

NEW HAVEN FOOTBALL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

Mechanics, Philosophy and Things to Remember

REFEREE

As the Game Administrator, you must have the crew ready to work the game. A solid pre-game conference is essential to a smooth flow of the game. It is essential that the crew have confidence in you and you have confidence in the crew. Go over the basics, basics and more basics. Ninety-nine per-cent of what will happen on the field today will be just that - BASIC. As the season progresses you can cover additional items that might have occurred the previous week either with your crew or with someone else's crew.

Leadership and control are critical to the successful administration of the game. This begins when you and the umpire visit with the opposing coaches before the game. Some coaches may ask you about a specific situation with regard to this game or will question something that happened to them last week. Answer the question that pertains to this game. If you were not officiating for that coach the previous week politely tell him that you had no knowledge of what happened and it would be unfair to comment unless you observed the specific play in question.

Once on the field remember one thing – “No one has a better job on this particular day than you –and- the crew that will be working this game with you today.” Enjoy the next 2.0 to 2.5 hours.

SCRIMMAGE PLAYS

- Make sure your initial position is 12-14 yards deep, deeper than the deepest back and on the QB's throwing arm. Be on the outside shoulder of and as much as one yard wider than the tackle position on your side. This position should allow you an excellent peripheral view of the action.
- Count the offensive formation and count the offensive players.
- Using a demonstrative signal, blow your whistle forcefully and declare the ball ready for play while standing still in the vicinity of the ball. Kill plays that end deep in the offensive backfield. Look to your wingmen to assist you with forward progress on sacks.
- If you are facing the clock make sure it starts when you wind it. If it is supposed to start on the snap make sure it does!! On penalty situations make sure it is stopped if you are facing it.
- Always check with HL on down and distance before each down. If there is any doubt stop the game and verify it with the official statistician before moving on to the next down.

KICKS

- Favor center of field between goal line and 10 yard line. This will vary depending on kicker.
- On obvious free kick situations direct crew to take their proper positions. Move up slightly but be ready to retreat should the kicker kick it long.

PUNTS

- Protect the kicker (and holder) on all scrimmage kick plays. The HL and LJ will assist with their respective duties if a kick is blocked and doesn't cross the LOS.
- Stand on the kicking foot side, 5-6 yards in front and 7-8 yards wide or wider than tight end. This position will give you a good look at the infraction if there is one.
- Once the ball is kicked watch flight of kick if kicked toward sideline. Be ready to line up covering official to OOB spot if ball leaves field on the fly.
- Move slowly downfield watching for illegal action.

FIELD GOAL & TRY PLAYS

- Position yourself on a 45 degree at least 5-6 yards to the side of the potential kicker facing the holder (or wider than the widest offensive player on your side).

RUNS

- Between the ends, be aware of blocking at the POA and officiate around the area of the ball carrier.
- You are responsible for the tackle on your side immediately following the snap.
- Be the opposite bookend of the umpire. Keep the play boxed in between U and you.
- The HL and LJ will kill most runs and give forward progress.
- Assist in ball retrieval and spotting as required.
- On wide runs, move toward the side zone behind the action, continuing to observe action around the ball carrier and be ready to assist if any OOB activity occurs.

PASSES

- The QB is your #1 priority, and must be protected from all illegal actions by defensive players. Stay with him as long as he is in any danger. Do not allow the defender more than one step after the QB releases the ball prior to the defender contacting the QB. Back pedal at an angle-not-straight back.
- While you are primarily responsible for the offensive tackle on your side, you may also help with the opposite side tackle.
- On both running and passing plays, look for fouls that have a large effect on the play, (e.g., the little pull that makes the play, the takedown or pull back (snatch) by the blocker for the QB).
- Officiate by the feet; if the defender is still able to move (he still has his feet) it is not a foul. Do not call the “rip” effect which causes the blockers arm to go around the defender's neck-does the defender still have his feet?

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- Give preliminary signal to press box on fouls as soon as it is reported. **DO NOT LET ANY PLAYER OR OFFICIAL DISTRACT YOU WHILE YOU ARE DOING THIS.**
- Do not move any distance before doing this, but step out in the open and give it. Maintain a stationary base, be firm on signals-no loose signals.
- Gather information and direct U to proceed with enforcement once option is obvious or after consulting with offended team.
- If there is a disagreement or uncertainty on a call or penalty enforcement, do not hesitate to conference with specific officials involved in the call.
- It is not how we look that is important; it is of utmost importance to **GET THE CALL RIGHT.**

UMPIRE

As the Referee is the Game Administrator, you are in control of the lion's den. You live in the hub of all scrimmage action and everything revolves around you. Your judgment regarding blocking/holding has a major impact on every game. Always take the lead position in crew discussions regarding these areas, sharing NHFOA philosophy thus contributing to the consistency we all strive for.

FREE KICKS

- Assume your position across the field from HL.
- On obvious onside kicks move up to K's restraining line opposite BJ. Have bean bag in hand and be aware of off side on the kicking team.

SCRIMMAGE PLAYS

- Observation of blockers on both runs and passes is your #1 priority. While your position will vary according to formations you should avoid a position that will interfere with linebackers.

- Don't worry about blowing your whistle as the HL and LJ will kill the majority of runs in the vicinity of the LOS and also establish the point of progress.
- Count offensive team players.
- Help the BJ with the clock when you are facing it.

RUNS

- Between the ends, the POA is your main focus, not the ball carrier. Continue to officiate that area throughout the play. The R will be your opposite bookend, observing the POA from the other side.
- The majority of ball retrieval and spotting is your responsibility.
- On wide runs, move toward the side zone and observe action around the ball carrier.
- Be ready to assist if any OOB activity occurs.

PASSES

- Move towards LOS, staying behind the defensive linemen, and observe the actions of the interior linemen, offense and defense.
- Spin quickly to assist on low trajectory passes. If you do not know whether the pass is incomplete, hold your position.
- If complete, move toward dead ball spot; if incomplete, signal incomplete quickly.
- You are responsible for holding by the center and both guards as well as the tackle opposite the R.
- On passing and kicking plays, be alert for defensive player pulling offensive lineman and shooting that gap by another defender.
- If a pass is caught behind the LOS indicate by punching toward the offensive backfield.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- Be sure you completely understand what was reported.
- Repeat the enforcement option to the Referee.
- Line yourself up the LJ at the enforcement spot and then walk off the yardage.
- U, communicate with the HL verbally the yardage to be assessed when you are at the enforcement spot.
- Do not walk off simultaneously with the HL. Make sure the HL is standing at succeeding spot confirming the proper walk-off before you spot the ball.
- LJ hold spot until the down marker is moved.

HEAD LINESMAN & LINE JUDGE

You are primarily responsible for dealing with the coaching staffs on your side of the field. During the game the action can get quite heated and it is important that you maintain a professional approach. Remember the game is emotional and you are there to arbitrate and not to root for or root against. Let the coach have his say and NEVER meet emotion with emotion.

FREE KICKS

- HL – assume your basic position on kick off opposite U.
- LJ – assume your basic position on kick off on receiving teams restraining line.
- On obvious onside kicks HL moves to the receiving teams restraining line. LJ you will be directly across from HL.
- Have bean bags in hand and look for legal/illegal touching.

SCRIMMAGE PLAYS

- Read the offensive formation and know your keys. Look for multiple things as each play develops. Communicate with one another visually the down before each play.
- LJ – know the approximate distance to go before each play. Indicate the offensive LOS by extended foot, and then take final position straddling the neutral zone, on the sideline. Punch back widest receiver if he is off line. If he goes in motion drop arm.
- Concentrate on the ball and the offensive linemen between you and the ball. See the ball snapped. Cover man in motion going away from you for illegal motion. He remains

your responsibility even though he changes direction (does not relieve opposite official from making obvious call).

- HL – it is your primary responsibility to know the down and distance before the start of each play. Communicate this to the Referee. If there is any discrepancy between the crew, the Referee will check with the official statistician before the next play is run.
- HL – keep the chain crew 6 feet off the sideline where facilities permit. No players are permitted in this area. Immediately give a sideline warning if the area is violated. The R cannot start the clock in a consistent manner if the down man is being hindered and not in place.

RUNS

- You are responsible for your half of the field. Take the runner as far as possible then release to the downfield official.
- Give forward progress with sharp 90-degree turns. Assist R with forward progress on sacks behind LOS. Ask for the ball and place at your feet on plays when a measurement may be required. Under no circumstances should the ball be marked without your progress spot!
- Keep the whistle out of your mouth. Don't anticipate. If you don't see the ball in player possession, don't blow your whistle.
- If the ball goes OOB, stop at the OOB and observe any OOB action. Never take your eyes off OOB players. The downfield official should be moving in to clean up and clear out the OOB players. The R should also be helping with this action.
- Observe action away from you and behind the R & U. Move downfield so that you are at the approximate dead ball spot on your side of the field. This spot should only be utilized in the event the opposite official is temporarily out of position and did not have the spot.

PASS PLAYS

- Observe action of the nearest ineligible lineman and pass protection until the ball is thrown or until your eligible receiver is a possible pass receiver.
- Surrender the call to the official facing the receiver.
- Be in position to determine whether a quick pass or pitchout thrown toward you is forward or backward.

PUNT PLAYS

HL will hold position until the ball crosses the neutral zone.

- Make sure the ball is kicked.
- Assist R in knowing if kick is tipped by a blocker.
- Move downfield slowly observing wide areas and multiple players in front of the BJ.

LJ will hold position until the ball crosses the neutral zone.

- Make sure the ball is kicked.
- Move downfield slowly observing wide areas and multiple players in front of the BJ.
- Be aware of players going OOB and returning.

HL – On short punts if ball goes OOB in the air look to R to line you up.

LJ – Look to R to line you up on all punts that go OOB's in the air to your SL.

FIELD GOAL & TRY PLAYS

HL after ball has crossed LOS move in to clean up and clear out players.

LJ be on post opposite BJ.

- Communicate with BJ before signaling.
- If play is busted or a fake make a beeline for the pylon on your side of the field to rule.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- Obtain all details of the foul before you approach the Head Coach on your side.
- Communicate to the Head Coach the foul and other pertinent information in a slow, concise and professional manner.

- Be sure to answer any questions he has if you know the answer to them. If you do not tell him you will get back to him.

LJ be at the proper enforcement spot to line up the U.

HL communicates with the U verbally the yardage to be assessed and proceed to the succeeding spot. Make sure U is standing at the proper spot before he spots the ball.

BACK JUDGE

FREE KICKS

- Take appropriate position after giving ball to kicker at K's restraining line.
- BJ will watch for clips and blocks below waist away from ball carrier.
- During obvious onside kicks U will be at K's restraining line across the field from you.

DEEP PASS PLAYS and LONG RUNS

- Observe contact on your eligible receiver and the defensive back. BJ/HL & BJ/LJ should box all calls between them.
- BJ should not pass on sideline call because HL or LJ is closer. Many times you will have a better look at it and if the foul is there you are expected to throw the flag.
- BJ don't be a toadstool. Move toward the HL or LJ as required when the ball is in the air, or the runner is in the area. If the play ends OOB, move closer to the sideline and observe dead ball activity.
- Do not run to ball carrier. Keep all players in front of you and be no closer than 10 yards to HL or LJ. Under no circumstances should you turn your back on the play to obtain a new ball until all activity ceases.
- When the ball is dead BJ will assist in back-dooring ball to U.

SHORT PASSES AND SHORT RUNS BEYOND LOS

PASS PLAYS

- Always be ready to rule on complete/incomplete as will HL & LJ.
- The U will spin quickly and assist on traps.
- Always give call to the official looking into the play.
- When play starts in the red zone HL-LJ-BJ should be alert for pick plays and make the call if it is there!
- HL & LJ will establish progress point in most cases.

RUN PLAYS

- Be aware of blocking action in front of the runner.
- If HL or LJ are covering OOB spot, R or BJ will clean up OOB action.
- If R or BJ are covering OOB spot, HL or LJ will clean up OOB action.
- HL & LJ will establish progress point in most cases.

PUNT PLAYS

- Take basic position on your sideline 5 yards in front of deepest receiver opposite LJ's side. On deep kicks to your SL that goes OOB's in flight look to R to line you up.
- Have bean bag in your hand to mark spot if ball is illegally touched in your area or the ball goes OOB on your sideline.
- Be alert for muffs and fumbles.
- After play becomes dead appropriate official will indicate the result of play (i.e., illegal touch and signal direction, direction, etc.). This will alert all others and give R chance to digest play.

FIELD GOAL & TRY PLAYS

- Take position on post opposite LJ.
- Communicate with LJ before signaling.

OUT OF BOUNDS PLAYS

- BJ will go OOB with players to clean up and clear out (keep eyes wandering looking for illegal action).
- Off official (U) will rotate toward hash mark or #'s (if appropriate) to back up BJ.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- HL-LJ -BJ will assist in getting ball to dead ball spot when foul is called by another official.
- Cover and hold dead ball spot, if appropriate.
- In most cases BJ will cover and hold flag(s).
- If spots and flag(s) are covered observe players and assist where needed.

CLOCK ADMINISTRATION

- Make sure you communicate with R in starting the clock properly.
- If you are facing the clock be aware of its status.
- On penalties make sure that it is stopped.
- If you are facing the clock, make sure it is running when it is supposed to.

GENERAL

- Do not converse with crowds at any time before, during or after game intermissions.
- Be in top physical condition. The players work hard, the coaches work hard and they deserve our best.
- Don't be over officious. Fans come to watch the players play and not to see officials officiate!
- If you have a foul make sure you **KILL THE CLOCK!!**
- Don't ever criticize or attempt to explain another official's judgment on decisions to a coach, team or fans. Never argue with players. If a player asks a question, give him the courtesy of listening to it, then give a definite and decisive answer. Never quibble about any situation.
- Do not discuss with any coach the play or players of his opponents in a game which you will officiate or are officiating.
- If a ruling is puzzling, relay an explanation to the press box.
- Assist players in the interpretations of rules when such request is made at the proper time.
- Wear your best and look best at every game.