back Judge starts out behind the deepest receiver he must move forward to view the catch/no catch or muff.
- b. The Head Line Judge will leave when he is sure ball will be kicked and cover his 1/3 of the field. One official has the ball the other is observing action in front of and around the receiver/runner.
- c. The Line Judge will not leave the line-of-scrimmage until the kick has crossed the line.
- d. If the punt is short, the Back Judge may get help from the Line Judge.

**7. TRY BY KICK OR FIELD GOAL ATTEMPT (5-Man):**

- a. Umpire goes back under the uprights with the Back Judge. U takes upright on the home team side as this is the sideline the Umpire goes up after the try for point or FG is successful. BJ has the whistle after the kick is ruled successful or no good.
- b. Referee shall look into the holder's face, and be at least 10 yards wide and 3 yards deeper than

kicker

**8. Official's uniforms shall follow the WVSSAC Officials' Handbook regulations for ALL LEVELS of contest. Blue bean bags and if necessary white bean bags for a PSK spot or aiding the down-marker in 1<sup>st</sup> and goal situations. Predominately black shoes with black laces and some white accents. If an official wears a towel it must be black with the black pants. NO SUNGLASSES ARE TO BE WORN (unless prescription)**

**9. TIMING INTERVALS AND INTERMISSION:**

- a. All intermissions are to be timed by the Back Judge (and perhaps the Referee).
- b. Put 3 minutes on the clock for the mandatory warm-up period after the halftime intermission expires.

**10. INITIAL COVERAGE OF ELIGIBLES:**

Follow the mechanics illustrated in the most recent Official's Manual.

**11. PSK shall not be used in overtime periods.**

There are to be no overtime periods for JV football.

**12. 6-MAN MECHANICS:**

In 6-man, deep judges have outside eligibles. With trips, take two outside eligibles.

**Umpire shall raise his hand when the ball becomes dead following a scrimmage down (this helps the wings on making sure ball is secured).**

**If there is only one flag, that official shall give the preliminary signal and report foul to the referee. If there are two flags, referee will get call and give signals.**

**Misc.** Referees may operate either on the wide side of the formation or on the passing arm/kicking leg side for scrimmage downs (*other than kick tries*).

Be certain the chain crew has been properly instructed as to their duties and to stay alert and move out of the way when a play comes toward them.

**Reminders for 2026: Referee, give penalty options to the Head Coach. Preliminary signal is optional but not recommended by R.**

**Reminders for 2026: Referee, announce number of offender on penalty announcement. (Ex. "Holding, offense, #74")**

**Reminder for 2026: We will not be doing the 2+2 anymore (Incomplete pass followed by stopping the clock signal). Officials, when an incomplete pass is thrown, covering official give incomplete pass signal. Other officials glance at game clock to make sure it has stopped.**

**REMINDER FOR 2026- Umpires/When the snap is inside the 5 yard line going in, U may position themselves toward the end line if they feel uncomfortable near the GL if they feel they are in harms way.**



## WVSSAC 6-MAN CREW MECHANICS

Referee, Umpire, Head Line Judge, Line Judge, Field Judge, Side Judge

Linesman and Side Judge on chain side; Line Judge and Field Judge opposite.

Game timing is the responsibility of the Side Judge. The Field Judge has the timing of the time outs and intermissions. The 40/25-second clock is the responsibility of the Field Judge (Side Judge echo raising hand signal to notify teams of less than 5 seconds on the play clock when no visible field clocks are present)

**Pre-Game Duties:** Once field inspection completed R, LJ and FJ remain on press box side of field. FJ responsible to get captains of his team to coin toss location at least three minutes prior to kickoff. The U, HLJ and SJ are opposite the press box and the SJ has the responsibility for his captains.

**Coin Toss:** The Referee and Field Judge escort their captains toward the center of the field. FJ has ball from his team and will stop at hash. Line Judge remains at sideline. The Umpire and Side Judge accompany their captains to the center. SJ has ball from his team and stops at the hash. The Head Line Judge remains on his sideline. Crew meet in center of field after toss.

**Kickoff:** R deeper than deepest receiver and in center of field. LJ, on press box sideline at about 20-yard line. HLJ, opposite press box on sideline at about 15-yard line. U has the kickers and remains with the kicker and will instruct him when the kick the ball after R give the ready signal. SJ has the kicker's restraining line (normally the 40). FJ has the restraining line of the receivers (normally the 50). FJ and R count receivers and U and SJ count kickers.

R has goal line, end zone, momentum and center of field. SJ and FJ have sidelines to goal and neutral zone. U has kicker and holder if there is one and center of field to his goal.

For a short free kick, FJ moves to kicker's free kick line, HLJ moves up to receiver's free kick line. LJ moves to receiver's 45-yard line. Again, staggered coverage by HLJ and LJ is desirable. R will be centered, deep.

**Scrimmage Plays:** R and U count the offense while SJ and FJ count the defense. **SJ and FJ shall be 15-20 yards deep or deeper than deepest defensive back and positioned on the sideline.**

HLJ and LJ have LOS responsibilities, don't leave too rapidly. HLJ and LJ are responsible for the sideline **all the way to the 2 yard line**. If HLJ and LJ can cover down sideline with flow, they should do so. SJ and FJ watch all perimeter action after play is dead, unless covering a sideline deep play.

SJ & FJ pinch in at an angle to the top of the numbers when the play is dead to observe dead ball action.

Wings start on the sideline and have forward progress to the 2-yard line unless the ball is snapped from the 10-yard line in where they have goal line responsibility.

Passing keys for deep wing officials is widest eligible their side. If trips to one side, deep wing has widest eligible, HLJ/LJ have two inside eligibles.

**Scrimmage Kicks:** PUNTS: HLJ and LJ hold until ball crosses neutral zone. [1] FJ on sideline slightly in front of deepest receiver. Responsible for kicks in you side zone. SJ be slightly behind the deepest receiver but be able to see a catch of the punt. [2] These two positions may be reversed, depending on lateral field position of the ball. If the ball is near middle, go with [1] mechanic. [1] SJ responsible for goal line. FJ and SJ cover momentum rule. Covering official drop bean bag where kick ends in field of play.

**FIELD GOAL and TRYS BY KICK:** FJ rules on cross bar. FJ and SJ slightly behind their respective upright to rule on ball passing between uprights. Nearer official communicates as to success or failure and both step into end zone and signal. Be alert to break away to cover fakes and broken plays. FJ has the whistle.

**Goal Line Plays:** When the ball is **from the 7 yard line and in**, HLJ and LJ lead runner to goal. SJ and FJ start on end line at the corner pylons, U initial position is on or near the goal line. Assist wings on runner being downed near goal since they are concentrating on the ball breaking the plane. All four flank officials need to communicate prior to each down concerning coverage.

**Umpire-** When the snap is inside the 5 yard line going in, U may position himself near the end line to get out of harms way if they feel uncomfortable near the goal line action.

**Time-outs:** HLJ assumes a position near team on your side, LJ be near team on your side, SJ and FJ be about half way between sidelines and hash on your side. U over the ball and R communicate with all.

**Measurements:** FJ has ball responsibility throughout measurement. HLJ, with clip (which is in middle of the yard line farthest from the front stick). U, take sticks from front chain crew member, wait till the LJ has made sure the HLJ has the chain stretched, then place front stick on side of ball opposite the press box. SJ, if it is a first down see that the down marker is properly set. SJ can do same if HLJ is marking forward progress and line-to-gain has been passed. SJ can help with maintaining spot of front stick while measurement is progressing.

**Flags:** U, HLJ, LJ, FJ and SJ; when foul is called by another official assist by covering and holding spot of flag and dead ball spot. Leave ball on ground until called for. Free officials continue to observe players. LJ have enforcement spot if different from previous spot. HLJ must go to succeeding spot to check measurement of U.

**End of Period:** SJ keep R informed of clock status near end of period. You are responsible if clock is to R's back. LJ cover your team during this period while SJ covers team on HLJ's sideline. FJ continue on down the field observing all players and be near new spot. FJ is responsible for timing the length of the interval between periods and halftime. FJ and SJ alert respective teams with about 5 minutes remaining in half-time.

Any additions or corrections to these mechanics will be communicated from the WVSSAC office when necessary. Unless noted, the general mechanics for a 5-man crew shall prevail.

## **PRINCIPLES OF SIX-MAN MECHANICS**

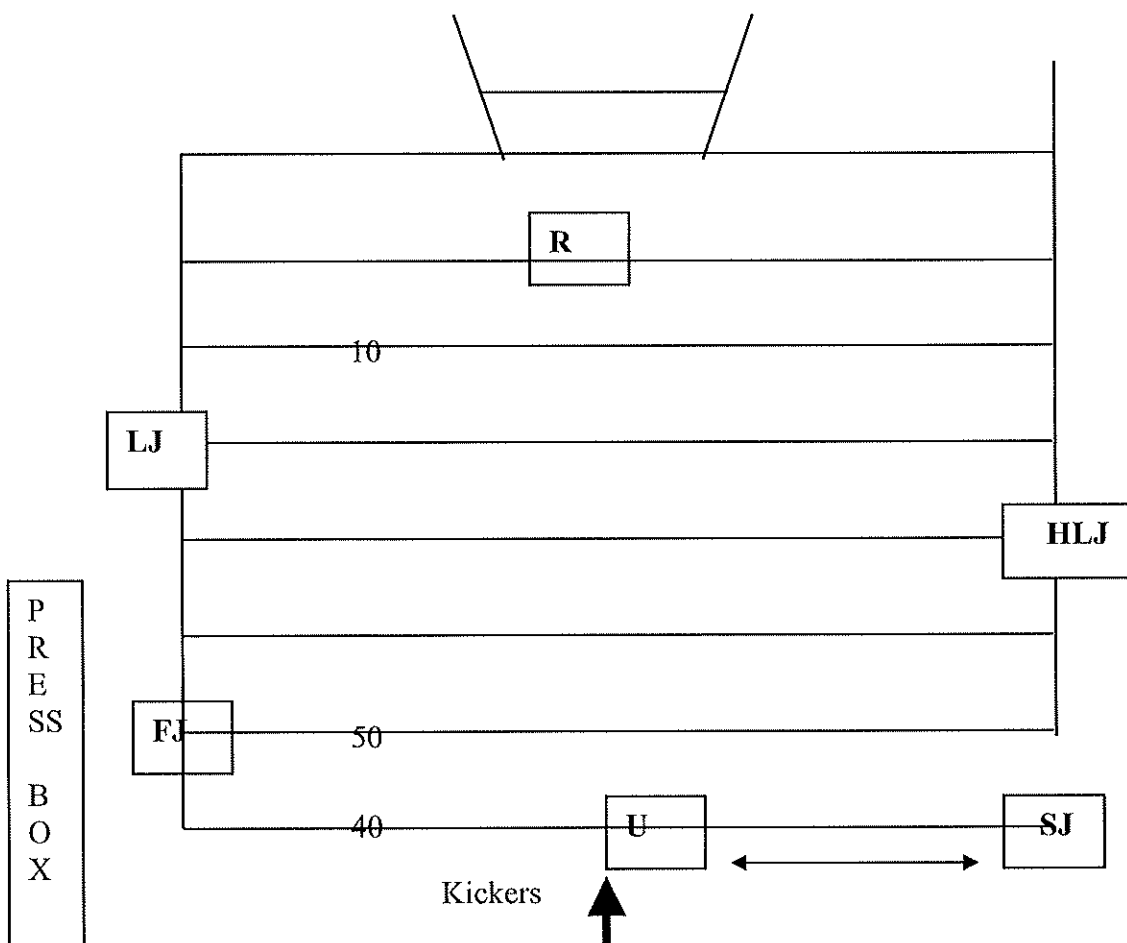
1. Don't officiate the ball. Officiate around the ball and be good dead ball officials.
2. Wide and deep. The less you move, the better you see.
3. Position yourself so that the play is coming toward you or going away from you.  
Try to avoid allowing the play to cross your face (Umpire is exception).
4. Short wings: do not leave the line of scrimmage on running plays until the ball crosses the line. Trail the play by five to seven yards. If it's a slow developing play, take three of steps up field and wait for the play to come to you.
5. Short wings: on passes, know when to go and when to hold.
6. Short wings: you have all the spots to the two yard line!
7. Deep wings: you have the spots from the two yard line only!
8. Deep wings: fade mechanics. Try to maintain at least a 20 yard cushion.
9. Short Wings: cross-field mechanics and soft spots.
10. Short Wings: bracket the play between you and the other deep official on your side. Don't turn your six into a five!
11. The most important line on the field is the goal line; the second most important line on the field is the sideline. The most important spot on the field is the intersection of the goal line and sideline – the goal line PYLON. Someone needs to be there!
12. These principles apply to free kicks and scrimmage kicks as well.
13. The sixth man is added value on all plays, preventive officiating (let them know there are six of us out there) and dead ball officiating, especially when the opposing team players enter the team box area.

- SJ and FJ take original position 20 yards deep on the sideline.
- After the snap, if the play is to the other side of the field, SJ and FJ may move into field of play no farther than the bottom of the numbers (just like HLJ/LJ when play goes away from them). Have goal line and sideline.



- SJ and FJ keep a 20-yard buffer unless wings are not at the spot. Eye contact and communication.
- SJ and FJ should have “an accordion” effect, coming in on plays to let players know they are there and back pedaling back to position.
- U: On pass plays over the middle, turn and look to help out. We are vulnerable on this play so special attention is needed. Off wing and deep officials step onto the field to also help with this play.

### 6-MAN KICKOFF



### Note:

Can fill positions with any official you like (other than the Referee) as long as we are in these 6 positions. It is set this way because the U is

positioned in the middle of the field on all scrimmage plays, so they are used to this look and angle.

## SEVEN MAN MECHANICS OVERVIEW

Below is a basic overview of the seven man mechanics. Responsibilities outlined in the five man mechanics are understood to still apply unless stated otherwise.

### **PRE-GAME RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Referee (R)** – Inspect field with the **B**
2. **Head Line Judge (HLJ)** – Give chain crew instructions with **S**
3. **Umpire (U)** –
  - a. Inspect players from both teams.
  - b. Police teams (buffer area)
4. **Line Judge (LJ)** –
  - a. Police teams (buffer area).
  - b. Will bring out home team.
5. **Back Judge (B)** –
  - a. The **B** will inspect the field with the **R**.
  - b. Will bring out visiting team.
6. **Field Judge (F)** –
  - a. Accompany and assist **S** with instructions of ball boys
  - b. Obtain home team captains for coin toss
7. **Side Judge (S)** –
  - a. Accompany and assist **HLJ** with instructions for chain crew
  - b. Accompany and assist **F** with instructions of ball boys
  - c. Obtain visiting team captains for coin toss

All officials are responsible for monitoring the teams and maintaining the buffer area.

### **COIN TOSS**

#### **First Half and Overtime Toss**

The coin toss mechanics are: **Referee** will and **FJ** enter the field from the home team sideline at mid-field with the **Referee** facing the clock. The **R** & **Field Judge** (home) and **U** & **Side Judge** (visitors) will escort the Captains from their respective sidelines to the top of the numbers. The **Line Judge** (home) and **Back Judge** (visitors) will remain on the sideline with their respective teams and the **Head Line Judge** will be with the chain crew. Once the coin toss is completed, all officials will meet in the middle of the field, mark their cards and break to their respective kick-off positions.

#### **Second Half Options**

At the conclusion of half time and during the first minute of the three minute mandatory warm up period, the **U** & **Side Judge** and **R** & **Field Judge** will escort the captains (Can take 4 but at least 1) to obtain their second half options. The crew of officials will then meet in the center of the field for second half instructions. On a signal from the Referee, the crew of officials will hustle to their pre-kickoff positions.



## FREE KICK

### Normal Kickoff

#### 1. Referee –

- Will line up in the center of the field on the goal line
- Count and confirm number of R players with
- Obtain ready signal from Back Judge
- Rule on touchback or momentum as applicable.
- Will cover runner between numbers

#### 2. Head Line Judge & Umpire –

- Will line up on the 30 yd Line (HLJ) Opposite press box and 20 yd Line (U) Press Box side
- Count and confirm number of R players with R
- Will have runner responsibility on all deep kicks to your side (outside numbers)
- If kick is short of position and on your side of field, quickly move forward to see runner and the catch or recovery.
- Will follow runner until play becomes dead or the runner moves to the far side of the field.
- Responsible for dead ball spot when run is up your half of field.

#### 3. Field Judge –

- Position on K's restraining line on the home sideline.
- Count K players and confirm with **BJ**
- Watch for encroachment by K, first touching by K, kick-catch interference by K.
- Watch for fair catch signals on pooch kicks.

#### 4. Back Judge –

- Initial position is on K's free kick line in the center of the field with kicker.
- Count K players and confirm with **Field Judge**
- Obtain ready signal from the **Side Judge, Field Judge and Line Judge**
- Once ball is kicked, officiate from the inside out watching blocks in the middle of the field.
- Cover initial blocks and be on the goal line waiting on runner

#### 5. Side Judge –

- Position is on R's free kick line opposite the Press Box
- Signal ready to **B** by raising one hand when he points at you
- Watch for encroachment by R, first touching by K, kick catch interference by K.
- Watch for fair catch signals on pooch kicks and on deeper kicks short of the LJ.
- Clean up OOB area when runner goes out on your side

#### 6. Line Judge –

- Position is on R's free kick line press box side
- Watch for encroachment by R, first touching by K, kick catch interference by K.
- Watch for fair catch signals on pooch kicks and on deeper kicks short of the HLJ. • Clean up OOB area when runner goes out on your side

### **Short Free Kick**

- **Side Judge-** Move up to K's Free kick line
- **Head Line Judge-** Move up to R's restraining line
- **Umpire-** Move up to R's 45 yard line on the Press Box side of the field
- **Referee** is responsible for possible deep kicks and R's goal line.

## SCRIMMAGE PLAY

1. **Referee** – Normal duties.
2. **Umpire** – Normal duties.
3. **Head Line Judge** – Normal duties with the chain and chain.
4. **Head Line Judge and Line Judge -**
  - Except for the addition of a key receiver, responsibilities before, at, and after the snap are unchanged from 6 man mechanics.
  - Key receiver is the second or third eligible receiver from the outside at the snap. If key goes in motion, the BJ will take that player as key and the affected wingman will take the next receiver in. Responsible for action on or by key from the snap until it may be necessary to release your key so that you can cover normal scrimmage action in your zone. Keys are designated so that a set of eyes are on each receiver so that rulings on contact by A against B (clips, block in back, block below waste, hold, pass interference etc.) and contact by B on A (pass interference, illegal use of hands, holding, etc.) are more easily detected. Keys are for every play, not just pass plays.
  - Remain on LOS until ball crosses the LOS and then officiate normally. Responsible for forward progress, all spots, and out of bounds spots or until the 2 yard line.
  - A 20 yard separation should be maintained by the **LJ/FJ** and **HLJ/SJ** to keep the play boxed in.
  - Determine if ball crosses the LOS on any play.
  - Determine if pass was thrown or kick made from beyond the LOS on any play.
  - Have goal line responsibility when the ball is snapped from the 5 yard line.
5. **Field Judge and Side Judge**
  - Count B players and confirm with **B**.
  - Position is normally 20 yards from the LOS. Adjust position near goal line as required.
  - Key receiver is the widest eligible receiver at the snap. If key goes in motion, the BJ will take that player as key and the affected FJ/SJ will take the next receiver in. Responsible for action on or by key from the snap until it may be necessary to release your key so that you can cover normal scrimmage action in your zone. Keys are designated so that a set of eyes are on each receiver so that rulings on contact by A against B (clips, block in back, block below waste, hold, pass interference etc.) and contact by B on A (pass interference, illegal use of hands, holding etc.) are more easily detected. Keys are for every play, not just pass plays.
  - Maintain deep positioning such that no player in your area gets deeper than your position.
  - If play ends anywhere in your side zone, assist in getting existing or new ball to the **Umpire** for spotting.
  - If play goes out of bounds on your side, HLJ or LJ will have the dead ball spot. Go into OOB area and clean up or get opposing players back onto the field before retrieving a football
  - **Side Judge** will assist **HLJ** with set up and operation of chains at any available opportunity.

## 6. Back Judge

- Count B players and confirm with F/S.
- Position is normally 25 yards from the LOS
- Not typically responsible for getting ball to Umpire or from sideline, but will assist in ball retrieval and relaying to proper sideline (rotating the ball out).
- Maintain deep positioning such that no player in your area gets deeper than your position.
- Responsible for the end line in all situations
- Key receiver is the 2nd eligible receiver from strong side at the snap or first man out of the back field. If receiver goes in motion, the BJ will take that player as key and the affected FJ/SJ/HLJ/LJ will take the next receiver in. Responsible for action on or by key from the snap until it may be necessary to release your key so that you can cover normal scrimmage action in your zone. Keys are designated so that a set of eyes are on each receiver so that rulings on contact by A against B (clips, block in back, block below waste, hold, pass interference etc.) and contact by B on A (pass interference, illegal use of hands, holding etc.) are more easily detected. Keys are for every play, not just pass plays.
- If the ball is snapped on or inside the 20 yard line position is on the end line.

## Goal Line Plays

### Goal Line Coverage (Going In or Coming Out)

- When the ball is snapped at the 7 yard line going in, the S/F will move to the corner of the end line and sidelines. The HLJ/LJ will read and react to cover the play and will be responsible for goal line coverage.
- When the ball is snapped from the 5 yard line going in or coming out, the HLJ/LJ will move immediately to the goal and take goal line responsibility.
- Umpire/When the snap is inside the 5 yard line going in, you may position towards the back of the endzone to get out of harms way near the goal line if you feel you are in the way of play in that goal line area.

## SCRIMMAGE KICKS

### Punts

1. **Referee** – The alignment and responsibilities are unchanged from 5 man mechanics.
2. **Umpire** – The alignment and responsibilities are unchanged from 5 man mechanics.
3. **Head Line Judge and Line Judge** –
  - Watch keys
  - **Head Line Judge** - Be prepared to assist on bad snap or blocked kick
  - **Line Judge** - Remain on LOS until ball crosses the line
  - When kick crosses LOS, move slowly and deliberately down field. • HLJ/LJ are now responsible for cleaning up at the end of the play • LJ is responsible for knowing if the ball crosses the LOS.
4. **Field Judge and Side Judge**
  - Count R players and confirm with BJ.
  - Help rule on validity of fair catch signal.
  - Observe fair catch signaler(s) who do not field the ball for then block.



- Help rule on touchback or momentum.
- If kick is short of position and on your side of field, move forward to see runner and the catch or recovery.
- Will follow runner until play becomes dead or the runner moves to the far side of the field.
  - If kick is to the far side of the field move up-field watching action ahead of runner
- Responsible for dead ball spot when run is up your side of field.

5. **Back Judge**

- Position to wide side of field and slightly behind deepest receiver(s).
- Count and confirm number of Team R players with S/F.
- Rule on touchback or momentum as applicable.
- Responsible for marking end of kick with bean bag
- Rule on validity of fair catch signal.

### **Try for Point/Field Goal**

1. **Referee** – Normal duties.

2. **Umpire** – Normal duties.

3. **Head Line Judge/Line Judge** –

- a. Responsible for goal line and sideline
- b. Move in to help separate players after play.

4. **Side Judge** –

- Positioned as a second umpire.
- Count and confirm number of Team R players with B/F.
- Responsible for goal line (inside out).
- Move in to help separate players after play.

5. **Field Judge** –

- Positioned under upright to rule on kick.
- NO STEP...SAY YES or NO!
- Count and confirm number of Team R players with S/B.
- **F** – On a busted field goal attempt move to goal line to rule on play.
- **B** – On a busted field goal attempt, cover end line

6. **Back Judge** –

- Positioned under upright to rule on kick (crossbar responsibility).
- NO STEP...SAY YES or NO!
- Count and confirm number of Team R players with SJ/FJ.
- Responsible for end line.
- Responsible for whistle when kick passes goal.

### **MEASUREMENTS**

1. **Referee/Umpire/Head Line Judge/Line Judge/Back Judge** – Normal duties.

2. **Side Judge** – Be near the down marker and set the box or the chains for the next series if a first down is awarded. 3. **Field Judge** –

- Assures players or officials do not block the view of the measurement from the press box.
- Have new ball for next play.
  - i. 3<sup>rd</sup> down or less – offensive team's ball ii.
  - 4<sup>th</sup> down – have both teams balls



## 2026 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

**Committee Approves an Additional Option for Wearing Play Cards [1-5-3c(9)]** — The committee has approved the wearing of play cards on both the forearm/wrist and belt areas of the body. The committee feels that the wearing of play cards on the belt poses no health risk issue to the player and poses no danger to the opponent.

**Committee Gives Clarity to Illegal Personal Contact Actions Related to All Players (9-4-7)** — In a concerted effort to clarify illegal personal contact actions as they relate to all players, the committee approved language to include the prohibition to apply equally to the offense and defense. By eliminating the words “defensive” and “blocker's” from the rule prohibiting slapping an opponent's head, the prohibition now applies to all players.

## 2026 EDITORIAL CHANGES

1-1-8; 1-3-5b; 1-5-1d(5)a - 4, 5; 1-5-3a(2); 2-15-1; 2-32-6; 3-5-7g; 4-1-3; 5-3-1; 5-3-2; 8-2-2; 8-2-3; 8-2-4; 8-2-5; 9-4-3p; 9-8 PENALTY; 10-4-2; 10-4-2b; 10-4-4a; 10-5-3; FOOTBALL FUNDAMENTALS – PENALTY MEASUREMENT (4); RESOLVING TIED GAMES – (3-1); SIX-PLAYER RULES DIFFERENCES; NFHS OFFICIAL FOOTBALL SIGNALS – (21).

## 2026 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. Flagrant and Unsportsmanlike Fouls
2. Helping the Runner
3. Sideline Management and Control
4. Identification of the NFHS Authenticating Mark on Game Balls





## **2026 FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

### **FLAGRANT AND UNSPORTSMANLIKE FOULS**

In high school football, flagrant fouls and unsportsmanlike fouls are serious rule violations that threaten player safety and the integrity of the game. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) places a strong emphasis on sportsmanship and risk minimization because players are still developing physically and emotionally. Game officials play a critical role in identifying and penalizing these fouls to ensure the game is played fairly, safely, and with respect for all participants.

Flagrant fouls are the most severe type of personal foul in high school football. These actions involve intentional, reckless or excessively violent behavior that shows a clear disregard for the safety of others. Flagrant fouls are fouls so severe or extreme that they place an opponent in danger of serious injury. They may also involve violations that are extremely or persistently vulgar or abusive. Examples include fighting, maliciously targeting the head or neck area, striking an opponent, or delivering a violent illegal blindside block or late hit. When a flagrant foul occurs, the penalty is 15 yards and automatic disqualification of the offending player. Removing players who commit flagrant fouls helps prevent serious injuries and stops situations from escalating into further violence.

In high school football (NFHS rules), unsportsmanlike fouls are non-contact fouls that violate standards of fair play, respect and sportsmanship, while personal fouls are fouls that involve illegal personal contact. Unsportsmanlike fouls are penalized even if they don't directly affect the play, and while they may not be physically violent, they harm the tone of the game. Common examples include:

- taunting,
- threatening gestures or posturing,
- racist comments,
- trash talking,
- excessive or choreographed celebrations,
- aggressively spiking, spinning or throwing the ball high into the air,
- using profanity,
- spitting,
- arguing with game officials, or
- throwing equipment.

Unsportsmanlike fouls can be committed by players, coaches or other team personnel. Each unsportsmanlike foul results in a 15-yard penalty, and a player who commits two such fouls in one game is disqualified.

Game officials must consistently penalize both flagrant and unsportsmanlike fouls to maintain control of the game. When these actions go unpunished, players may feel emboldened to act more aggressively or disrespectfully, increasing the risk of fights and injuries. Proper enforcement sends a clear message that dangerous or unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated, helping to keep emotions in check and the game orderly.

Penalizing flagrant and unsportsmanlike fouls is important because high school football is about more than winning; it is about teaching values such as respect, discipline, and responsibility. By enforcing these rules,



game officials protect players, promote good sportsmanship, and set a positive example for young athletes. Consistent enforcement helps ensure that high school football remains a safe, competitive and educational experience for everyone involved.

## **HELPING THE RUNNER**

Collegiate and professional football rules allow offensive players to pile in behind and directly push the runner. The “tush push” is an example of such a play often used at those levels. Although direct contact with the runner is illegal under NFHS rules, these plays are becoming more common in the high school game. As guardians of the game, it is imperative that all stakeholders work together to remove “illegally helping the runner” from our high school game.

Administrators, coaches and football game officials all have a responsibility to know, respect and teach/enforce the NFHS rules of high school football. Football is a vigorous, physical contact game and, for this reason, much attention is given to minimizing risk of injury to all players. Each respective rules code (NFL, NCAA and NFHS) has rules that coincide with the physical development of competing athletes and their goals for the game.

The NFHS Football Rules Committee focuses on minimizing risk and supporting a balance between offensive and defensive rules. Illegally helping the runner to assist forward progress presents a risk of injury to the runner and others. The additional momentum to a particular offensive player, as opposed to the pile, swings the balance toward the offense in a manner not intended by the rules.

Football game officials should be aware of ruling plays dead when a runner’s forward progress is clearly stopped, and they should penalize actions by offensive teammates who directly contact the runner and push, pull or lift the runner forward in a clear and obvious attempt to keep the runner’s progress moving forward.

Of course, not all contact with the runner is illegal. Game officials should observe and judge an offensive teammate’s actions and the runner’s progress to determine whether a foul for illegally helping the runner is warranted. Although a foul can occur on any play, game officials should especially be alert for this type of action on short-yardage plays near the goal line and line to gain. Remember, pushing the pile is legal; direct contact while pushing, pulling, lifting of the runner to assist forward progress is not.

The NFHS Coaches Code of Ethics states: “Coaches shall master the contest rules and shall teach the rules to their team members. Coaches shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules. Coaches have a tremendous influence, for good or ill, on the education of the student, and thus shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.”

If school administrators/athletic directors truly believe that activities are an extension of the classroom, they must be actively involved with programs they supervise and redirect coaches when they observe them teaching prohibited tactics.

Removing “illegally helping the runner” from high school football will, at times, be met with resistance, especially considering the visibility of this type of play at other levels of the game. School administrative support of football game officials, re-focus of coaches and education of players will lead to a smooth transition. All stakeholders must remain committed to trying to minimize risk to all players and maintain the balance between offensive and defensive play.

## **SIDELINE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL**

Sideline management has become a recurring “point of emphasis” because it improves game safety by keeping game officials, players, coaching staff and other team personnel clear of the active game play areas. It promotes good sportsmanship and professionalism across all levels of play and also prevents unnecessary delays and confrontations that can impact game flow and fairness.

The sideline includes the team area and any restricted zones around the field where players and coaches stand during the game. Game officials expect this area to be organized and kept clear of unnecessary personnel. Coaches must remain in the designated team area when interacting with game officials, especially for rule discussions. Leaving that area to step onto the field or challenge calls results in an automatic unsportsmanlike conduct foul. Coaches are generally only allowed to step toward the sideline (into the working area, often a marked 2-yard border) to call offensive or defensive signals after play has stopped.

Game officials are instructed to strictly enforce NFHS Football Rules when the following behaviors are observed:

- Coaches or team personnel entering the field of play to dispute rulings or address game officials outside the coaching area.
- Prolonged or excessive celebrations or demonstrations that carry onto the field.
- Failing to maintain professional behavior. Coaches and team personnel are expected to set a standard for sportsmanship.
- Game officials shall call fouls for violations of sideline control when they are observed.
- Infractions such as approaching game officials with devices (e.g., to view or review video).

The following is a summary checklist for coaches/teams to follow during a game:

- Remain inside your team area for game official discussions.
- Only move toward the sideline after play is dead, and for signal/play calling.
- Keep non-essential personnel and spectators off the field level.
- Avoid approaching game officials during play or with electronic/video devices.
- Set a professional, sportsmanlike example for the entirety of the contest.

To minimize the risk of all involved, non-players (including substitutes, athletic trainers and coaches) must remain in their team box and out of any restricted areas, especially while the ball is live. Non-players may never be on the field while the ball is live and may only be on the field when the ball is dead in very limited situations. In the excitement of the game, it is not uncommon for substitutes and other non-players to move closer to the sideline beyond their team box area. This inevitably causes coaches to move up into restricted areas and closer to the field - often impeding game officials in their essential duties. Crowding at the sideline puts players, non-players, coaches and game officials in danger of severe injury. Game officials and coaches must be aware of this problem and take the necessary steps to prevent and correct these occurrences. Coaches, substitutes, athletic trainers and others affiliated with the team may be in their team's area, which is out-of-bounds and between the 25-yard lines (unless otherwise approved to be adjusted by state association adopted policy). Their movements and positions are limited by this designated area. The coaches' area extends at least a 2-yard depth out-of-bounds from the sideline. A maximum of three coaches – and only coaches – may be in this area when the ball is dead between plays. However, all coaches must leave this area when the ball is about to become live, such as when the snapper is approaching the ball, and no one may be in this area while the ball is live. The team box area is outside the field, beyond the restricted area and between the 25-yard lines. All coaches and non-players associated with the team may be in this area. A nonplayer may not be outside of this area unless to become a player or return as a replaced player.

When nonplayers are outside of the team box area, or anyone is in the restricted area while the ball is live, game officials will give a sideline warning to the team involved. A second offense results in a 5-yard penalty. All subsequent offenses result in 15-yard penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, which are charged to the head coach. If a game official unintentionally contacts a coach or other nonplayer in the restricted area while the ball is live, the team is assessed a 15-yard penalty for a nonplayer, illegal personal contact foul. As a nonplayer foul, the penalty is enforced from the succeeding spot. A second such offense would result in the head coach's disqualification. Unlike a foul for sideline interference (non-contact, Rule 9-8-1k or 9-8-3), no warning or 5-yard penalty is required in this situation.

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE NFHS AUTHENTICATING MARK ON GAME BALLS

The NFHS Authenticating Mark ensures easy identification of inflated and non-inflated balls used in interscholastic competition for which the NFHS writes playing rules. All such balls are required to display the NFHS Authenticating Mark.

The use of conforming equipment is essential to the integrity of contests played under the NFHS rules. This mark helps to promote a level playing field by ensuring consistency in the equipment being used. The mark allows for the development of more sophisticated standards in balls and clearly communicates to administrators, coaches, and game officials that these standards are being met.

Non-compliance with these requirements will be reported to the state association for potential penalties, following the contest. Administrators and coaches play a pivotal role in making sure all inflated and non-inflated balls meet these specifications. They must instill the importance of proper equipment use through consistent reinforcement during the pre-competition certification meeting and throughout the season. Game officials must also remain vigilant and report any non-compliant balls to the state association office.

**\*\*FINAL – 5-1-26**





## **2026 and 2027 FOOTBALL GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

### **PENALTY COMMUNICATION**

Communication among the officiating crew is vital when processing penalty enforcement. From the time the flag is thrown, until the umpire steps off the penalty, a breakdown in communication among the crew can turn a routine penalty enforcement into a train wreck.

All fouls must be reported to the press box and both coaches. The foul must also be communicated to the entire officiating crew so each game official can perform his or her role in penalty enforcement. When a flag is thrown, the calling game official must notify the referee and the game official on the chain side as soon as the play ends. The chain-side game official must hold the chains and down box in place, and the referee prepares for penalty enforcement. If necessary, use three short whistle blasts after the ball becomes dead to alert the referee. Wing officials who throw a flag for a dead-ball foul prior to the snap should jog toward the middle of the field to report the foul while continuing to observe players for potential retaliation. If multiple flags are down, game officials should meet to discuss what each observed before any signal is given to the press box.

#### **Reporting the Foul**

The referee must receive an accurate report from the calling game official. Depending on crew preference, the report may include only the foul and offending team or a brief description of what was observed. When applicable, include the status of the ball or whether a player involved was an eligible receiver. Teams should be identified by offense or defense rather than jersey color whenever possible. Reporting procedures should be reviewed during the pregame conference.

#### **Coach Communication**

Unless the penalty is automatically declined or part of a double foul, the referee must present the penalty options to the appropriate captain or coach. The explanation should be brief, accurate and courteous. The umpire should listen to ensure the proper options are given. The wing official on the penalized team's sideline should inform the coach of the offending player's number and explain the foul in simple terms. Do not guess the player's number if it is unknown.

#### **Enforcement**

After the referee determines whether the penalty is accepted or declined, the decision must be communicated to the crew. If accepted, the umpire must know the enforcement spot, distance and direction of enforcement. The referee should then move clear of players, face the press box, stand stationary, and signal the foul and the offending team using the proper signals.

### **FORWARD PROGRESS**

Forward progress is the same regardless of the level of play. The challenge officials will always face is noting two places at once: The spot where and if the runner is down by rule and the spot where the forward-most point of the ball is when that happens.

Forward progress is the end of advancement of the ball toward the opponent's goal (2-15-1). It is the spot indicated by the forward-most point of the ball when it becomes dead by rule. In the vast majority of cases it is obvious the ball has become dead by rule. A runner is down when any part of the body other than a hand or foot touches the ground. The ankle or wrist are considered part of the foot or hand, respectively, and do not make a runner down. However, a runner is not down if any part of the body, other than a hand or foot, touches another player (teammate or opponent) who is lying on the ground. The ball also becomes dead by rule when a ball carrier steps out of bounds, the ball carrier's helmet comes completely off, or an inadvertent whistle is blown.

When a player is knocked forward when being tackled as is often the case, the likely progress spot is where the ball meets the turf. If, however, the player is grabbed in such a manner that the knees touch the ground before the player falls forward, the spot is where the ball was when the knee went down. There are too many possibilities to describe, but the covering game officials must not only be able to discern when the runner is down by rule, but also where the ball is when that happens.

When the quarterback is sacked, there is often a substantial difference (3 to 5 yards) between the spot the quarterback is contacted and where the quarterback goes down. The referee usually must get that spot, and if the referee spots the ball where it landed, you know there was an error.

Sideline plays: If the runner steps out of bounds, the forward progress spot is the foremost point of the ball when the runner touches the ground out of bounds. That applies regardless of whether the ball is held inside or outside the sideline. When a runner's foot touches the sideline, game officials will almost always mark the ball where the foot touches the sideline. That often is a reasonably correct spot, but the true spot is where the foremost point of the ball was when the foot hit the line. The covering game official should know how the runner was holding the ball. If it was in the runner's outside arm, the rearmost point of the ball was probably about the out-of-bounds foot. If the ball was in the runner's inside arm, the "foot spot" may have been in advance of the ball. In the vast majority of cases, the difference between the spots described above will be inconsequential, but when the runner goes out of bounds near the stake, the wrong spot may deny a properly earned first down or may incorrectly award one.

Another difficult spot to determine is when the runner is airborne when crossing the sideline. Forward progress is where the forward-most part of the ball crosses the plane of the sideline, not where the ball is when the runner first touches out of bounds.

The judgment call: The challenging aspect of forward progress is the runner's advancement can end without any of the aforementioned events occurring. The exact moment the play has ended becomes a judgment call. When the runner's voluntary movement is stopped, the whistle should be blown. If the runner is physically controlled and held stationary, it's a very simple call. If the runner is carried back and placed on the ground, then the only additional task is ascertaining they won't break free from the tackle.

The challenge for game officials is when the runner is pushed back (not carried) and appears to be free to advance. That scenario is inconsistently officiated, probably because there is virtually no documentation on how to deal with it. If such a runner is immediately able to break free and continue to run, the ball clearly should remain live. However, if the runner is contacted again and brought down at the spot, then broke free, the runner is entitled to forward progress at the farthest advance. Some game officials will deny forward progress because the runner broke contact with the defense.

When a runner appears to be stopped, the runner should be given an opportunity to escape if such an opportunity exists. If the runner is stopped, forward progress is marked at the ball's farthest advance. If the runner break's free and renews the charge, or runs backward of the runner's own accord, progress is marked at the farthest ball point of the subsequent advance.

The most judgmental scenario occurs when a runner breaks free and renews this charge, but staggers and goes down without further contact by the defense. In this situation, "down by rule" is a factor. If the game official judges the runner went down as a result of the initial contact, then the runner is entitled to forward



progress at the spot where first contact occurred. If not, forward progress is marked at the spot where the runner went down.

When a runner is taken backward, the spirit of the rule entitles the runner to the spot where original contact occurred unless the runner is subsequently able to move forward under the runner's own power. Whether or not the defense continually maintains contact with the runner is not a factor.

The down side: The forward progress rule is designed to benefit the offense by giving them the yardage they have properly earned, but there is one situation where the rule works against the team in possession. A player who intercepts a ball in the end zone near the goal line and is tackled from behind so that the progress spot is in the field of play is "entitled" to the farthest most spot. That spot will be significantly behind the 20-yard line where the ball would be placed on a touchback.

## **FREE-KICK COVERAGE**

Plays with free kicks expose players to some of the hardest collisions of any football play. The speed of closure between kicking and receiving team players needs to be a focus of each free kick, and emphasis on legal blocking is crucial to help enhance both player safety and fair play.

To provide comprehensive coverage of players during a free kick, game officials should divide the players up on each side of the kicker and key on the action of those players. The widest two players on each side of the kicking team formation are the responsibility of the deepest sideline official. These game officials should remain stationary unless forced to move until the kick is possessed, observing their players as they progress down the field.

The other kicking team players (excluding the two widest players on each side of the kicking team formation) are the responsibility of the game officials on the kicking team restraining line and the receiving team restraining line. Each of those game officials should observe those players on their side of the field in that formation as the players progress down the field. Additionally, the game official on the kicking team's restraining line is responsible for action against the kicker.

The referee is responsible for ensuring at least four players are on each side of the kicker when the ball is kicked. The referee is also responsible for determining momentum or safety on kicks possessed inside of the 5-yard line. When in doubt, the kick should be ruled as a touchback.

**\*\*FINAL – 5-1-26**





## **2026 NFHS FOOTBALL JERSEY and PANT RULES**

**(June 2026)**

### **RULE 1-4-3:**

**ART. 3 . . .** Each player shall be numbered 0 through 99 inclusive. Any number preceded by the digit zero is illegal. See 7-2-5.

### **RULE 1-5-1:**

**ART. 1 . . . Mandatory Equipment.** Each player shall participate while wearing the following pieces of properly fitted equipment, which shall be professionally manufactured and not altered to decrease protection:

#### **b. Jersey:**

1. A jersey, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, and which shall be long enough to reach the top of the pants and shall be tucked in if longer. It must completely cover the shoulder pads and all pads worn above the waist on the torso.
2. Players of the visiting team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:
  - (a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) shall all be white.
  - (b) The body of the jersey shall contain only the listed allowable adornments and accessory patterns in a color(s) that contrasts to white:
    - (1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1c or as the school's nickname, school logo, school mascot, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders,
    - (2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3.5 inches,
    - (3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width, and/or
    - (4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any non-white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.

**NOTE:** One American flag, not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches, may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel. By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the uniform without compromising its integrity.

- (c) The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors, but if there is doubt, the referee may require players of the home team to change jerseys.
3. Players of the home team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:
  - (a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) may not include white, except as stated below.
  - (b) The jerseys of the home team shall all be the same dark color(s) that clearly contrasts to white. If white appears in the body of the jersey of the home team, it may only appear:
    - (1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1c or as the school's nickname, school logo, school mascot, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders,
    - (2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point



- within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3.5 inches,
- (3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width, and/or
- (4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.

**NOTE:** One American flag, not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches, may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel. By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the uniform without compromising its integrity.

(c) The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors, but if there is doubt, the referee may require players of the home team to change jerseys.

**c. Numbers:**

1. The numbers shall be clearly visible and legible using Arabic numbers 0-99 inclusive and shall be on the front and back of the jersey.
2. The numbers, inclusive of any border(s), shall be centered horizontally at least 8 inches and 10 inches high on front and back, respectively.
3. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) exclusive of any border(s) shall be approximately 1½-inches wide.
4. The color and style of the number shall be the same on the front and back.
5. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) shall be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the body color of the jersey.

**d. Pads and Protective Equipment** – The following pads and protective equipment are required of all players:

1. Hip pads and tailbone protector which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.
2. Knee pads which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, which are worn over the knee and under the pants and shall be at least ½ inch thick or 3/8 inch thick if made of shock absorbing material.
3. Shoulder pads and hard surface auxiliary attachments, which shall be fully covered by a jersey.
4. Thigh guards which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.

**e. Pants** - which completely cover the knees, thigh guards and knee pads and any portion of any knee brace that does not extend below the pants.

**RULE 1-5-3:**

**ART. 3 . . . Illegal Equipment.** No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the umpire is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

a. The following items related to the **Game Uniform:**

1. Jerseys and pants that have:
  - (a) A visible logo/trademark or reference exceeding 2¼ square inches and exceeding 2¼ inches in any dimension.
  - (b) More than one manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference on the outside of either item. (The same size restriction shall apply to either the manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference).
  - (c) Sizing, garment care or other nonlogo labels on the outside of either item.
3. Tear-away jerseys or jerseys that have been altered in any manner that produces a knot-like protrusion or creates a tear-away jersey.
4. Any transverse stripe on the sleeve below the elbow.

c. The following items related to **Other Illegal Equipment:**

1. Ball-colored helmets, jerseys, patches, exterior arm covers/pads, undershirts or gloves.
6. Jerseys, undershirts or exterior arm covers/pads manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent (through 2026). Effective 2027, jerseys or pads manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent.
10. Equipment not worn as intended by the manufacturer.

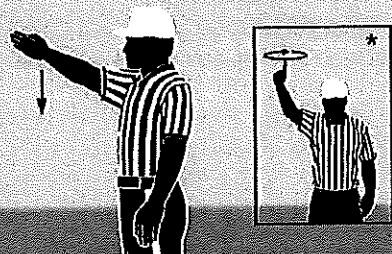
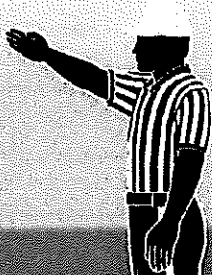
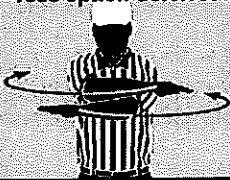
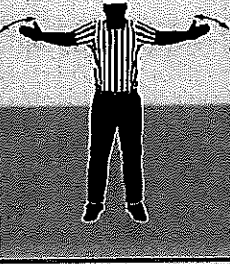
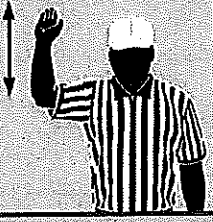








# NFHS OFFICIAL FOOTBALL SIGNALS

|                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Ball ready for play<br>*Untimed down<br> | <b>2</b> Start clock<br>                                                 | <b>3</b> Time-out<br>Discretionary or injury time-out<br>(followed by tapping hands on chest)<br>       |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>4</b> TV/radio time-out<br>                   | <b>5</b> Touchdown, Field goal,<br>Point(s) after touchdown<br>         | <b>6</b> Safety<br>                                                                                    | <b>7</b> Dead ball foul, Touchback<br>(move side to side)<br>  |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>8</b> First down<br>                         | <b>9</b> Loss of down<br>                                              | <b>10</b> Incomplete forward pass<br>Penalty declined<br>No play, no score<br>Toss option deferred<br> | <b>11</b> Legal touching of forward pass or scrimmage kick<br> | <b>12</b> Inadvertent whistle<br>                                                                       |
| <b>13</b> Disregard flag<br>                    | <b>14</b> End of period<br>                                            | <b>15</b> Sideline warning<br>                                                                         | <b>16</b> First touching<br>Illegal touching<br>               | <b>17</b> Reset play clock to 25 seconds<br>(Use both hands to have play clock reset to 40 seconds)<br> |
| <b>18</b> Encroachment<br>                      | <b>19</b> False start<br>Illegal formation<br>Free kick infraction<br> | <b>20</b> Illegal shift (2 hands)<br>Illegal motion (1 hand)<br>                                       | <b>21</b> Delay of game<br>                                   | <b>22</b> Substitution infraction<br>                                                                   |



# NFHS OFFICIAL FOOTBALL SIGNALS

|                                                                    |                                                      |                                                             |                                                                                     |                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>23 Disconcerting act</b><br>                                    | <b>24 Illegal helmet contact Targeting</b><br>       | <b>25 Illegal horse-collar tackle</b><br>                   | <b>26 Illegal blindside block</b><br>                                               | <b>27 Unsportsmanlike conduct Noncontact foul</b><br>      |
| <b>28 Illegal participation</b><br>                                | <b>29 Sideline interference (Face press box)</b><br> | <b>30 Running into or Roughing kicker or holder</b><br>     | <b>31 Illegal batting/kicking (Followed by pointing toward toe for kicking)</b><br> | <b>32 Invalid fair catch Illegal fair catch signal</b><br> |
| <b>33 Forward pass interference Kick catching interference</b><br> | <b>34 Roughing passer</b><br>                        | <b>35 Illegal pass/forward handing (Face press box)</b><br> | <b>36 Intentional grounding</b><br>                                                 | <b>37 Ineligible downfield on pass</b><br>                 |
| <b>38 Personal foul</b><br>                                        | <b>39 Clipping</b><br>                               | <b>40 Blocking below waist</b><br>                          | <b>41 Chop block</b><br>                                                            | <b>42 Holding</b><br>                                      |
| <b>43 Illegal block Illegal use of hands/arms</b><br>              | <b>44 Helping runner Interlocked blocking</b><br>    | <b>45 Grasping face mask or helmet opening</b><br>          | <b>46 Tripping</b><br>                                                              | <b>47 Disqualification</b><br>                             |





## **NFHS GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOOTBALL LINE-TO-GAIN CREWS**

A four-person line-to-gain crew is preferable, consisting of an operator for the down indicator, two holding the stakes, and a clip person. The person responsible for the clip may also be requested to record penalties. No one on the line-to-gain crew should double as a ball person or any other function. If the line-to-gain crew consists of only three members, the person working the down indicator can perform most of the duties involving the clip while the person holding the trailing stake temporarily holds the down indicator (or vice versa). It is strongly recommended that the members of the line-to-gain crew be adults and wear distinctive vests or jackets, and/or hats furnished by home or game management.

The line-to-gain crew is part of the officiating crew and must remain impartial. They must be prepared to hustle and to follow any instructions from the Head Line Judge. They should be reminded that they are not allowed to cheer, criticize the game officials, make any remarks relating to players and coaches, nor express opinions concerning any ruling or calls made by the game officials. They are not to communicate with the visiting team and may not use cell phones or other electronic devices while on the line-to-gain crew. Any problems or situations the line-to-gain crew encounters while performing their job is to be brought to the Head Line Judge's attention. They are to be reminded it is the Head Line Judge's responsibility to resolve the situation, not theirs. If members of the line-to-gain crew are unable/unwilling to perform their duties, the Referee and the home team coach/athletic director should be informed.

### **PREGAME DUTIES**

The line-to-gain crew shall meet the Head Line Judge on the sideline opposite the press box at least 15 minutes before game time and also five minutes prior to the second-half kickoff. If an unofficial auxiliary down indicator is used, the operator shall meet the Line Judge on the press box side at the same time.

The Head Line Judge shall make certain that the official line-to-gain equipment has been placed opposite the press box or on the designated sideline and that all are in good working order and conform to the rules. The Line Judge shall make certain that the unofficial auxiliary down

indicator is in good working order and is placed on the opposite side of the field from the official line-to-gain crew.

### **GAME PROCEDURES**

For kickoffs, the line-to-gain crew should be positioned well out of bounds near the receiving team's 30-yard line or near the 50-yard line for a free kick following a safety.

When a first down is declared, the Head Line Judge goes to the sideline and marks the spot for the down indicator with his downfield heel. The line-to-gain crew shall move as quickly as possible to their next position, with the rear stake set behind the down indicator.

After the chains are set, the chain must be clipped at the intersection of the sideline and the 5-yard line nearest the trailing stake. Once the chain is clipped, it must be moved approximately six feet off of the sideline. The clip is a safety valve. If the chains are moved either in error or for safety reasons, the clip provides a reference point for the exact chain location.

Once the chains are moved away from the sideline, the down indicator is also moved six feet away from the sideline and is placed in front of the trailing stake so that the game officials' view of the down indicator is not obstructed. The lead holder is responsible to ensure the chain is taut at all times. When the trailing stake is set behind the box, the trailing stake holder should step firmly on the chain; that ensures the chain will be taut and that the trailing stake will not be displaced when the lead stake is pulled.

Following each down, the down indicator must be set at the location specified by the Head Line Judge (the foremost point of the ball) and the down indicator should be changed to indicate the next down, as directed by the Head Line Judge.

On plays going out of bounds near the chains on the line-to-gain crew's sideline, the line-to-gain crew shall drop the chains and down indicator in order to ensure player safety.

The line-to-gain crew shall not move or change the number of the down until signaled to do so by the Head Line Judge. On long gains or after a change of possession, the Head Line Judge shall wait for the Referee's signal before directing the chains to move. It is permissible for the Head Line Judge to allow the line-to-gain crew to move on direct signal from the Referee. If the line-to-gain crew sees a flag and the Head Line Judge instructs them to move, they should notify the Head Line Judge of the flag.

The line-to-gain crew shall not be allowed to slow the pace of play. If the line-to-gain crew is not ready once the Umpire has spotted the ball, the Head Line Judge shall drop a bean bag to spot the location where the down indicator should be placed, and play should proceed.

Whenever the line-to-gain becomes the goal line, only the down indicator is required. The Head Line Judge should provide a bean bag to the down indicator holder to be placed at the spot for reference in the event the down indicator is moved. The chains are no longer needed and are to be laid down safely out of the way. Only the down indicator shall be used during try attempts.

During measurements, the down indicator shall be placed on the sideline at the location of the front stake until either a new series is declared, or the chain is returned to its previous position.

Between the first and second periods and the third and fourth periods, the Head Line Judge shall grasp the chain at the clip, the line-to-gain crew shall reverse direction and shall carry the chain to the location on the opposite side of the 50-yard line, as instructed by the Head Line Judge.

**\*FINAL – 4-10-26**





## **NFHS GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOOTBALL GAME AND PLAY CLOCK OPERATORS**

### **GENERAL**

- A. The game and play clock operators are integral members of the officiating crew and game administration. Unfair advantages occur when either the clock is not started or stopped correctly by rule. Great care must be exercised to ensure excessive time lag does not occur in starting or stopping the clocks.
- B. The game and play clock operators must be separate individuals and neither should be tasked with operating the scoreboard.
- C. Both clock operators should meet with the Referee and the game officials responsible for timing the game, either on the field or in the game official's locker room at the time specified by the state association. The following shall be discussed:
  - 1. The sequence of pre-game and halftime activities, the time when kickoff will occur, and the length of the halftime intermission.
  - 2. A complete review of the starting and stopping of the clocks in accordance with the playing rules, to include overtime and the running clock procedure (if applicable).
  - 3. The procedure for communication with the operator(s) during the game and adjustment of the clock, if necessary.

### **GAME CLOCK**

- D. The game clock should be started with a countdown to game time as soon as the facility is opened. At least a 60-minute countdown is desirable.
- E. The halftime intermission will start on the Back Judge's or Referee's signal which is given after the players leave the field. The operator will reset the game clock to three minutes for the warm-up period immediately when the halftime intermission expires and start it without any signal by the officiating crew.
- F. If the game clock malfunctions, the operator may give the game officials the official time. The game official responsible for timing will then pick up the correct time on their stopwatch. Should the game clock be subsequently repaired, its use may be resumed at the Referee's discretion.

#### **G. Game Procedures:**

1. On all free kicks (kickoffs), the nearest game official(s) will signal the legal touching of the ball by winding the game clock. The game clock does not start on first touching by Team K, kicks into the end zone or kicks that go out of bounds untouched.
2. The game clock operator should react to game clock-stopping events without waiting for a signal (e.g., a pass that is clearly incomplete). If there is any question as to what occurred (e.g. it is uncertain if the runner stepped out of bounds), the game clock operator should wait for a signal. The primary game clock-stopping events are:
  - (a) Following a touchdown, field goal, touchback or safety.
  - (b) When a forward pass hits the ground.
  - (c) When a runner is tackled clearly beyond the line-to-gain (first down) stake.
  - (d) When it is obvious the runner has gone out of bounds. If there is any doubt, the game clock operator should wait for the signal.
  - (e) Following a fourth-down play.
  - (f) At the end of a play where a flag has been thrown.
3. After the game clock has been stopped, the Referee may start it on the ready-for-play signal. If no ready-for-play signal is given, the game clock operator will start it on a legal snap. If the Referee erroneously starts the game clock at the ready, the signal should be honored.
4. After a first down is awarded to Team A where the ball becomes dead inbounds, the Referee will start the game clock when the ball is spotted but will not blow their whistle. This is known as the "silent wind" and the game clock operator should be prepared to quickly start the game clock as soon as the ball is spotted. Usually, the game clock will be stopped for only 3-5 seconds.
5. If the game clock is erroneously stopped, the Referee may start the game clock before the ready-for-play signal.
6. The game clock operator must record the time of all game clock stoppages so if the game clock erroneously runs on a false start when the game clock is stopped, it can be immediately corrected by the game clock operator without instruction from the Referee.
7. The try (extra point) that follows a touchdown is not a timed down.
8. At the end of a quarter, the game clock should not be reset until the Referee declares the period over by facing the press box and holding the ball over their head. If the period is extended for an untimed down, the game clock is kept at 0:00 until all untimed plays are completed and the period is declared to be over.
9. Any game official may signal a time-out; therefore, the game clock operator should be alert to stop the game clock, especially toward the end of a half.

#### **H. Overtime Procedures:**

1. If the game is tied at the end of the fourth quarter, the overtime procedure prescribed by the state association shall be used.
2. The game clock operator will put three minutes (3:00) on the game clock and start it on the Referee's signal. When the three-minute intermission expires, the game clock shall be turned off.
3. If subsequent overtime periods are necessary, there is a two-minute intermission between periods. These will be timed by the Back Judge. There is no need to put this time on the game clock as most teams will be ready to play before the two minutes expire.

## PLAY CLOCK

- I. After a play, the play clock starts at 40 seconds unless there is an administrative stoppage. The play clock should be started when a down ends by rule, but if there is any doubt, the play clock operator should wait for the appropriate signal which will be either S3 (time-out), S7 (dead ball - one arm straight up) or S10 (incomplete pass).
- J. When a legal snap occurs, the play clock is immediately set to 40 seconds. If the play clock is still running after the play starts, it can be reset to 40 seconds during the play. There is plenty of time to reset it to 25 at the end of the down, if necessary, since a 25-second play clock is used only after an administrative stoppage.
- K. If the 40-second play clock runs below 20 seconds and the football has not yet been set on the ground ready for the next down, the play clock operator must be alert for the Referee to reset (pump-up) the clock to 25 seconds. The Referee's signal for this is a pumping motion with one hand up (pushing the sky). The same pumping motion with both hands indicates that the play clock will be reset to 40 seconds.
- L. The following situations result in a 25-second play clock (exceptions noted):
  - 1. Any foul occurs\*\* (40 seconds if only a defensive player);
  - 2. Play is stopped for an injured player\*\* (40 seconds if only a defensive player);
  - 3. Play is stopped to address an equipment issue\*\* (40 seconds if only a defensive player);
  - 4. Any down that involves a score;
  - 5. Either team is granted a time-out;
  - 6. Any down that includes a legal kick followed by a new series;
  - 7. A measurement for a first down;
  - 8. Team possession changes during or after a down;
  - 9. The beginning of any period;
  - 10. An inadvertent whistle occurs; and
  - 11. There is an untimed down.

**\*\* - If both teams have any combination of #1, #2 and/or #3, the 25-second play clock is used.**
- M. The play clock shall be turned off (or set to 40) whenever it would start with more time than what is remaining in any quarter and the game clock is running or would start on the ready-for-play signal. The reason for this is to avoid confusion over the amount of time remaining to snap the ball.

**EXAMPLE 1:** A running play ends inbounds with 12 seconds remaining in the quarter and there is a flag on the play. After disposition of the penalty, the game clock will start on the ready and the offense will have 12 seconds to put the ball in play. The quarterback should not be able to view a play clock that starts at 25 seconds.

**EXAMPLE 2:** A running play ends inbounds on first down with 38 seconds remaining in the quarter. The game clock keeps running, but a 40-second play clock does not start. The second-down play is an incomplete pass which stops the game clock with 17 seconds remaining and there is a flag on the play for offensive holding. After disposition of the penalty, the game clock will start on the snap. A 25-second play clock will start because the game clock is not running.



- N. If the play clock is interrupted, whether it is because of a malfunction or for an official's discretionary time-out, it must be reset to 25 seconds. It is not reset to 40 seconds unless there is an administrative stoppage and the rule mandates 40 seconds (e.g., defensive foul). The play clock will never resume at an interrupted count. When a malfunction occurs, the game clock must also be stopped and will restart on the snap.
- O. If the play clock does not start on time, it should be started as soon as it is noticed. The Back Judge will have a backup clock. If the play clock continues to malfunction, the Referee may direct that it be turned off. The play clock count will then be kept on the field with the Back Judge signaling the last ten seconds of the count.
- P. If the play clock gets to zero prior to the snap or free kick and a foul for delay of game is called, it is left at zero until the penalty is enforced, then reset. If there is no flag, immediately reset the play clock to 40 seconds.
- Q. The play clock is used during overtime.
- R. If a running clock rule applies, it is recommended the visible play clocks be turned off.

| PLAY CLOCK/GAME CLOCK PROCEDURES                                                                                                 |            |            |                                         |                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------|
| Event                                                                                                                            | Play Clock | Game Clock | Covering Official's Signal <sup>^</sup> | Referee's Signal |
| Dead Ball Inbounds                                                                                                               | 40         | Running    | S7                                      | None             |
| Dead Ball Out of Bounds                                                                                                          | 40         | Snap       | S3                                      | None             |
| Incomplete Pass                                                                                                                  | 40         | Snap       | S10                                     | None             |
| Team A Awarded 1st Down                                                                                                          | 40         | Signal     | S3                                      | Wind             |
| Penalty Administration *                                                                                                         | 40/25      | Ready      | S3                                      | Wind             |
| Charged Team Time-out                                                                                                            | 25         | Snap       | S3                                      | Chop             |
| Injury / Helmet Off / Equipment Issues *                                                                                         | 40/25      | Ready      | S3                                      | Wind             |
| Measurement                                                                                                                      | 25         | Ready      | S3                                      | Wind             |
| Double Change of Possession – Team A Snaps                                                                                       | 40         | Ready      | S7                                      | Wind             |
| Change of Possession - Team B Snaps                                                                                              | 25         | Snap       | S3                                      | Chop             |
| Touchdown                                                                                                                        | 25         | N/A        | S3                                      | Chop             |
| Try, Field Goal, Safety                                                                                                          | 25         | Varies **  | Varies **                               | Chop             |
| Start of Each Period                                                                                                             | 25         | Snap       | Varies                                  | Chop             |
| Legal Kick                                                                                                                       | 25         | Snap       | S3                                      | Chop             |
| Start of Overtime Period                                                                                                         | 25         | N/A        | N/A                                     | Chop             |
| Other Administrative Stoppages ***                                                                                               | 25         | Ready      | S3                                      | Wind             |
| * See Rule 3-6-1a(1)e Exceptions for Defensive Injuries, Equipment Issues and Fouls (Set to 25 if both teams cause the stoppage) |            |            |                                         |                  |
| ** The Game Clock Will Start on the Legal Touch of a Free Kick                                                                   |            |            |                                         |                  |
| *** Includes Inadvertent Whistle and Period Extension                                                                            |            |            |                                         |                  |
| <sup>^</sup> See the Current NFHS Football Rules Book for the NFHS Official Football Signals                                     |            |            |                                         |                  |

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