

AAFOA Five-Man Mechanics

This document should be considered a supplement to the old GHSA 5 man mechanics and can be altered by the Crew Chief only to perform better coverage during games. The Crew Chief has the discretion to alter some mechanics but this must be communicated during their pre-game conference to the crew. Keys should always stay the same. This is a guide to help create consistency from crew to crew.

Note: The Head Linesman will be positioned on the sideline on which the chains are placed. The Line Judge will work on the sideline without the chains. For GMSAA games, this means that the Head Linesman will be on the home sideline.

Scrimmage Plays Originating Outside 10-Yard Line

REFEREE

Ready-for-Play:

- Attempt to set the pace of the game by having a consistent ready-for-play; in routine situations this should be possible with no more than 12 to 14 seconds between the end of one play and the ready-for-play for the next one. In any case, do not blow RFP before your crew is ready.
- If offensive team is using a conventional huddle, stand 5-7 yards off the LOS and near the huddle to blow the ready-for-play, then back into your pre-snap position while watching the huddle and the ball.
- If offensive team is not using a huddle, be in your pre-snap position and allow Umpire to get in position before blowing the RFP. If Umpire is still over the ball, wave him off (Illegal Motion signal) and let him get in position before RFP.

Pre-Snap Position:

- 12-15 yards behind LOS on QB's passing arm side (if not known, start on his right and change if necessary after the first passing play). Wider is better.
- Should have a clear line of sight to the ball and the opposite side tackle. Either R or U must have sight to the ball at all times once the ball has been blown ready-for-play. At snap, R reads opposite tackle for run block or pass block.

Pre-Snap Routine:

- Confirm game clock is rolling or stopped correctly.
- Confirm box is showing correct down and know distance to go. Think if down & distance may affect play selection (run or pass).
- Blow Ready-for-Play whistle when crew is ready. Regular pace is 12 to 14 seconds after last play ended. Wind clock if applicable.
- Note any Substitutions and count offensive players, confirm count with Umpire. Do not let ball become live if there are more than 11 offensive players in huddle or formation and nobody is leaving.
- Watch for pre-snap movement including shifts, false starts, or snap infractions by snapper.

After Snap:

- Make initial read of the block by opposite side offensive tackle to determine likely pass or run
- Run play
 - For hand-off or pitch plays, verify QB is out of danger before giving him up.
 - For outside runs away from you, move laterally in same direction and turn upfield only after runner has moved several yards upfield.
 - For outside runs to your side, pivot and then move to outside if runner gets outside numbers.
 - For runs up the middle, trail and watch blocks at point of attack. Come in once run ends.
 - You are responsible for action on runner until he crosses LOS; Then blocks around runner.
 - On long runs, trail play and watch for mixed colors and personal fouls.
 - Be aware of possible fumbles/interception returns and prepare to beat runner to goal line.
 - Be a good dead ball official - Separate colors, observe all action, get ball in for next play.
- Pass play
 - Watch for holds/blocks by linemen on opposite side and blocking backs.
 - As QB comes under pressure, focus on QB and most threatening defender.

- Watch for QB rollout:
 - If away, move laterally in same direction but keep focus on QB.
 - If to your side, pivot and observe action. Trail if QB gets far enough outside.
 - If QB stays in pocket, do not move.
- Watch throwing hand - MUST judge Incomplete or Fumble - did contact dislodge ball?
- Once pass is away, keep focus on QB. Announce "Ball's Away" if defender is closing in on QB.
 - Once QB is no longer "in danger", trail play and watch for mixed colors and personal fouls.
- Be a good dead ball official - Separate colors, observe all action, get ball in for next play.
- In the case of an interception or fumble recovery by defense, the Referee should maintain a buffer and remain farther downfield than the runner and be able to beat him to the goal line or assist with forward progress short of the touchdown.

UMPIRE

Pre-Snap Position:

- If offensive team is using a conventional huddle, U should spot the ball then move to position.
- If offensive team is not using a huddle, U should remind snapper to wait on the whistle then get in position before the RFP.
- Pre-snap position is 5-7 yards off the LOS approximately head-up of the center but slightly offset in direction opposite Referee. If ball is obstructed from view, move more opposite R, as needed.
- Either the Umpire or the Referee must have a clear line of sight to the ball at all times once the ball has been blown ready for play.

Pre-Snap Routine:

- Confirm ball is in proper lateral position on field.
- Confirm game clock is rolling or stopped correctly.
- Confirm down and distance with the crew. Think if down & distance may affect play selection (run or pass).
- Note any Substitutions and count offensive players, confirm count with Referee. Do not let ball become live if there are more than 11 offensive players in huddle or formation and nobody is leaving.
- Confirm that offensive linemen are properly numbered. Note any unbalanced formations or covered tight ends.
- Watch for potential snap infractions by snapper and false starts by the Linemen

After Snap:

- Make initial read of your keys to determine run or pass based on blocking
- Observe action by/on center and guards.
- Run play
 - Pay special attention to blocks at point of attack.
 - For runs to either side, adjust focus and observe blocks on corners and at point of attack.
 - Be mindful of runs up the middle in your direction and pivot away from the runner.
 - Otherwise, pivot in direction of play and begin to trail and clean up on long runs.
 - Be aware of possible fumbles and rule on fumble or down for runs up the middle.
 - Be prepared for return of interception or fumble and watch blocks on periphery then let play pass you.
 - For dead balls in the middle of field and just outside hash marks, move to retrieve dead ball and get it spotted for next play.
 - For dead balls near sideline, move to inbounds spot and receive relayed ball from crewmates.
 - Be a good dead ball official - Separate colors, observe all action, get ball set for next play.
- Pass play
 - When pass is read, move up to rule on Line of Scrimmage
 - U is responsible for ineligible downfield, as well as LOS in relation to passer and pass
 - Adjust Focus to outside blocks and possible pressure points on QB.
 - Once pass is thrown, watch for tipped ball B and signal accordingly.
 - Once pass crosses LOS and action at line has ended, pivot and prepare to assist on catch/no-catch
 - Be prepared for return of interception or fumble and watch blocks on periphery then let play pass you.

- For dead balls in the middle of field and just outside hash marks, move to retrieve dead ball and get it spotted for next play.
- For dead balls near sideline, move to inbounds spot and receive relayed ball from crewmates.
- Be a good dead ball official - Separate colors, observe all action, get ball set for next play.

WINGS

Pre-Snap Position:

- Wing officials should begin each play on the line of scrimmage and positioned on the sideline.
- Wider is better! Start wide and move in, if necessary, as the play develops.

Pre-Snap Routine:

- Establish the LOS with your foot on the offensive side.
- Count the defensive players and confirm with opposite wing and Back Judge. Do not let ball become live if more than 11 players are in defensive formation and none are leaving field.
- Confirm down and distance with crew. Think if down & distance may affect play selection (run or pass) but DO NOT ASSUME.
- Count offensive players on the LOS to your side of the center and give appropriate signal to opposite wing.
- Determine if widest offensive player is on/off the line. If off, signal by extending your arm straight out towards offensive backfield (fist clenched). Maintain signal until ball is snapped, receiver goes in motion or receiver shifts into legal position on LOS.
- Know the number(s) of eligible receiver(s) on your side of the LOS. You are responsible for ruling on ineligible(s) downfield on your side of the field (by number or position).
- Determine your receiver key.
 - Hold near the line of scrimmage for the initial line charge then key on the outside receiver. Watch for illegal blocks by or on the receiver(s).
- Observe linemen for potential false starts or encroachment and motion man on your side of snapper to ensure legal movement.

After Snap:

- Make initial read of the block by offensive tackle on your side to determine likely pass or run
- If ball is snapped from inside offensive team's own 3 yard line, move to goal line to rule on possible safety.
- Run Play
 - Observe blocks by tackle and tight end (if present) on your side as well as other blocking at point of attack.
 - For runs up the middle or to your side, watch action by and on runner until down.
 - For sweeps to your sideline, retreat toward the offensive backfield a couple steps and let runner pass you then trail play.
 - For runs to opposite side, move into the field a few steps and watch blocks around and action behind the runner.
 - If you do not have spot or goal line, help clean up play and get ball in.
- Pass Play
 - After initial read of tackle to determine pass play, change focus to your outside receiver key.
 - When reading pass both wings should start to drift downfield when his/her keys take them downfield. Move with purpose but do not be in a hurry to get downfield to quickly. You want to keep the receiver's boxed in with the Back judge.
 - As play develops, move into a "zone" coverage where BJ has deepest receiver(s) and wings have receivers on shorter routes.
- Wings are responsible for all forward progress spots. If the runner is down at or near the goal line, confirm call with BJ before giving signal.
- Wings have sideline from end line to end line and should be prepared to make a call when sideline is involved, including plays at the junction of the sideline and goal line.
- Be a good dead-ball official: If you do not have spot or goal line, help clean up play and get ball in.

BACK JUDGE

Pre-Snap Position:

- On the field, 15-20 yards off the Line of Scrimmage and near the middle of the formation but shaded slightly to the strong side of the formation (side with more receivers). BJ shall not take a position outside the inbounds marks (hash marks). *Note: If ball is snapped from between the 20 and 10 (going in), BJ may not be able to start on the goal line due to defensive formation but should be in position to come up and cover goal line if necessary on runs or short passes.*

Pre-Snap Routine:

- Clock - note time of the clock and ensure it is properly running or properly stopped.
- Watch for ready-for-play from Referee and begin 25-second clock upon the whistle.
- Count the defensive players and confirm with both wings. Do not let ball become live if more than 11 players are in defensive formation and none are leaving field.

After Snap:

- Make initial read of the block by strong side offensive tackle to determine likely pass or run.
- Run Play
 - Temporarily hold position and watch blocks ahead of runner at point of attack.
 - If runner clears line of scrimmage, begin to move backwards while still observing blocks.
 - If runner moves to a side zone, shade to that side of the field while still maintaining buffer ahead of runner.
 - Back Judge should be waiting at the goal line. If the runner is down at or near the goal line, confirm call with Wing before giving signal.
 - For dead ball in middle of field, pinch in and move toward mixed jerseys.
 - For dead ball in a side zone or on a sideline, move to ball and help officiate dead-ball action. Once mixed jerseys are separated, assist in retrieving/relaying ball.
- Pass Play
 - Begin moving backwards at snap. Always stay deeper than deepest receivers.
 - Initial responsibility is action by/on inside receiver(s). As play progresses, shift to "zone" coverage where your responsibility becomes deepest receiver(s) while wing officials cover shallow receivers.
 - If pass is incomplete, move to retrieve ball and relay it back in to the Umpire.
 - If pass is complete, maintain buffer ahead of runner and carry him to goal line. If the runner is down at or near the goal line, confirm call with Wing before giving signal.
 - If pass is intercepted, trail play while watching blocks ahead of and around the runner, much like the Referee in a scrimmage play. If pass is intercepted near goal line, be prepared to rule on momentum and drop bean bag, if applicable.

Scrimmage Plays Originating At or Inside 10-Yard Line

Responsibilities change for balls snapped at or inside the 10 yard line (going in) to enhance coverage of the goal line and end line. The specific changes are outlined below:

REFEREE

- No actual position or coverage changes.
- Should remind the rest of the crew once ball crosses 10 yard line to ensure the remainder of the crew change their responsibilities accordingly

UMPIRE

- No significant position or coverage changes.
- Can assist wing officials with "hands to the chest" signal if he sees ball cross goal line. Should **not** give Touchdown signal.

WINGS

- Wings now have sole responsibility for goal line. Wings should beat the play to goal line.
 - If snapped between the 5 and 10, wings should immediately fire downfield then stay ahead of the play. They should continue to the goal line as play advances or come back to the play in short gain situations.
 - If snapped inside the 5, wings should immediately go to the goal line and then work back to the play if down short of the goal line.
- For passes to corner of the end zone, Wing official will rule on sideline and Back Judge will rule on end line. These officials should make eye contact and confirm with each other before signaling.

BACK JUDGE

- Back Judge's initial position will be on end line, still shaded to strong side of offensive formation.
- For passes to corner of the end zone, Back Judge will rule on end line while Wing will rule on sideline. These officials should make eye contact and confirm with each other before signaling.

Punt Plays

REFEREE

Pre-Snap:

- Line up on kicker's kicking foot side, a couple yards wide of kicker and several yards deep. Wide enough so that kicker does not obstruct view of blocking backs and rushers. Deep enough to not be in the way in case of bad snap or blocked kick. Position should be more deep than wide.
- If punt will take place near goal line or end line, take initial position on the line in question to be able to rule on a potential safety.
- Signal the Umpire that the offense is in a kicking formation (false start signal) when offense lines up in this formation

After Snap:

- Initially watch action by blocking backs on rushing defenders.
- Then change focus to action by and on kicker. Be prepared to rule on whether kick is touched near the kicker and if the kicker is roughed or run into.
- Stay with the kicker until the he has recovered from his kicking position and moves to otherwise participate in the play.
- Once kicker is clear, observe flight of ball in case it is toward a sideline. Be prepared to "chop-in" the back judge (or wing) if shanked kick crosses sideline high in the air.
- If kick is faked or blocked, officiate like a normal scrimmage play. Be prepared to beat runner to goal line if defense recovers.

UMPIRE

Pre-Snap:

- Line up in normal pre-scrimmage position.
- Echo the Referee's kicking formation signal to acknowledge snapper protection.
- Observe numbering of linemen to know who is ineligible in case of fake or broken play.

After Snap:

- Focus on action on the snapper until he has had opportunity to rise and participate.
- Next observe action by blockers on line and backs.
- Be able to rule if low kick is touched in offensive backfield or at LOS.
- Once the kick is away, verbally say "ball's away" allow action to flow by, then pivot to follow the action downfield.
- During the return work inside-out watching for personal fouls, clipping and illegal blocks.

WING OFFICIALS

Pre-Snap:

- Line up in normal pre-scrimmage position.
- Count receiving team and confirm count with opposite wing and Back Judge (thumbs up).
- Count line like a normal scrimmage play and confirm with opposite wing.

After Snap:

- Both Wing officials hold the line of scrimmage at the snap. Maintain this position on the LOS until kick has crossed and will obviously not return.
- In case of bad snap or blocked kick, the Wing official opposite the Referee should drift back to help box in the play. Wing official on same side of Referee should still hold the LOS.
- Initially observe blocks by tackle/end on your side and action on kicking team gunners as they move downfield.
- Once kick has clearly crossed LOS, drift downfield 10-15 yards from the LOS observing blocks around and ahead of runner.
- During return, maintain buffer ahead of runner but also in position to come back to spot when runner is down. Pick up runner on long returns but still be in position to beat runner to goal line. Remember there are no other officials on the sideline.

BACK JUDGE

Pre-Snap:

- Line up 4-5 yards behind and 8-10 yards wide of deepest receiver on wide side of field. If deepest receiver is on or inside his 10 yard line, take initial position on the goal line.
- Remind receiver(s) of a proper fair catch signal.
- Count receiving team and confirm count with wings.

After Snap:

- Make initial look at line of scrimmage to ensure a kick is forthcoming.
- Once ball is kicked, observe actions by the receiver(s) including any valid or invalid fair catch signal.
- As kicking team players close in on receiver, watch for kick-catch interference or late fair catch signals by the receiver as well as a clean catch of the kick.
- If ball is kicked over the receiver's head, move with the ball and action around it. Watch for touching, especially unintentional, by either team.
- Drop bean bag at yard line where kick is caught or recovered.
- During return, trail runner and observe action by or on runner. Be prepared to assist with spot if runner is down in middle of field as wing officials will be working ahead of the runner. On long returns, let wings pick up runner then trail and clean up behind play.

ALL OFFICIALS

Special coverage for punts out of bounds:

- For grounded punts or punts that are low to the ground when they cross the sideline, the wing official on that sideline should be able to spot the ball unassisted.
- For kicks which cross the sideline while high and airborne, the wing official should move down the sideline well past the spot where the ball went out and stop the clock. The official should then come back toward the LOS with one hand raised. The Referee will stand behind the punter and mark the path of the ball, also with one hand raised. Once the wing official reaches the spot on the sideline which intersects with the path of the ball, Referee will drop his hand and "chop in" the wing official. Wing official will then hold that spot until new ball is set on field.

Field Goal & Kick Try Plays

REFEREE

Pre-Snap:

- Line up facing the holder standing ~3 yards wider than the last down lineman and ~2 yards behind the kicker's initial position. Line of sight should include opposite side tackle, blocking backs, holder, and kicker. Stay deep enough to be able to officiate bad snaps and blocked kicks without having to scramble.
- Signal the Umpire that this is a kicking formation (false start signal).
- For FG kicks, verbally remind Umpire and Wing that ball is live.

After Snap:

- Initial look is to make sure snap is fielded properly by holder and it is not a fake.
- Then observe action by/on rushers, first against blocking backs then against kicker/holder.
- If kick is faked or blocked, officiate like a normal scrimmage play. Be prepared to beat runner to goal line if defense recovers on FG plays.
- If try or FG kick is good, turn to face press box and echo signal.

UMPIRE

Pre-Snap:

- Line up ~5 yards deep and shaded to LJ side of the field. Be in position to watch action on center and guards but also be able to assist on fakes or broken plays to the LJ side as he is not in position.
- Echo the Referee's kicking formation signal to acknowledge snapper protection.

After Snap:

- Focus on action on the snapper until he has had opportunity to rise and participate.
- Next observe action by blockers on line and backs.
- Be able to rule if low kick is touched in offensive backfield or at LOS.
- Once the kick is away, verbally say "ball's away" and allow action to flow by.
- During the return work inside-out watching for personal fouls, clipping and illegal blocks.

HEAD LINESMAN

Pre-Snap:

- Line up in normal pre-scrimmage position.
- Count linemen. You are responsible for entire line as LJ is under goal post.

After Snap:

- Hold line of scrimmage to rule if kick crosses line.
- Watch action by blockers and rushers on corner.
- If FG kick is returned, move with the runner and officiate as a normal scrimmage play. You may be the only official in position to get spot until LJ catches up to the play from his pre-kick position.

LINE JUDGE & BACK JUDGE

Pre-Snap:

- Line up behind and under the goal posts.
- Count receiving team and confirm count with each other (thumbs up).

After Snap:

- BJ blows whistle to end play when kick crosses goal line (or sooner on try kicks).
- Once kick reaches goal post, confirm with each other ("yes yes" or "no no") then step out and give appropriate signal.
- If kick is wide to one side, only official on that post will signal no good. Other official will give no signal.
- For blocked FG kicks or fake/broken plays, LJ should move to sideline then goal line as possible to officiate the play.
- For long FG kicks which are clearly short, move to goal line to rule on touchback.

Free Kick Plays

REFEREE

- Initial position on goal line in middle of field. Depending on age level and abilities, you may need to start further up field but always be in position to rule on goal line. Have bean bag in hand to rule on momentum.
- Count receiving team and confirm count with wings. When wings signal ready, confirm with clock operator and blow ready for play.
- On deep kickoff, watch for touching by receiving team and wind clock when appropriate.
- You are responsible for runner until he moves to a side zone or advances well up field.
- After wings have picked up runner, focus on blocks around runner as well as cleaning up behind the play.
- For obvious onside situations, you will be the only official deep.

UMPIRE

- Initial position on Team K's restraining line. Give kicker ball if he doesn't already have it and instruct him to wait for Referee's whistle before kicking. Ensure all Team K players have helmet secured (four straps) and mouthpieces in.
- Count Team K players and confirm with Back Judge that your team is ready, then move to kicking team's sideline.
- Have bean bag in hand to rule on first touching by K.
- After kick, move onto field and observe action by/on kicking team players and first wave of receiving team blockers.
- On long returns, let play pass you and work inside out, still observing blocks.
- For obvious onside situations, BJ will move across from you and wings will move up to box in the play. You are primarily responsible for watching the ball hitting the ground and blocking by K and R.

WINGS

- Initial position on receiving team's 10 yard line, although age level and kicker ability may make you start further up field. Discuss this with Referee and opposite wing before the kick. For middle school, a good starting point would be the 20. For sixth grade you may be as far up as the 30 and some eighth grade kickers may keep you at the 10.
- Count Team R players and confirm count with Referee.
- On deep kickoff, observe action by second wave of Team R blockers ahead of deep receivers. Pick up runner once he moves into your area of coverage.
- On pooch kick or unexpected onside kicks, hustle up field to cover the kick. Watch for fair catch signals on pooch kicks.
- For obvious onside situations, move to receiving team's restraining line. You are primarily responsible for first touching by K before the ball travels 10 yards and recovery of the kick.

BACK JUDGE

- Initial position on Team R's restraining line, shaded to receiving team's side of field. Ensure all Team R players have helmet secured (four straps) and mouthpieces in and are ready to play.
- Count Team K players and confirm with Umpire, then move to receiving team's sideline.
- Have bean bag in hand to rule on first touching by K.
- After kick, move onto field and observe action by/on kicking team players and first wave of receiving team blockers.
- On long returns, maintain buffer and stay ahead of runner to goal line, still observing blocks.
- For obvious onside situations, move to kicking team's restraining line and wings will move up to box in the play. You are primarily responsible for watching blocking by K and R.

Free Kicks After a Safety

Same as above except ball is kicked from Team K's 20. Referee and wings will line up based on receivers. Wings will probably be at or around R's 30.

Free Kicks After a Fair Catch or Awarded Fair Catch

REFEREE: Will handle the ball and will instruct the kicker/Team K in much the same way that the U does for an ordinary free kick.

UMPIRE: Will be responsible for Team R restraining line.

HEAD LINESMAN: Initial position is on his sideline at goal line to rule on touchback or momentum. Also responsible for runner if kick is returned. Remember to wind clock if ball touched by R.

BACK JUDGE & LINE JUDGE: Positioned under the goal posts like for an ordinary Field Goal. No whistle or signal unless ball has clearly crossed the goal line. Move to goal line (and LJ to sideline) if kick will be obviously short and grounded in the field of play.