

2-PERSON MECHANICS

Editor's Note: NIRSA no longer publishes the 2-person part of the NIRSA Football Officials' Manual. The NIRSA Flag Football Editorial Board recommends using 3- or 4-person mechanics for officiating flag and touch football. The following information is supplemental to the content within Parts I, II, III, and IV of the NIRSA Football Officials' Manual, found in the NIRSA Flag & Touch Rules Book & Officials' Manual (pgs. 71-85). NIRSA disclaims any responsibility to further revise or update content related to 2-person mechanics.

SECTION 1. SCRIMMAGE PLAYS

Article 1. Before the Snap.

- All:** A. Initial positions vary depending upon play situations, team formations, tendencies, field, and weather conditions. Always box in the play, as all players should be in the collective vision of the officiating crew at all times. When in doubt, take a position that is wider and deeper that avoids interfering with the players.
- All:** B. Signal and verify the down with your partner. Check the down box for accuracy. Communicate the clock status as necessary. Remind the players to tuck in their jerseys and adjust their flag belts as necessary. Be alert for time-outs, dead ball fouls, injuries, and anything out of the ordinary. Ensure that your partner is ready and in proper position prior to allowing the ball to become live.
- R:** C. Take an initial position in the neutral zone on the sideline. If a receiver lines up near the sideline, or if the line-to-gain or goal line is threatened, start 2 yards off the sideline. Be in a position to see the ball and all players near the scrimmage lines. Be aware of incoming and exiting substitutes. Be alert for the following fouls: encroachment, false start, illegal snap, illegal formation, illegal shift, and illegal motion. Take responsibility for A players in motion at the snap. Communicate to A when there are 15 seconds and 10 seconds remaining on the play clock. With 5 seconds remaining on the play clock, count down 5-4-3-2-1 so that the player(s) in position to receive the snap can hear.
- R:** D. Upon the conclusion of the previous play, mark the forward progress spot and indicate the next location of the A scrimmage line. Use your downfield foot and raise your arm straight above your head while indicating the next down. Pass this spot to the BJ to retrieve the ball spotters. Set the ball spotters in the appropriate location on or inside the hash marks to create the neutral zone. Announce the down/distance and mark the ball ready for play by blowing your whistle and giving the appropriate signal (S1). The ready for play procedure and announcement should not prevent a team from snapping the ball quickly. Start timing the play clock upon marking the ball ready for play. Announce "Double Stakes" if A must obtain two lines-to-gain, and "Triple Stakes" for three lines-to-gain.

- BJ:** E. Take an initial position on the opposite side of the field as the R. Start approximately 20 yards beyond A's scrimmage line, always deeper than the deepest defensive back, and 5 yards from the sideline, always wider than the widest wide receiver. Be aware of incoming and exiting substitutes. Communicate the clock status as necessary.
- BJ:** F. Upon conclusion of the previous play, if necessary, mark the forward progress spot and pass this spot onto the R to indicate the next location of the A scrimmage line. If the R obtains the forward progress spot, hold this spot while the R retrieves the ball spotters and sets the new A scrimmage line.

Article 2. Reading and Understanding Keys.

- All:** A. Keys are intended to help determine officials' coverage areas at the initial snap. Officials must be prepared to react to the play as it develops. Keys do not necessarily determine coverage for the entire play, as constant adjustments are necessary.
- All:** B. Officials should become familiar with the concept of "player, zone, ball." Player refers to the initial key(s) that the official should focus on at the snap. As the play develops, officials should switch to covering a zone of the field that could impact the play. Once the offense commits to passing or running into a specific zone, covering officials should focus attention on the specific player with the ball and the players in the immediate vicinity of the runner.
- R:** C. Initial keys for the R include the player(s) in position to receive the snap and all players lined up on their respective line of scrimmage.
- BJ:** D. Initial keys for the BJ are all wide receivers on the BJ side of the snapper.

Article 3. Running and Passing Play Coverage.

- All:** A. Flag football is primarily a passing game. However, officials must also be prepared for designed runs and runs that develop out of passing formations. Backward passes are also a staple of the game, so all officials must be prepared to accurately rule on the direction of a pass anywhere on the field. Always box-in the play. Stay wide to prevent situations that may cause scrambling to avoid interference with players. It is always easier to move in than to back out.
- R:** B. **The R's mental checklist is: Snap, Ball, QB, Rush, and Pass.** Be ready to rule the snap dead if it strikes the ground prior to being possessed. After the snap, hold your position for a second to observe the initial charge of the line players and rule on any immediate contact created by either team. Read the movements of your initial keys. If you read run, hold at the neutral zone and observe the screen blockers and defenders ahead of and around the runner. If you read pass, move in the backfield no more than 5 yards, observing the action behind the neutral zone. Focus on the quarterback and blockers surrounding the QB or runner. You are

responsible for ruling on the direction of all passes behind the line of scrimmage. If in doubt, the pass is backward. When the forward pass is thrown, announce “ball’s away” and keep your vision on the passer until there is no threat of a foul. You are primarily responsible for Roughing the Passer and Intentional Grounding. Check the legality of passes thrown near the line of scrimmage. If in doubt, the pass is legal.

- R:** C. As the runner advances beyond the neutral zone, keep a position that is parallel to the runner and rule on the legality of all backward passes beyond the line of scrimmage. Maintain an “outside-in” look, to keep the action between you and the middle of the field. Mark forward progress from behind the neutral zone to approximately 10 yards downfield. If your normal coverage of the play takes you to the line-to-gain, stop there. You are responsible for your sideline from end line to end line.
- BJ:** D. **The BJ’s mental checklist is: Snap, Keys, Zone, and Ball.** After the snap, hold your position for a second to observe the initial movements of your initial keys. If you read run, watch the screen blockers surrounding and ahead of the runner. If the runner moves toward your sideline, move to the sideline and maintain an “outside-in” look. If you read pass, move backward as the receivers establish their patterns. Let the play come to you but do not allow any players to get behind you. Once the forward pass is thrown, move to a position to see between the receiver and the defender.
- BJ:** E. As the runner advances beyond the neutral zone, lead the play toward the goal line while observing the blockers surrounding and ahead of the runner. On long scoring plays, stand still on the goal line when the runner crosses. On long passing plays that threaten the end line, move off of the goal line to cover the end line. You are primarily responsible for your sideline from end line to end line.

Article 4. Line-to-Gain Coverage on 3rd and 4th Down.

- R:** A. Your initial position, keys, and coverage responsibilities remain the same as standard scrimmage plays.
- BJ:** B. Your initial position is the line-to-gain. If the ball is snapped less than 2 yards from the line-to-gain, wait until the wide receivers are lined up and set before assuming your position on the line-to-gain. This will prevent them from lining up in the neutral zone. Hold your position on the line-to-gain and rule on either a 1st down or forward progress short of the line-to-gain. You are primarily responsible for determining if the line-to-gain was achieved. Defer to the R if the play ends near the intersection of the opposite sideline and the line-to-gain. Do not leave the line-to-gain until either the ball is clearly beyond the line-to-gain or the ball becomes dead by rule.

Article 5. Goal Line and Try Coverage.

- R:** A. Your initial position and keys remain the same as standard scrimmage plays. If

the ball is snapped on or inside B's 5 yard line, hustle to the goal line immediately following the snap. Hold your position on the goal line and rule on either a touchdown or forward progress short of the goal line. Do not leave the goal line until the ball becomes dead by rule or there is a change of possession.

- BJ:** B. If the ball is snapped outside of B's 5 yard line, start on the goal line. On passing plays that threaten the end line, move off of the goal line to cover the end line. If the ball is snapped on or inside B's 5 yard line, start on the end line, 5 yards from your sideline. Do not leave the end line until the ball becomes dead by rule or there is a change of possession.

Article 6. Reverse Mechanics.

- All:** A. Reverse mechanics apply to situations following a change of team possession.

- R:** B. Following a change of possession, R coverage responsibilities become similar to those of the BJ. Lead the play toward the goal line while observing the blockers surrounding and ahead of the runner. Stand still on the goal line when the runner crosses.

- BJ:** C. Following a change of possession, BJ coverage responsibilities become similar to those of the R. Keep a position that is parallel to the runner and rule on the legality of all backward passes. Maintain an "outside-in" look to keep the action in between you and the middle of the field.

Article 7. Reverse Goal Line Mechanics.

- All:** A. Reverse goal line mechanics apply to situations where A snaps the ball close to their own goal line.

- R:** B. If the ball is snapped on or inside A's 10 yard line, hustle to the goal line immediately following the snap. Stay on the goal line and rule on either a safety or forward progress in advance of the goal line. Do not leave the goal line until it is no longer threatened and the play has moved downfield.

- BJ:** C. If the ball is snapped on or inside A's 10 yard line, the R will be occupied with the goal line, so expand your coverage area and be prepared to help in zones typically covered by the R.

SECTION 2. PUNT PLAYS

Article 1. Before the Snap.

- R:** A. Prior to all 4th down plays, ask the A captain if their team wants to punt. Communicate this decision to all players and coaches, and then mark the ball ready for play. Inform both teams to stay out of the neutral zone until the ball is punted.

- R:** B. Your initial position remains the same as standard scrimmage plays.
- BJ:** C. Take an initial position on the opposite side of the field as the R. Start approximately 3 yards behind the deepest receiver and at least 10 yards wide of the nearest receiver. If the deepest receiver lines up on or inside R's 10 yard line, stand on the goal line and be wider than usual to keep an appropriate angle.

Article 2. Reading and Understanding Keys.

- R:** A. Your initial keys remain the same as standard scrimmage plays.
- BJ:** B. Your initial keys are the deepest R players in position to receive the kick.

Article 3. Punt Coverage.

- All:** A. Once the punt is caught, utilize reverse mechanics.
- R:** B. Watch for the snap hitting the ground and the kicker punting the ball. After the snap, rule on any scrimmage line fouls and hold your position until the ball crosses K's scrimmage line. If the ball is kicked short, take responsibility for the receiver and drop the bean bag where the kick ends. As the ball is in the air, stay near K's scrimmage line and sideline, observing blockers surrounding and ahead of the runner.
- BJ:** C. After the snap, work to maintain a 45 degree angle with the receiver while the ball is in flight. Once the ball is caught, drop the bean bag where the kick ends, and move with the flow of the play. You are responsible for R's goal line. If the punt lands or rolls near the goal line, stay wide and straddle the goal line, ruling on touchbacks.
- All:** D. If punted out of bounds on the ground on your sideline or in the air, mark the spot.

SECTION 3. CO-REC ADJUSTMENTS

Article 1. Scrimmage Play Coverage.

- All:** A. Verify the open/closed status with your partner prior to marking the ball ready for play.
- R:** B. Announce open/closed status when marking the ball ready for play. Your initial position, keys, and coverage responsibilities remain the same as standard scrimmage plays. Rule on illegal male advancement, **illegal male reception**, a 2nd forward pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, and whether the passer is behind or beyond A's scrimmage line when the pass is thrown.
- BJ:** C. Your initial position, keys, and coverage responsibilities remain the same as standard scrimmage plays.