

LINE OF SCRIMMAGE SIGNALS

By Mike McDaid

Counting

Both line of scrimmage officials (as well as the BJ) are responsible for counting the defense on ***EVERY*** play. The following signals are expected to be used to indicate there are 11, more than 11 or less than 11 players on defense:

- **When there are 11 player on defense**, punch to the defensive side and hold until acknowledged by either the opposite flank official or BJ.
- **When there are more than 11 players on defense**, give the “twirling finger” signal and look to BJ and opposite flank for acknowledgement. If there are more than 11, the flag should be thrown when the snap is imminent.
- **When there are less than 11 players on defense**, give the single “jazz hand” and look to BJ and off official for acknowledgement. It is important to know if there are less than 11 players because if another player runs into the formation, the officials will know that player is legal.

The timing of the signal is dependent upon the type of offense that is being run. If the offense is huddling on every play, the signal should be given at the time the offensive huddle breaks.

If the offense is running a no-huddle offense, the signal should be given as soon as the count is complete.

Formations

Whenever the offense lines up in an illegal formation, both flank officials are expected to have a flag down. To help the far-side official know whether or not you are judging the receivers on your side to be either on or off the LOS, both officials should use the following signals:

- **When the widest receiver is off the line of scrimmage**
 - Calling official points to offensive backfield and far-side official acknowledges by pointing back
- **When the two widest Receivers are off the line of scrimmage**
 - Raise hand with two fingers and slowly “rolls” arm toward offensive backfield
 - Far-side official acknowledges with a point
- **When receiver resets on the line of scrimmage**
 - Calling official crosses chest with the hand that is nearest the offensive backfield
 - If two or more receivers reset on the line of scrimmage, the signal is the same

False Starts/Encroachment

Both false starts and encroachment (offensive and defensive) are dead ball fouls and when the flag is thrown, the play (and clock) are killed.

In order to help the off LOS official and R know what is being called, flags for fouls against the offense should be thrown in the **offensive backfield** and flags for fouls against the defense should be thrown in the **defensive backfield**.

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If HL and LJ have a flag against each team, they should come together and discuss before they report to the R.

Live Ball Fouls

For any live ball fouls that are not spot fouls, the flag should be thrown **high in the air** and must land in the field of play.

For live ball fouls that are spot fouls, flags should be thrown nearest the **spot of the foul** as possible. Upon conclusion of the play, the flag should be adjusted to accurately reflect the spot of the foul before the foul is reported to the referee.

Backward Pass

If a pass is thrown to your side of the field, you are responsible for ruling if the pass is either forward or backward.

If the pass is forward, no signal is given.

If the pass is **parallel to the line of scrimmage or backward**, “punch” into the offensive backfield. If the pass is incomplete, continue to officiate the play as the ball is still live.

Fourth Down

On all fourth down plays, give the “squirrel cage” signal and look to off official and BJ for acknowledgement.

This signal indicates that regardless of the result of the play, the game clock will be stopped.

Goal Line

When the BJ gives up the goal line, the flank officials shall point to the pylon to confirm with the BJ that they now have responsibility for the goal line.

When the ball is first snapped from the 5 yard line in, both flank officials shall point to the pylon which indicates to the opposite flank that they will be in goal line mechanics on the next snap.