

Field Judge Break-Out
Game Situations / Mechanics / Communication With Partners
June 24, 2006

POINTS OF DISCUSSION IN ITALICS
REFER TO 'MECHANICS MANUAL' FOR MORE DETAILS

Think about each of these play situations. What are your responsibilities? What are you looking for? What are you doing with each of your partners (BJ, LJ, others)?

(1) On 3rd and 9 from the B49, running back A32 runs a sweep to the SJ's / H's side of the field and goes out of bounds at about the B40. The referee calls for a measurement.

Signal time-out. (Echo signal once you see it from the opposite side officials [the officials closest to the play].)

Be a great dead ball official.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Determine whether play ended in bounds or out of bounds.

Go to opposite side of the field and get a ball from the ball boy (on SJ's side of field).

Go to hash mark (with the new ball) and wait for completion of the measurement. Have ball ready when the chains come back into the hash mark.

Think 'clock on snap' if play ended out of bounds (or 'ready' if play ended in bounds) and communicate.

(2) On 2nd and goal from the B6, the quarterback pitches the ball to running back A20. A20 runs a sweep to the FJ's / LJ's side of the field and, at about the B2, dives for the pylon.

On pylon at snap (a few yards wide).

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Back up at snap.

Watch blocks by initial key.

Pick up location of ball as runner moves to goalline.

If you have a TD, slow down!

Check with LJ to ensure runner didn't step out of bounds. Communicate with LJ (example, shake heads 'yes'; talk about communication in the pre-game conference.)

Be stationary and give yourself the best opportunity to make the call.

Signal TD.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Talk with LJ if spot is short of goalline. Communicate. No need for 2 to get the spot.

Be a great dead ball official.

(3) Team A has just scored (and finished the try down) to make the score A17-B20 with 30 seconds left in the game. What are you doing from the time the try ends to the time the kickoff is made? What's your check-list?

Quick check with referee to ensure we move into on-sides kick formation. (Doesn't affect FJ position.)

Go to B's restraining line (A45).

Write details of score on card (time, score, etc.).

Bean bag in hand.

Count R players and signal to SJ..

Think offside (by B), illegal touching (by A), touching by B, illegal batting (by A), pooch kick and fair catch, direction of kick, illegal blocks by A (not allowed to block until they are eligible to touch kick)

Treat A45 yard line (restraining line) as a plane.

Key is widest (closest) Team B player on front line.

Signal ready with hand up.

Get a good look at who touches kick, where, and when.

Signal clock to start (? new rule? when kicked?)

Drop bean bag on yardline where ball is illegally touched by Team A player if he is the first to touch a kick before it has gone 10 yards..

Be ready to retreat on ball kicked deep. We have run-back and forward progress on this play.

Be ready to stop clock as soon as play is over.

Be ready to separate piles quickly.

Be ready to rule on possession – give time out signal, then signal the direction of possession.

If ball is kicked to SJ side, assist in touching and possession.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Be a great dead ball official.

(4) On 4th and 5 from the B18, A attempts a field goal. The ball is partially blocked at the line of scrimmage and rolls toward the goal line. Attempting to recover the ball, A89 touches (and muffs) the ball at the B3. The ball continues rolling, and, when it's in the end zone, a number of A and B players attempt to recover it.

Under upright with BJ.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Get to goal line (straight to goal line) when kick is blocked.

Bag illegal touch by A.

Whistle as soon as ball hits ground in end zone untouched by Team B.

Be stationary and give yourself the best opportunity to make the call.

Signal touchback (as long as ball is snapped inside B20) or no good (if snapped outside B20).

Observe action of A and B players as they are attempting to recover the dead ball (holding, illegal blocks, etc.)

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Be a great dead ball official.

(5) On 3rd and goal at the B4, the quarterback throws a fade pass to the corner of the end zone on the FJ's side in hopes that wide receiver A89 will catch it for a touchdown.

At end line pylon at the snap

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Back straight away from pylon (perpendicular to sideline.) LJ will have a view down the sideline.

OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)

Get a look at catch (feet, then ball).

Be stationary and give yourself the best opportunity to make the call.

Check with LJ and BJ for TD; Communicate; Communicate; Communicate

If needed, go to BJ and LJ to discuss what you saw (if there's any question)

Signal TD only when you're sure it is a TD catch.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Be a great dead ball official.

(6) On 4th and 10 from the A30, Team A punts. B30 catches the punt at the B22 and runs up the sideline on the FJ / LJ side of the field. He is downed at the A45.

Line up with BJ, behind B player(s) waiting to receive the kick.
All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).
Focus on your key, and holding by B players on your key. Your key will take you to where the ball is coming down.
Watch for key going out of bounds on his own (hat down), then coming back in (flag)
Move up or back with BJ while ball is in the air.
Watch blocks in front of B30.
Pick up runner, follow play, mark forward progress.
Signal time-out.
Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.
Be a great dead ball official.

(7) Defensive back B44 intercepts a Team A pass at the A45. B44 returns the ball toward the goal line along the FJ / LJ sideline. B44 scores and runs to the corner of the endzone, where he's greeted by teammates. The celebration begins.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).
Keep cushion while backpedaling.
OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)
After interception, switch into reverse mechanics with LJ (follow forward progress of play and prepare to get spot of forward progress.)
Look for blocks in front of ball-carrier.
Let LJ take goal line inside the A1.
Follow B44 into end zone and clean up the celebration.
Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.
Be a great dead ball official.
Get a Team B ball for try (or work with LJ to do this.)

(8) On 3rd and 9 from the A41, wide receiver A88 (the FJ's initial key), steps out of bounds to get around defensive back B30. A88 comes back onto the field and catches QB A10's pass at the B48 where he is downed. The umpire reports that the pass was tipped at the line of scrimmage.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).
Keep cushion while backpedaling.
Hat down when A88 steps out of bounds.
Flag down when A88 is the first to touch pass (as far as you know.)
Be stationary and give yourself the best opportunity to make the call.
OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)
Can't have either in this situation
Signal time out after A88 is down.
Make a mental note of the player the foul is on (A88).
Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.
Be a great dead ball official.
Report foul to referee.
Ask referee to wipe out foul after you hear the comments from the umpire.

(9) On 3rd and 9 from the A41, QB A15 throws a pass downfield toward the middle of the field at the B40. The FJ clearly sees that the ball is caught by A89. As the FJ looks to his

LJ, he sees the LJ looking for help from the umpire, BJ, and H. The LJ gives the incomplete signal.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Keep cushion while backpedaling.

OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)

Signal time out after A89 is down beyond the line to gain.

Check with LJ (head nodding / other discussed in pre-game) and try to get his attention; Help with spot.

If you notice that the LJ is unsure of catch, run to the spot of the catch (hard) and sell the catch.

If (in the meantime) the LJ gives the incomplete signal, go to him and ask whether he saw ball hit the ground.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Be a great dead ball official.

(10) On 2nd and 5 from the B35, QB A10 throws a pass to A80 at the B30 near the FJ / LJ sideline. A80 was the FJ's initial key. The FJ (standing at his B10) throws his flag when defensive back B49 interferes with A80 before the ball gets to A80. The ball falls incomplete. The flag lands at the B22.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Keep cushion while backpedaling.

OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)

Throw flag when you determine there is a foul. ("Is it a foul? Is it a foul? Yes, it's a foul.")

Be stationary and give yourself the best opportunity to make the call.

Signal incomplete when ball hits the ground. Blow whistle.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Be a great dead ball official.

Go to flag at the B22 and move it to the correct location of the foul (B30).

Report foul to the referee.

(11) On 4th and 10 from the A20, Team A is punting. Wide-out (gunner) A26, the FJ's key, is being covered by 2 Team B defenders. The punt is caught by B20 and returned up the SJ's side of the field. B20 is downed at the B49.

(11a) Both defenders grabbed A26's shirt (no)

(11b) Both defenders grabbed A26's shirt and pulled him to the ground (yes)

(11c) If B20 returned the punt up the FJ's sideline, does it change anything? (no, 99% of the time)

(11d) If there was only one Team B player covering A26, does it change anything? (yes, if it has an impact on the play)

Line up with BJ, behind B player(s) waiting to receive the kick.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Focus on your key, and holding by B players on your key. Your key will take you to where the ball is coming down.

Watch for key going out of bounds on his own (hat down), then coming back in (flag). s

Move up or back with BJ while ball is in the air.

Make a mental note of the spot of the foul (hold); Will the hold impact the play? Any take-downs require a flag.

If the defense is giving up 2 players to block 1 offensive player, and there are no take-downs, is there a foul? (no)

If you have a foul, make sure the flag is in the correct spot.

Continue officiating.

Watch blocks in front of runner once the kick is caught.

Follow the play; Help with a soft spot for forward progress.

Signal time-out.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Be a great dead ball official.

(12) On 2nd and 4 from the A24, back A32 runs a sweep to the FJ / LJ side of the field. Wide receiver A89 (the FJ's initial key) goes inside and blocks linebacker B56 low back toward the initial position of the ball at 'about' the B34. A32 is tackled in the side zone at the A37.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

This example shows the importance of knowing your 10 yard zone.

Watch blocks by initial key. If the low block is within 10 yards of the snap and it's toward the initial position of the ball, this is a foul

Make sure the flag is thrown to the correct yardline. This is critical when the foul is 'near' 10 yards of where the ball is snapped.

Continue officiating.

Signal time-out when play is over.

Be a great dead ball official.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Make sure flag is in the correct spot.

Report the foul to the referee.

(13) On 3rd and 20 from the A30, the FJ's key, wide receiver A89, runs 5 yards downfield and begins to block defensive back B40. A screen pass is thrown to the FJ's / LJ's side of the field. The ball is caught by back A20 near the original line of scrimmage.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Keep cushion while backpedaling.

OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)

Flag for OPI on A89.

Signal time-out when play is over.

Be a great dead ball official.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Make sure flag is in the correct spot.

Ask LJ whether ball crossed the line of scrimmage. Was pass downfield?

If ball did not cross line of scrimmage, there is no OPI.

Report the foul (or no foul) to the referee.

(14) On 2nd and 5 from the B19, quarterback A10 throws a pass to A92. A92 was the FJ's initial key, and is running a post pattern toward the end line, between the FJ and the BJ. A80, running away from the FJ, appears to have caught the ball near the end line, but the FJ does not have a clear view of the catch because A80's back is to the FJ.

At goal line pylon at the snap

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Drift toward end line (down sideline) when it's obvious ball is thrown at the end line.

Get best view of potential catch.

*OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)
Be stationary and give yourself the best opportunity to make the call.
Check with BJ for TD; Communicate; Communicate; Communicate
If there's any question, go to BJ and discuss what you saw (if there's any question)
Do not give any signal if you do not see the ball.
Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.
Be a great dead ball official.*

(15) On 3rd and 12 at the A38, tight end A80 (the FJ's initial key) blocks defensive end B65 at the line of scrimmage and drives him a few yards downfield with a legal block. He then stops and drifts backwards towards the original line of scrimmage. Meanwhile, QB A5 sprints out towards the SJ / H side of the field. A5 stops and throws a pass to A80 (across the field). The pass is caught near the A38.

*All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).
Keep cushion while backpedaling.
OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)
Flag for OPI on A80.
Signal time-out when play is over.
Be a great dead ball official.
Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.
Make sure flag is in the correct spot.
Ask LJ whether ball crossed the line of scrimmage. Was pass downfield?
If ball did not cross line of scrimmage, there is no OPI.
Report the foul (or no foul) to the referee.*

(16) On 3rd and 12 at the B42, QB A10 throws a pass down the center of the field to A89 at the B25 yard line. Defensive back B45 is covering A89. At the snap, wide receiver A95 is the FJ's key. A89 was lined up on the SJ's side of the field. The ball is thrown 20 feet over A89's head. The BJ throws a flag in the direction of A89/B45. The FJ knows the ball was not catchable.

*All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).
Keep cushion while backpedaling.
OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)
Be stationary and give yourself the best opportunity to make the call.
Signal time-out when play is over.
Be a great dead ball official.
Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.
Go to BJ quickly and ask him, 'what do you have?' Your presence is telling him that you have it as uncatchable. You should not use the word 'uncatchable', in case any player or coach hears it. . (BJ may have another foul [holding, for example])*

(17) On 2nd and 12 from the A48, QB A10 drops back to pass. A86, the FJ's initial key, does a fly pattern. A10 scrambles and eventually runs up the FJ / LJ sideline before going out of bounds at the B45 (which happens to be the opposing team's bench at this field.)

*All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).
Keep cushion while backpedaling.
OPI/DPI? Look for hands/arms/ head (defender looking back for ball or looking at receiver?)
Signal time-out when play is over.*

Move up sideline after the QB is out of bounds and get to the QB (who's probably still running at you.) Go through bench (behind team) if needed. Referee and possibly BJ will be there, too.

Be a great dead ball official.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Escort the QB out of the opposing team's bench.

Ensure the LJ has a ball at the spot the QB went out of bounds.

Get a ball from the ball boy and relay it to the umpire.

(18) On 2nd and 7 from the A43 from the hash mark closest to the FJ / LJ side of the field, back A35 runs off tackle toward the FJ / LJ side of the field. A35 is stopped at the line of scrimmage by a number of Team B players and driven back (while still on his feet) to the A38. The LJ blows his whistle and has a forward progress spot at the A43. The pile continues to be driven backwards (and towards the FJ / LJ sideline.)

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Begin backpedaling at the snap. Stop when it's obvious play will end near original line of scrimmage.

Get to the runner and the pile as quickly as possible. (This means running past the LJ [who's holding the spot] and going into the backfield. The referee will probably be there, too.

Blow whistle if needed to get players attention.

Be a great dead ball official.

Ensure the LJ has a ball at the spot of the end of the run..

Get a ball from the ball boy and relay it to the umpire.

(19) On 3rd and 5 at the B40, running back A25 runs a sweep towards the FJ / LJ sideline. Flanker back A34 (the FJ's initial key) grabs defensive back B60's shirt with both hands and begins to push him backwards. A25 follows A34. A34 lets go of B60's shirt, and B60 makes the tackle at the B38.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Begin backpedaling at the snap. Keep the cushion.

Watch the hold. Is an advantage being gained? B60 makes the tackle.

Grasping an opponent's shirt doesn't necessarily mean holding. When the shirt is stretched because a defensive player is trying to get away, it does.

See 'Thoughts on Holding' in Mechanics Manual.

If A34 does not let go, and A25 gains yards past the spot of the hold, the hold should be flagged.

Be a great dead ball official.

Ensure the LJ has a ball at the spot of the end of the run if the run ends in the side zone.

Get a ball from the ball boy and relay it to the umpire.

(20) B40 caught Team A's 4th down punt at the B38 and is running up the FJ / LJ sideline at the 50 yard line. While the punt was in the air, B20 began to block (legally) A70 at the B47 yard line, and drive him towards the FJ / LJ sideline. B20 drives A50 out of bounds at the B45 as the punt returner and the FJ move up the sideline (past this block). Runner B40 is tackled at the A35. Players B20 and A50 are still engaged out of bounds at the B45 yard line.

Line up with BJ, behind B player(s) waiting to receive the kick.

All pre-snap responsibilities (counting defense, arm signal, noting 10 yard blocking area, initial key widest stationary A player, etc.).

Focus on your key, and holding by B players on your key. Your key will take you to where the ball is coming down.

Watch for key going out of bounds on his own (hat down), then coming back in (flag). s

Move up or back with BJ while ball is in the air.

Watch blocks in front of runner once the kick is caught.

Follow the play and get the forward progress spot at the end of the run.

Be aware of the block behind you, but the BJ will be cleaning up. (Review this in pre-game.)

Signal time-out when ball is dead.

Check clock status. Make sure clock is stopped. Make a mental note of the time.

Be a great dead ball official.

Hold the spot. LJ helping with block behind you?