

2024 OKLAHOMA Football Officials Mechanics

As an official you must be in the correct position to rule on a play. Being in the best position at the right time will allow your rules knowledge and sound judgement to operate efficiently. The following document contains mechanics for your crew to study and begin to implement as you prepare for the upcoming football season. Officials' mechanics can be flexible based upon the game situation and upon individual strengths and weaknesses and it may become appropriate for the crew to make some adjustments. We do ask you to implement these mechanics with your crew as much as possible to maximize your efforts on the football field. Our general focus is on the safety of our officials and the players with emphasis on minimal movement at the critical moments when decisions must be made. The expectation for 2024 is that these mechanics are implemented by your crew.

PRE-GAME ROUTINE

Make a special effort to have your conversation with the head coach at least a full hour or more prior to the kickoff. We certainly understand that travel considerations may make this difficult on occasion. We do encourage you to be in full uniform as you address your responsibilities on the field. Your conversation with the head coach should be professional, brief and to the point. Topics to be addressed include: 1.) your game card with the names and ID numbers of the crew which can also include the address for the coach to send the HUDL video; 2.) signing of the Gold Card - briefly mention that we respectfully request the head coach's help in all three areas of concern; 3.) confirmation of the halftime length; 4.) coin flip early or at the regular time with the captains (involve the captains at the regular time anytime the head coaches really don't have a strong opinion); 5.) rather than ask a head coach specific questions about either team, we encourage you to finish up with the following question - "Is there anything else that you would like to visit with us about?"

As the crew observes the pre-game activities for both teams, at least 2 officials should be lined up at midfield keeping the teams separated and paying close attention to equipment issues that need to be addressed before the game. Be alert for verbal exchanges or any attempt to intimidate the opponent. It is suggested that you keep each team inside their 45 yard line to create a 10-yard buffer between the teams. The referee should communicate with each QB to get his name and to encourage open communication during the game. The umpire should communicate with each snapper to get his first name and discuss the possible use of the 'stop sign' if a slight delay is necessary. It is recommended that the 2 wing officials observe the offensive team plays from the vantage point that they will have throughout the game to get an idea of the formation(s) being utilized by each team. It is also important for the BJ to observe kickoffs and punts to determine the relative strength of each kicking game. The HL should wait until the teams have left the field to visit with his chain crew and this is also a good time to carefully look for any safety issues on the field. During these pre-game responsibilities, each official should introduce himself to each head coach. Keep your introduction short and refer all game administration questions to the referee.

FREE KICK MECHANIC

This is the free kick mechanic that we now expect each crew to use. A rare adjustment may be necessary because of a game situation or possibly a crew injury issue to put the crew in their best position. This will give you the best coverage for free kicks.

Referee - line up on R's goal line anywhere between the hash marks with responsibility for the entire goal line ruling on touchbacks – use a strong signal to start the game clock if necessary - if a return/running play develops, you will observe the play as it progresses from behind the runner as you do on most all scrimmage plays – focus on the blocks near the location of the runner. It is R's responsibility to confirm that there are at least four K players on each side of the kicker until the ball is kicked.

HL & LJ - your initial alignment will be on your respective side of the field near R's 10 yard line - the only time that you would ever retreat toward the pylon would be for the extremely rare occasion that the untouched kick travels near the pylon and R can use your help with a ruling of touchback or out of bounds - prior to the ready for play whistle, carefully observe the kicker's alignment with relation to the football as it is a most common occurrence that the kicker will telegraph what he is about to attempt with the kick (pooch, on-side, deep) - the wing official to the side of the field where K's team bench is located should feel free to move up the field in anticipation of the more common pooch kick that is usually kicked toward K's bench when there is evidence to support that possibility - either wing official should be prepared to make that adjustment when the evidence dictates - it is certainly appropriate to move your initial alignment from the 10 yard line nearer the appropriate yard line if your pre-game observations indicate that the kicker will clearly not threaten R's goal line at all - the primary responsibility for the wing officials becomes forward progress once a return (running play) is in progress as you observe the blocking throughout the return - this alignment then gives you the same look at the action as you experience on most scrimmage plays – it is not necessary to focus on the runner until he is about to be contacted or run out of bounds.

BJ - you will be responsible for team K and their free kick line - as the K players align for their free kick, you are free to verbally fix any alignment issues prior to any signal to your referee for the 'ready' whistle - always take a position on the sideline where team R's bench is located as most pooch kicks and on-side kicks are directed toward team K's bench and we want the Umpire on that side of the field on R's free kick line - on legal kicks downfield, after the players clear your area move from your sideline position onto the field out near the hash on your side to observe the return/running play progressing back toward your position – your focus should be on the blocks in and around the location of the ball. Be prepared to assist the wing officials on forward progress on lengthy returns and you must be responsible for coverage on K's goal line.

Umpire - you will be responsible for team R's free kick line - following any verbal communication you have for the team R players, take a position on the sideline where team K's bench is located - it is important to have that position covered as we have discovered that most pooch kicks and on-side kicks are usually directed toward team K's bench - on legal kicks downfield, after all players clear your area move from your sideline position onto the field out near the hash on your side to

observe the return/running play progressing back toward your position – your focus should be on the blocks in and around the location of the ball.

EVERY official must be keenly alert for blind side blocks during a kick return as this is a prime spot for this to occur – DON'T be a ball watcher unless and until you clearly have forward progress responsibilities!!!

PRE-SNAP SCRIMMAGE DOWN RESPONSIBILITIES

Referee - your alignment should be 13 - 15 yards behind the LOS and as wide as 1 - 2 steps outside the normal tight end spot and on the side of the QB's passing arm - whether the offense huddles or not, it is important that you determine as quickly as possible that there are 11 players on offense and that there are 5 linemen numbered 50 - 79 - we would certainly recommend a hand signal of some kind to indicate to your entire crew that you have 11 on offense and the umpire will indicate the same - this determination may occur before or after the ball is ready for play depending on the pace of the offense – be prepared for the appropriate clock responsibilities that are now in place as a result of our 40/25 second play clock possibilities.

Umpire - Your initial alignment will mirror the Referee. 13-15 yards behind the LOS and 1-2 yards outside of the normal Tight End position in the offensive backfield with R on the right side of the QB – U on the left. You will both count the offense and confirm that you have 5 linemen numbered 50-79. (Be alert for any numbering exceptions in a scrimmage kick formation!)

HL & LJ - your position must be outside the sideline and inside the restricted area prior to the snap - verbally communicate with any offensive or defensive player(s) who align themselves near your position on the sideline to help with their alignment and hopefully avoid any illegal formation / encroachment issues - we would encourage the following communication only (while extending your leg out to mark the LOS, "this is your line of scrimmage" and as they take their position, "you are on" or "you are off") - we would prefer that you never tell a player to "move up" or "move back" - after the player has taken his position and either the offensive or defensive player is too close to their LOS, ("#??, here is your line, take a look") - at this point, the 2 wing officials must determine that the offensive formation is legal at the snap - an illegal offensive formation really should have a flag on the ground following the snap from each wing official - it needs to be absolutely crystal clear that we have an illegal formation - leave the marginal alignment alone - remember to look for the referee's signal for 11 players and then just count the 4 players that are normally off of their LOS - an exchange of signals between the 2 wing officials to determine players on or off the LOS is certainly optional for the crew - since the wing officials are concerned about the offensive alignment on each scrimmage play, it does make sense for them to also count the offense if the crew chooses - 2 officials (R & U) counting the offense and 1 official (BJ) counting the defense is probably sufficient. The LJ will start the game on the visitor sideline with the chains. The HL will work the home team sideline opposite the chains. The wing officials will then switch sides for the second half. Your specific responsibilities on each down do not change other than your handling of the chain crew. The LJ and the HL will retain the same responsibilities throughout the game.

BJ - your alignment should be at least 20 yards from the LOS between the hash marks and near the side of the offensive formation strength - it should not be a problem for the BJ to easily count

the defensive players for each down since their pre-snap responsibilities are limited - the BJ has timing responsibilities and should make a habit of keeping an eye on the clock between plays when his position is facing the clock - helping the Referee to remember the status of the game clock is also a strong habit to develop anytime it was stopped for any reason – physical signals to restart the game clock or not can be very helpful. Verify that the play clock has been set correctly.

RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE SNAP AND ON RUNNING PLAYS

Referee - watch for a legal snap or a possible false start in addition to the initial movement of the opposite side tackle and guard plus the movement of the offensive backs while limiting any movement of your own - your initial focus at the snap should be on either lineman who is covered by a defensive opponent until the play begins to develop into a run or pass - for a run, your focus quickly changes to the direction of the run to observe the critical blocks.

Umpire - Pre-Snap – Umpire has Guard, Center, Guard. Referee has offensive backfield. LOS officials have the Tackle on their side.

After the snap, your focus will be the initial engagement by offensive linemen from the ball to your side of the offensive line that are covered by a defensive opponent as the play develops. The Umpire will take G, T, and TE on his side and the Referee is responsible for the G, T, and TE on his side of the line plus any backs aligned between the normal tight end spots. The snapper could go left or right. If he goes right the Referee will take him. If he goes left the Umpire will take him.

On inside runs between the normal tight end spots, immediately focus on the point of attack to determine legal contact by the offensive and defensive opponents. On wider runs to your side, focus ahead of the runner to watch the critical blocks that allow the runner to get to the outside. On wider runs away from your side, focus on the line play behind the runner.

HL & LJ - your focus at the snap is on a legal offensive formation in addition to any alignment problems that may result in an encroachment foul - immediately following a legal snap, focus on the initial contact between offensive and defensive players in your area as you watch for the play to develop into a run or pass - for a inside run to your side, begin to focus on forward progress and if the run moves to the outside toward your position, your focus must include any critical blocking in advance of the runner in addition to forward progress - hold your position on the sideline to observe as much as you can while stationary beginning to move for the forward progress when it becomes necessary - for runs to the opposite side of the snapper, do not become a ball watcher - focus your attention away from the runner to watch for any player action on the backside of the running play. Pay close attention to action on the QB after he is no longer a runner. He must be protected.

BJ - your focus at the snap will be on your specific keys dependent on the offensive formation - remain still at the snap without any movement forward to read the play as it develops into a run or a pass - your focus on running plays will be on the critical blocking out in front of the runner especially on runs that progress outside of either tackle position - any movement at this point will be laterally or backward depending on the progress of the runner - keep in mind that you must be

prepared to cover B's goal line if there is a lengthy scoring threat or help with forward progress on lengthy break-away runs.

Remember that a clearly visible physical signal when the ball becomes dead is an absolute must!!!

RESPONSIBILITIES DURING A FORWARD PASSING DOWN

Referee - As a pass play develops, hold your position unless the passer moves in your direction and observe the pass blocking by your keys - stay with the blockers until the passer is clearly threatened or the pass is released - you are totally responsible for the safety of the passer until he is out of harm's way – you must be prepared for a possible pass/fumble decision when the QB is contacted and you are completely responsible for that decision – if you sense the possibility of intentional grounding, the use of the bean bag at the spot of the pass is suggested until you determine otherwise - if the passer has to scramble and crossing the LOS becomes an issue, the referee stays with the passer for protection and is then in a position to assist on an illegal forward pass decision by the LJ as a result of the pass being released beyond the neutral zone (this really needs to be a very crystal clear foul - let's leave that alone if it is a marginal possibility) - checking the down box location must be done clearly after the passer has released the ball and is no longer threatened - his protection is much more critical than a possible illegal forward pass!

Umpire - Pre-Snap – Umpire has Guard, Center, Guard. Referee has offensive backfield. LOS officials have the Tackle on their side.

After the snap, your focus will be the initial engagement by offensive linemen from the ball to your side of the offensive line that are covered by a defensive opponent as the play develops. The Umpire will take G, T, and TE on his side and the Referee is responsible for the G, T, and TE on his side of the line plus any backs aligned between the normal tight end spots. The snapper could go left or right. If he goes right the Referee will take him. If he goes left the Umpire will take him. **The Referee will have total responsibility for protecting a passer during the duration of a passing down. Stay with the passer wherever he goes!** If the passer scrambles in front of the Umpire opposite the Referee, the Referee will also pass in front of the Umpire. The Umpire will stay with the action of the linemen – the Referee will take the passer until he is no longer a passer (crosses the LOS).

HL & LJ – you will both hold your position on the LOS and observe the action against eligible receivers as you determine that a pass play has developed - you both are responsible for an eligible end man on the LOS on your side in addition to a possible second eligible receiver that is nearer your sideline location than he is to the interior linemen near the location of the snap – the LJ will remain on the LOS in order to rule on forward / backward and whether a passer has thrown a forward pass from beyond the LOS. The HL will move approximately 5 yards beyond the LOS as the pass play develops to monitor any activity on crossing receivers inside the 10 yard belt just beyond the LOS - it is also critical to know where a forward pass is caught in relation to the LOS and the LJ is able to make this decision by holding your position on the LOS - most passes can be officiated from your LOS position since they travel less than 15 yards downfield - when a pass is thrown well beyond 15 yards and to your side, the wing official shall move down the field as far as

you possibly can while the ball is in flight prepared to slow yourself down at the critical moment to rule on a catch/no catch or on an inbounds/out of bounds decision - although it is not your primary responsibility, the HL can certainly be prepared to assist on any pass play to the opposite side of the field from your location to determine a crystal clear ineligible downfield, a passer clearly beyond the LOS when the ball is released or the spot where the ball was caught in relation to the LOS - you both have primary responsibility for a covered up receiver on your side of the snap who does go downfield prior to the release of the pass - although we encourage you to hold your position as long as possible on forward pass plays, you are certainly free to move downfield quickly when the receivers and the flow of the play are clearly to your side - when you clearly determine the need to move downfield on your side, do not hesitate - GO!

BJ - you are responsible for initial action by and against eligible receivers located inside any wide out(s) to the strong side of the offensive formation and located nearer the interior linemen - this may include a tight end on the LOS that has 2 wide outs to his outside that do not have him covered up - as the pass play develops, begin to give ground remaining inside the hash marks as you observe your keys - it is important to keep any and all receivers in front of your location throughout the down and it is critical to remember that a potential receiver is a great example of a defenseless player while in the act of catching a pass and must be protected - you clearly have no responsibility for ineligibles downfield, for determining if the pass was caught behind the LOS or a passer who releases the ball beyond the neutral zone - stay deep, observe the play as it develops and certainly be prepared to assist with any catch/no catch decision on long passes downfield and also with forward progress on lengthy plays downfield!

EVERY official must be keenly alert for blind side blocks during an intercepted pass return as this is a prime spot for them to occur – DON'T be a ball watcher unless and until you clearly have forward progress responsibilities!!!

GOAL LINE MECHANICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

GOING IN – Wing officials must be prepared for goal line mechanics if and when the LOS is inside team B's 10 yard line. The most important line on the field is the goal line and it must be covered when there is a ruling to be made.

Referee – make certain that the crew is aware of goal line mechanics. You are now responsible on forward/backward passes and you will determine whether the QB was beyond the LOS when a forward pass was released. Remember that your wing officials are no longer on the LOS following the snap.

Umpire – you now have more LOS responsibilities. Be prepared to assist with a QB who was beyond the LOS when a forward pass was released and was the pass caught behind or beyond the LOS. The wing officials are no longer available to make these decisions following the snap.

HL & LJ – the goal line is your responsibility. Make sure that all sideline personnel are clear of the area you need to work. At the snap, do not rush – go to the goal line at a 45 degree angle leaving plenty of room for you to make a judgement on a play at the pylon. If the runner is

stopped short of the goal line, work your way back to the spot of forward progress and spot the ball there. On close plays at the goal line in the middle of the field, both wing officials should ‘crash’ to the point of resistance and signal. If you cannot see whether the ball crossed the goal line or not, ‘crash’ to the pile and find the ball. If the ball is across the goal line, it is a touchdown and if the ball is short of the goal line, spot the ball at that point. It is very important that on close plays at the goal line in the middle of the field that you do not stand on the sideline after the ball becomes dead. You must hustle to the point of resistance and make a ruling.

BJ – the back line is your responsibility. On a pass play, you must be aware if a player steps out of the back of the end zone and returns to participate. You must also be prepared to rule on any pass that threatens the back line. On a running play your focus must be on blocks at the point of attack especially on sweep plays.

GOING OUT – Wing officials must be prepared for goal line mechanics if and when the LOS is inside team A’s 5 yard line. The most important line on the field is the goal line and we must have it covered when there is a ruling to be made.

Referee – make certain that the crew is aware of goal line mechanics. Your position is on the back line. You are now responsible for forward/backward passes and you will determine whether the QB was beyond the LOS when a forward pass was released. Remember that your wing officials are no longer on the LOS following the snap.

Umpire – you now have more LOS responsibilities. Be prepared to assist with a QB who was beyond the LOS when a forward pass was released and was the pass caught behind or beyond the LOS. The wing officials are no longer available to make these decisions following the snap.

HL & LJ – the goal line is your responsibility. Make sure that all sideline personnel are clear of the area you need to work. At the snap do not rush – go back to the goal line. Remember the runner must get the entire ball completely out of his end zone. If any portion of the ball does not clear the goal line coming out, the result of the play is a safety. On close plays at the goal line in the middle of the field, both wing officials should ‘crash’ to the point of resistance and sell their spot. If you cannot see whether the ball crossed the goal line or not, ‘crash’ to the pile and find the ball. If the ball is on or behind the goal line, sell your forward progress spot and let the referee know who will then signal the safety. If the ball is completely out of the end zone, spot the ball at that point. It is very important that on close plays at the goal line in the middle of the field that you do not stand on the sideline after the ball becomes dead. You must hustle to the point of resistance and make a ruling.

BJ – this situation is treated as any normal scrimmage down. Be aware that it may take either wing official longer to get to a dead ball spot. As always on deep passes or lengthy runs, be prepared to help with forward progress.

RESPONSIBILITIES DURING A 4TH DOWN PUNT SITUATION

Referee - your position should be behind the possible punter 3 - 4 yards and as wide as the normal TE position to the side of his kicking leg so that everything that you need to observe is in front of your position and you can hold your position during the kick or during a rugby style kick or during a fake - the kicker must be protected first and foremost - if he is not threatened, try to get a quick look at the kick to check on the possibility of a poor kick headed out of bounds - on normal kicks headed downfield, do not follow the ball but observe the K players as they begin to move downfield to observe all blocking while holding your spot as the play develops.

Umpire - hold your normal position at the snap to observe the protection blocking and then head downfield and simply face the return of the kick and officiate from a normal vantage point as the return progresses back up the field.

BJ - determine if either side of the field is clearly a wider side depending on the placement of the ball prior to the snap - take a position 3 - 4 yards behind the deepest return man and well to his side toward this wide side of the field - make certain that the end of the kick is marked with a bean bag only if the kick is returned up the field (there is no real need for a bean bag on a fair catch, a kick out of bounds, a kick that rolls dead with no player in possession or if K downs the ball) - it is critical to remember that the return man is a great example of a defenseless player while he is in the act of receiving the ball and must be protected - if a return develops, observe the initial blocks and be ready for a blind side block as they often happen when R players peel back to set up a blocking wall!

HL & LJ - prior to the snap from your normal position on the LOS, observe which side the BJ has taken and the wing official on the opposite side of the field from the BJ will hold until the potential kicker has cleanly possessed the snap and begins his kicking motion - then he shall begin to move down the field no more than half of the distance from the LOS to the spot where the deepest R player is positioned prepared to stop and observe the blocking that develops in the area in front of this R player - the wing official on the same side of the field as the BJ will hold your position on the LOS until the kick has clearly crossed the neutral zone and then move downfield as well no further than the same distance as your opposite wing also observing the developing blocks.

EVERY official must be keenly alert for blind side blocks during punt returns as this is a prime spot for them to occur - DON'T be a ball watcher unless and until you clearly have forward progress responsibilities!!!

RESPONSIBILITIES DURING A TRY FOR POINT(S) AND FIELD GOAL

Referee - First and foremost, do not get in a big hurry to make the try down 'ready for play' - if the offensive team lines up in the normal kick try formation, make certain that all of your officials are in their correct spots before you blow the ready whistle - make certain that your own spot is facing the front of the holder and your alignment is 3 - 4 yards deeper than the holder and at least as wide as the numbers on your side of the formation - if the offensive team lines up in a different formation (likely a normal play from scrimmage set or possibly a swinging gate), it is more important to utilize your normal pace between the scoring play and the ready on the try as well as your normal alignment - remember that you must cover the goal line pylon on your side of the

standard scrimmage kick formation on a fake or a busted play (help with forward progress at the goal line from the umpire is possible).

Umpire - Take the traditional Umpire position 7-8 yards in the defensive backfield. Be prepared to observe the linemen and their numbers to assist with any ineligible receiver issues on a trick play (keep in mind that you may not have any 50 - 79 numbers on the offense - on a normal kick, make certain to protect the snapper in addition to observing the interior blocking - if the play that develops is a fake and the run / pass goes wide to either side, take a position on the goal line to possibly assist with a runner breaking the plane of the goal line.

HL & LJ - your initial alignment should be to your normal LOS spots on the sideline until it is clear that the offensive team is lining up in the normal scrimmage kick formation for a kick try - a shift from a swinging gate to the scrimmage kick formation still gives you time to adjust your alignment for a kick try - the wing official that would be facing the front of the holder is the official who will move to the upright position along with the BJ when the scrimmage kick formation is used - both wing officials along with the BJ must pay very close attention to eligible receivers prior to the snap and a possible passing down from the scrimmage kick formation – the wing official under the upright and the BJ must know the eligible receivers on their respective side of the formation - on a fake or busted play, the wing official who have moved to the upright position with the BJ must help with the back line, but do not try to get back to your LOS position.

BJ - your alignment will naturally be along the end line for a try taking one upright for a potential kick try - make absolutely certain to carefully observe eligible receivers prior to the snap to assist with any eligibility questions that could come up in a passing situation – the BJ and the wing official under the upright must know the eligible receivers on their respective side of the formation.

DEAD BALL SIGNALS

There must be a clearly visible physical signal by the covering official(s) at the end of every down for the benefit of the press box personnel, the coaches, the other officials and the players. All of these people may have critical decisions to make quickly.

These signals include:

Signal #3 (time out to stop the game clock)

Signal #7 (the ball is dead – one arm straight up)

Signal #10 (a forward pass is incomplete)

It is appropriate to use a ‘winding’ signal if and when a runner is extremely close to the sideline, but stays inbounds short of the line to gain.

There is no need for all officials to mirror the appropriate signal. The covering official needs to be responsible for the physical signal as we expect the other officials to be covering their areas of

responsibility and must not be guilty of becoming a ‘ball watcher’. It is also important to remember that only one physical signal is necessary on each down.

* **Spotting the ball for the next down** – with a crew of only 5 officials, it is critical to understand that any official on the crew must be prepared to assist with the retrieval and placement of the ball for the next down. The Referee and the Umpire are likely to spot the ball most of the time for the next down depending on which side the ball ends up on the previous play. It is also a possibility with this new mechanic that the Back Judge could be in a position to spot the ball if the result of the previous play is a lengthy gain downfield well beyond the LOS. The most likely responsibility of the 2 wing officials would be to start the relay of the ball back toward the middle of the field when the ball ends up near or outside of the numbers. **The crew must discuss this issue and decide how each official may be involved in the retrieval and spotting of the ball! We must always try to have the ball on the ground ready for the next play with all officials in place at the 30-second mark of a 40-second play clock!**

* **When the Offense is in obvious hurry up situations the U can leave when the pass is released and will leave clean up behind the play to the Referee.** The Umpire will spot the ball in most hurry up situations and back out as quickly as possible. The Referee will not allow the snap to occur until the Umpire is safely out of the way by communicating with the QB. If it is an obvious situation where the Offense will legally spike the ball to conserve time the U should take his original spot behind the defensive line.

* **On the rare occasion that the snap needs to be delayed,** it becomes necessary to carefully communicate to the appropriate players quickly. The Referee must be prepared to immediately communicate with the player in position to receive the snap and with the Umpire. At that point, the Umpire must be prepared to communicate with the snapper. It is always helpful to know the first name of the snapper and the QB!

* **Dead ball officiating is always important,** and it becomes especially critical where there may be the “gaps” that were mentioned earlier. As a crew discusses the various adjustments they will make with the Umpire on the offensive side of the ball, the 2 officials that are likely the greatest distance from the dead ball spot need to be prepared to focus on these open areas until the players separate. **(As always, avoid being a ball watcher!)**

* **Scrimmage kick downs** call for added responsibilities for the crew and these must be discussed in any pre-game conversation. The Umpire should **strongly consider** returning to their traditional spot behind the defensive line for a punt, field goal or kick try situation to make certain that the snapper is protected and this places the Umpire closer to the middle of the field to help cover these possible kicking situations. The other 4 crew members will not likely need to change what they have done for many years.

* **Passing downs also call for added responsibilities** and it is especially critical to thoroughly discuss the duties of the 2 wing officials. Ineligible receivers going downfield too early must be monitored carefully in addition to the spot where the forward pass was thrown, where the forward pass was first touched and by whom plus where the pass was caught and the possibility of the recent rule change allowing for the legal grounding of a forward pass. These are critical decisions to be made and the wing officials do have a full plate on passing downs. **Lets make certain that their duties are clearly discussed and everyone understands and is prepared!**

* **Suggested duties for the wing officials on passing downs** – the **HL** moves 3 yards beyond the LOS to monitor any ineligible beyond that point and also monitors any activity in the 10-yard belt beyond the LOS. The **LJ** remains on the LOS to monitor the spot where the forward pass was thrown, where it was first touched and by whom, did it cross the LOS plus the issue of a legal or illegal grounding of the forward pass. This remains the same when you change sides.

* **Suggested duties for the wing officials on passing downs** – the **HL** moves 3 yards beyond the LOS to monitor any ineligible beyond that point and also monitors any activity in the 10-yard belt beyond the LOS. The **LJ** remains on the LOS to monitor the spot where the forward pass was thrown, where it was first touched and by whom, did it cross the LOS plus the issue of a legal or illegal grounding of the forward pass. This remains the same when you change sides.

2024 OSSAA OFFICIATING PHILOSOPHIES

Blocking

- It is legal use of hands rather than holding or illegal use of hands
- The defensive back has legally initiated contact in passing situations
- The contact is below the waist (for blocking below the waist)
- It is a block at the side rather than a block from behind
- The contact is at the knees or below (for chop block)

Tackling

- It is twisting, turning or pulling the facemask
- The runner's knee has not touched the ground

Passing

- The passer has not intentionally grounded the ball
- A Team A player has a reasonable opportunity to catch a pass
- The ball is a forward pass and not a fumble during a forward pass attempt
- The pass is incomplete rather than a fumble
- As to “caught or trapped” the pass is incomplete
- The pass was released in or behind the neutral zone rather than beyond it
- On an attempted screen pass the ball was caught/touched behind the neutral zone
- It is a forward pass rather than a backward pass when thrown in or behind the neutral zone
- The pass is backward rather than forward beyond the neutral
- A Team A lineman was not downfield when the pass was released
- A Team A lineman did not make an attempt to catch the ball

Kicking

- It is roughing rather than running into the kicker/holder
- The ball is accidentally touched with a foot rather than intentionally kicked
- A fair catch signal is valid rather than invalid
- The player has not touched rather than touched the ball
- The ball has been muffed rather than caught

Running

- **The runner is held so that forward progress is stopped rather than a fumble**
- **The runner has not fumbled as he contacts the ground**

Scoring/Touchback/Safety

- **The ball is dead in the field of play rather than a touchdown**
- **The original force has not been expended**
- **It is a touchback rather than the ball belonging to Team B under original momentum rules**
- **The ball belongs to Team B under original momentum rules rather than a safety**

Out of Bounds

- **A player is in bounds rather than out of bounds**
- **The ball is dead in the field of play rather than out of bounds**
- **A player has been blocked out of bounds by an opponent**

Formation

- **The one second pause has not been violated**
- **Offensive players are legally on the line**
- **Offensive players are legally in the backfield**
- **Players are legally in motion rather than in illegal motion**
- **A Team A player has been within the 9-yard marks**
- **A departing player has left the field prior to the snap**
- **Defensive signals are legal**

Mechanics

- **Don't throw the flag**
- **Don't blow the whistle**