



FOOTBALL OFFICIATING ACADEMY GUIDE



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NFL Officiating Academy Guide – Your Road Map for Success

Welcome

The NFL Officiating Academy Guide is a proven and successful road map for officials of all levels to achieve their goals. This Guide will get you started with important information about who to contact and how to improve with steps for career development and success.

Getting Started

Officials are often asked, “*How did you get started with officiating?*” In most cases, another official encourages or helps someone get started as an official. Athletic directors or coaches can assist by supplying the contact information for their leagues’ assignment person.

A veteran official can guide a beginner through the registration process with introductions to local, state and national associations. New officials need to be informed of fees, equipment costs, and time commitments before they begin the journey of becoming an official.

Following are some steps to getting started:

- Contact your state governing body for high school athletics
- Contact a local officials association
- Complete the registration process
- Fulfill the requirements of your state: clinics, rules meetings, tests, background checks, etc.
- Register for training classes in your area
- Ask about equipment requirements and how to obtain new or used equipment
- Attend local association meetings for instruction on rules interpretations, mechanics and sound officiating philosophy
- Introduce yourself to the youth and sub-varsity assignor in your area
- Participate in scrimmages to learn basic mechanics
- Study rules tests with veteran officials for rule interpretations
- Ask the assignor for film of youth and sub-varsity games to study mechanics
- Prepare and arrive early for meetings, scrimmages and games
- Socialize with officials in the local association for insights to learning the craft

Football Officiating Academy Benefits

This Football Officiating Academy will prepare you for officiating youth and high school football. The benefits include:

- Instruction from the best trainers, including NFL officials
- Life skills development sessions to improve employment opportunities
- Football officiating uniform, rule books, study guides
- Rules applications and sound officiating philosophies
- Mechanics (where to stand on the field, signals, movement and coverage areas during a play)
- Step-by-step instruction for officiating licenses
- Contact information for game assignments
- Officiating Academy Alumni Club (progress tracked by NFL Officiating Department)

PROFESSIONALISM

The word professionalism in officiating is very subjective and open for debate among officials nationwide. One official may comment that giving an incomplete or timeout signal waving one arm while blowing a finger whistle is unprofessional looking. That same official might not think twice about professional appearance by walking out to a ball game with dusty shoes. These nuances of the game will always be debated when discussing professionalism in officiating.

One guideline always agreed upon is the decorum, integrity and composure officials must exhibit on and off the field. In their communities, officials are in the public eye no matter what level they work. A strong sense of commitment, pride and responsibility to the participants of the game should keep officials working hard to be the best they can be each and every game. Officiating a football game is a privilege and not a right, so we must always work hard to improve ourselves at rules knowledge, mechanics and sound officiating philosophy. Officials are expected to start perfect and get better every game.

The following sections will discuss professionalism as it relates to:

The Officiating Community: In good times and bad, officials are the greatest friends and supporters of their peers and families. Only another official understands the peaks and valleys an official encounters from week to week. The officiating community is always there for support when sickness or adversity strikes the officiating family. Through all of this, officials take on the responsibility to conduct themselves with dignity and composure by listening, learning and sharing knowledge about football officiating.

Professionalism within the officiating community encompasses these subjects on and off the field:

Training: Seek every opportunity and resource available to improve your officiating. Your will to prepare must be greater than your will to succeed. Regularly attend association meetings, clinics and scrimmages to gain more knowledge or share your experiences with the group. The crews you work with have complete trust that you're working to be the best you can be, don't let them or the game down. Get physically fit and learn to be in position to make the call.

Communication: Today's technology makes it inexcusable to not communicate with your peers. Good communication skills with your crew are important for keeping organized with travel & meeting times, game schedules and unexpected changes or delays.

Many officials work for multiple assignors in their region and sometimes have conflicts. Keep your assignors aware of your open and closed dates months before the season starts. As soon as you receive games, send the assignors the closed dates in your schedule to avoid double bookings which helps them when they have last minute changes.

The best way to improve your understanding of the game is open discussions and debates concerning test questions, interpretations, mechanics and sound officiating philosophy. These discussions are critical for career development and accomplishing your goals. Keep every avenue of communication open to your officiating peers.

Honesty: An official's reputation should be built on the basis of their uncompromising honest and integrity. Start with being honest with yourself regarding your preparation and performance as an official.

Whether it's a presentation at an association meeting or a post-game evaluation, assess your performance and consider ways to improve. Be honest with your fellow officials concerning decisions made on and off the field. Everyone makes mistakes, so be honest with your crew. Honesty with supervisors and assignors is critical in your development whether it is regarding a call in a game or a scheduling issue.

Feedback & Evaluations: Former Big Ten Conference official Jim Keogh has repeated many times, "when you're green you grow, when you're ripe you rot." We all need to accept positive or negative feedback from our performances as tools for improvement no matter how long we've been officiating. Observers and evaluators are sharing their knowledge so we can get better, not to insult or humiliate us. Don't take the evaluation as a personal attack and respond with a counter attack or personal remark. Never criticize or gossip about other officials.

Reliability: Always arrive early for meetings, travel connections with your crew or games. Your fellow officials deserve the respect of your timely arrival for a meeting or game. Work hard to establish the reputation as the person a crew or assignor can depend on to show up on time.

Dress for Success: Arrive at a game site dressed in business casual slacks or shorts and a collared polo shirt for that great first impression with game management. You only get one chance to make a great first impression. If you look professional, it sends a positive message about your commitment to the game. On the field, keep your officiating gear looking crisp and clean, even if that means buying new knickers (umpires), socks or hat each year. Clean and polish your shoes during the week, not in the locker room an hour before kickoff.

Coaches, Athletic Directors, Administrators: This group has many hours of time and preparation invested in the contest you're officiating and will not view all of your decisions objectively. They are emotional and very protective of their athletes and schools. Officials need to make a great first impression with a composed professional appearance and respectful demeanor. This will establish credibility to successfully work through the contest beginning with your arrival to the site through leaving the parking lot after the game. Working with this group in a highly emotional environment takes confidence, composure and respect; successful officials utilize these great people skills.

Coaches and officials must work together with integrity and without any preconceived notions about each others' roles. Coaching staffs' jobs are usually evaluated by won/loss records, which heighten their emotions on game days. Communication and interaction between coaches and officials should be done with non-confrontational body language, composed voice levels and mannerisms. Officials must be approachable and responsive but also know when to end the conversation.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case as tempers flare and boorish behavior sometimes happens during a game. Start a coaches conference with giving the coach due respect by adopting an instant listening mode while making eye contact. Remain composed with a brief response and discuss the play in question without rehashing previous play situations.

Choose your words wisely and confidently on the field and maybe with no response while heading off the field after a game. When working with coaches on and off the field, National Coordinator of Division I Officials, David Parry, has taught officials nationwide to "kill em with kindness" or "you can't quote silence." Officials need to be composed and respectful even when it is not returned. Officials have to be thick skinned, not take remarks personally but at the same time know how to differentiate between a personal attack vs. one aimed at motivating their team. A good response to a personal attack from a coach

is to ask the coach if he cares to repeat what he just said. Usually they don't repeat the personal attack, but if they do, they commit an unsportsmanlike conduct foul.

Players: As guardians of the game, an official's number one priority is the safety of the participants, especially the players. Officials must enforce the rules which are written to improve player safety in a highly competitive contact sport. When it comes to game control or safety fouls, these rules must be officiated to the letter of the law.

Officials are important role models who can teach student athletes about dealing with conflict and controversy. Officials must treat the players with respect while commanding their attention without being a bully. By remaining calm and composed, an official can demonstrate the proper behavior to players for decision making under pressure when things seem chaotic.

Address players by their number or as captain when communicating with them during the game. A compliment for good plays builds a rapport with players who sometimes view officials as always noticing the negative. Use non-confrontational body language but be fair and firm with your demeanor to players. Never threaten or verbally abuse players to make your point, but a subtle warning can get the point across.

Sometimes, players commit fouls such as slugging that disqualify them from the game. How an official reports the foul to the player and coach are very important from a teaching aspect for the player who committed the foul. The referee should announce to the player, coach and on the microphone if applicable, that the player has disqualified himself from the game. The player's actions removed them from the game; the officials did not eject them. We need to make this clear in order for players to understand that they are accountable for their actions.

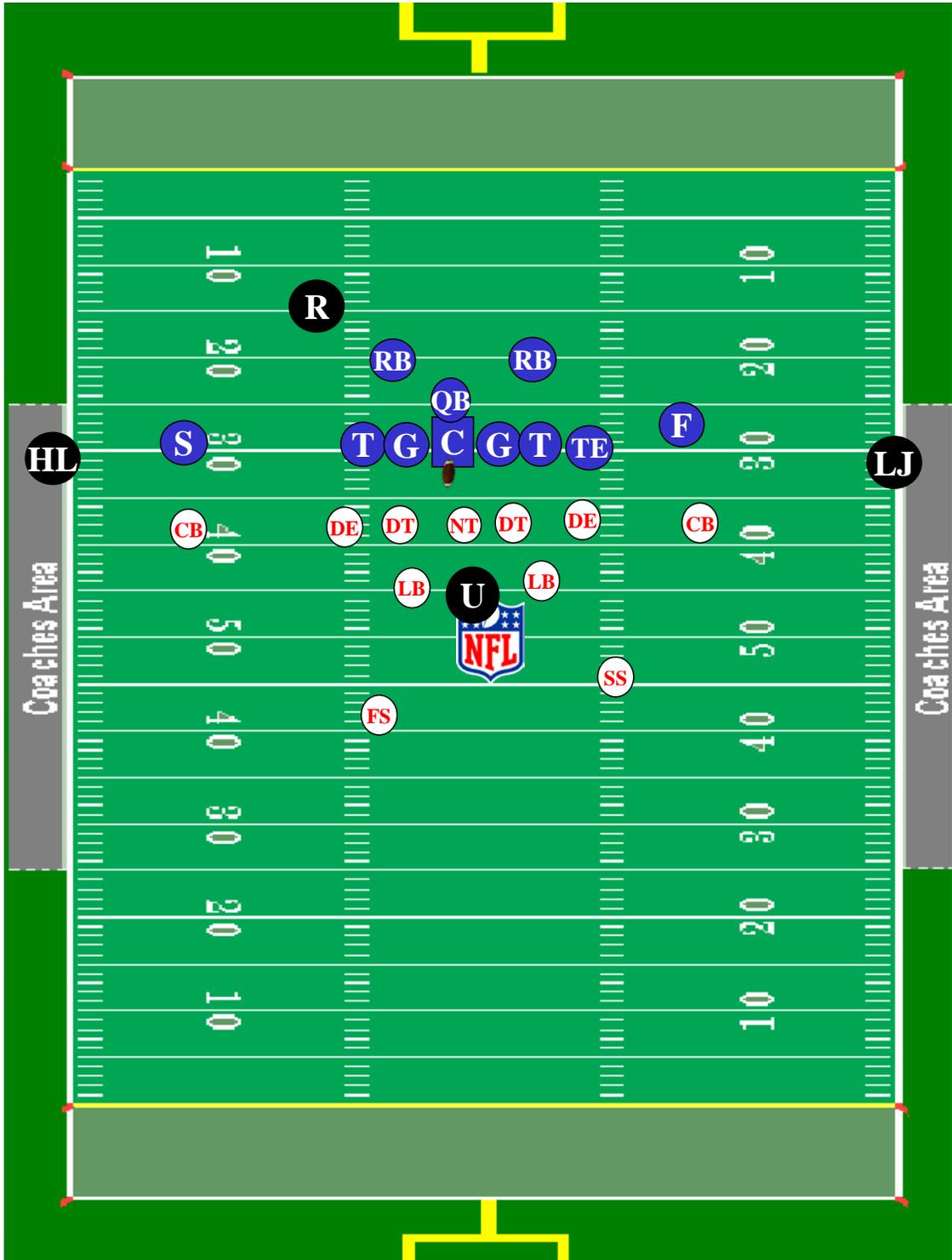
Spectators: Unlike coaches, players and administrators, spectators attend a football game without the training background regarding the rules and intricacies of the sport. Spectators are blinded by their allegiances to their teams and do not view the action objectively. They will get infuriated with a call, become hostile and take delight in antagonizing the officials. Spectators believe it is their right to express their unhappiness with a call and honestly believe officials are cheating.

Comments from spectators are part of the officiating environment, but how we handle ourselves during this abuse defines our own character. Officials should ignore the comments by concentrating on their keys and responsibilities for the next play. The comments are not meant for you the individual, but you, the striped shirt official. Failing to ignore the fans can lead to losing focus and committing an error on the ensuing plays.

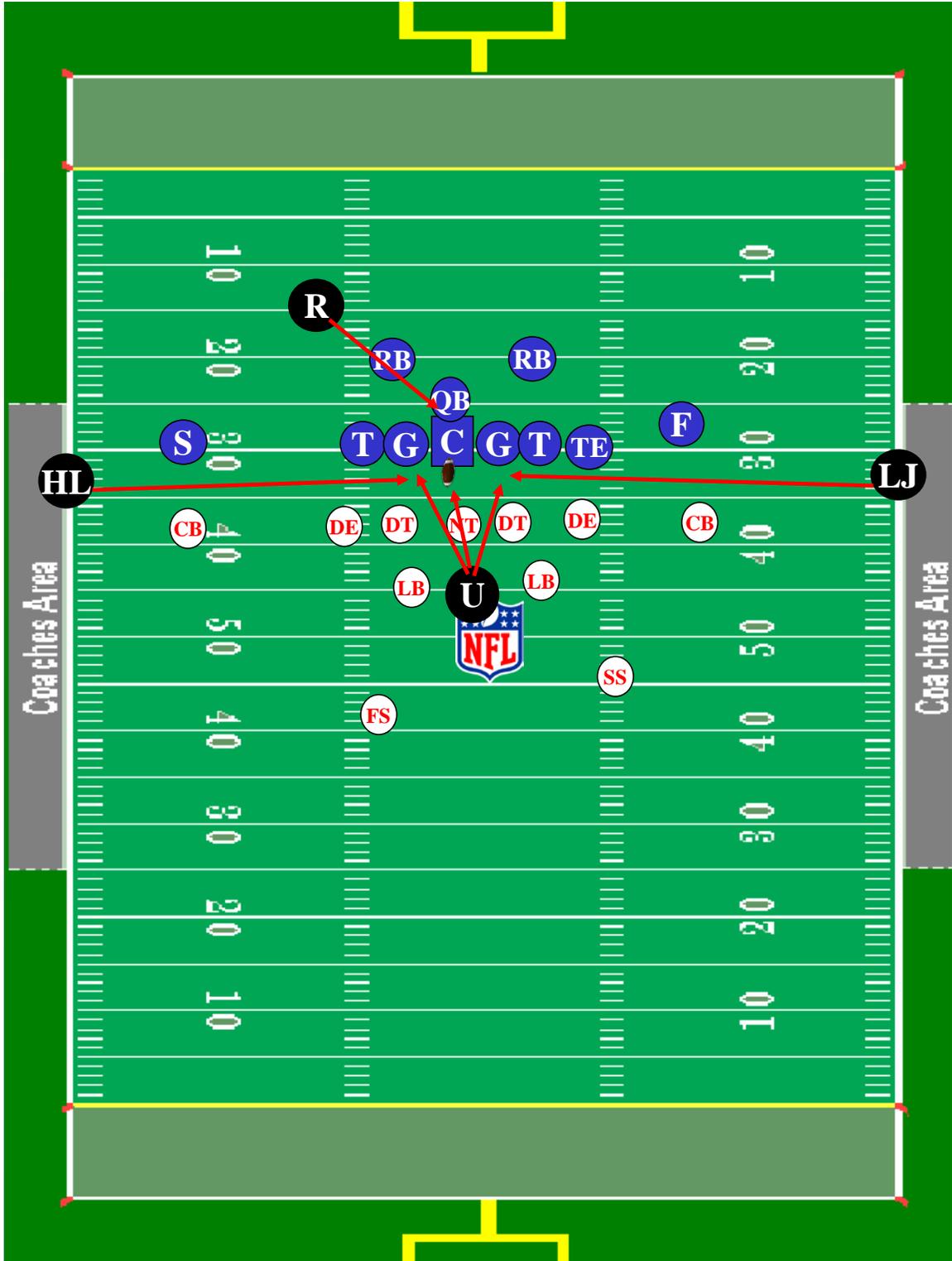
Remain calm and composed and do not engage with the spectators, by eye contact or verbal responses. A reaction from an official is what the abusers are trying to do and we lose our focus and credibility when we react. If the situation becomes dangerous with objects being thrown, call for game administration to handle the situation.

After the contest ends, exit the field and ignore the comments as you make your way to the locker room. Never react by yelling or gesturing to the spectators leaving the field. Conduct yourself with the highest standards of class and professionalism no matter how boorishly the fans are acting around you, dignity is expected of officials.

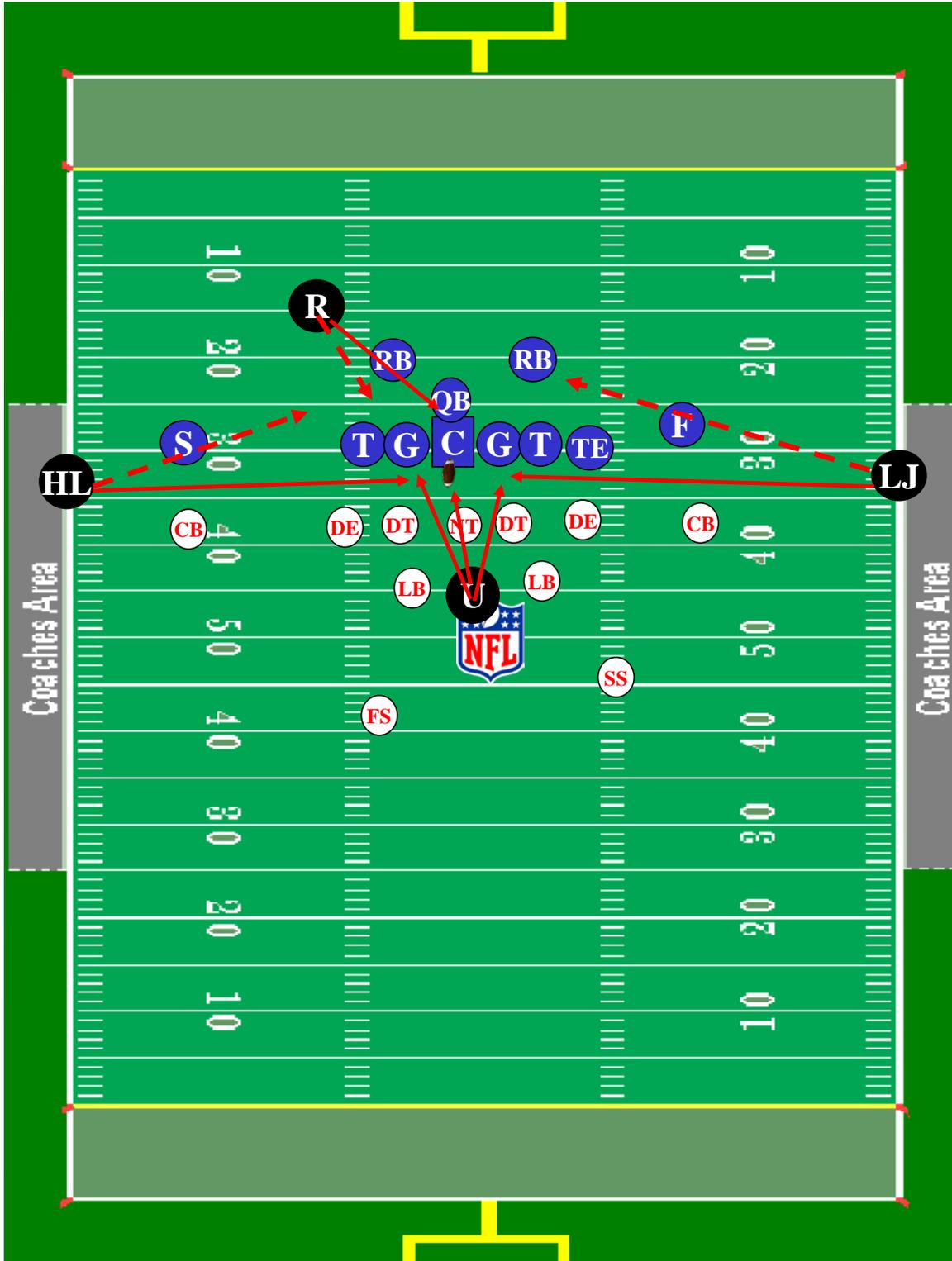
CREW OF FOUR OFFICIALS
REFEREE (R), UMPIRE (U), HEAD LINESMAN (HL), LINE JUDGE (LJ)



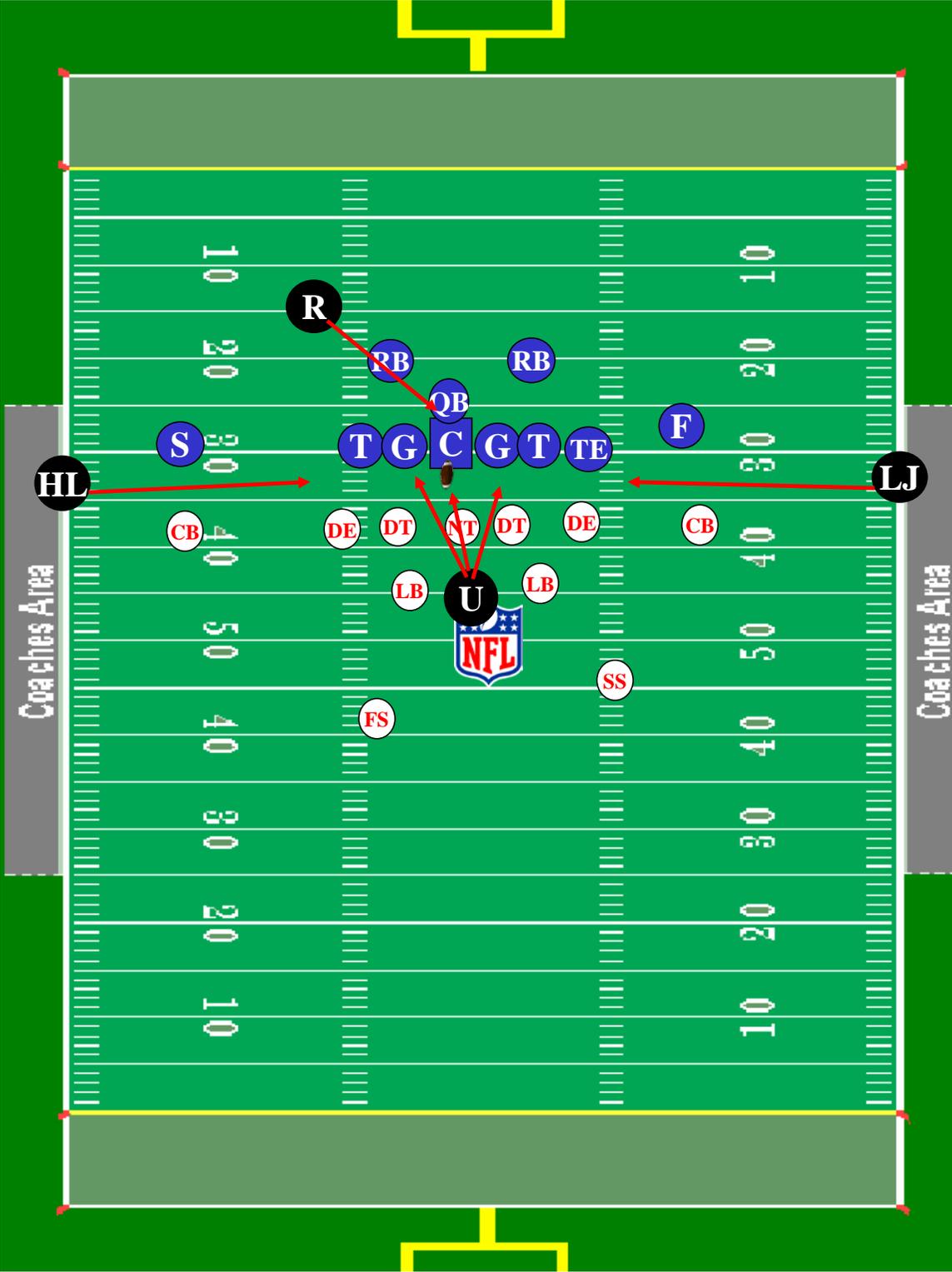
CREW OF FOUR PRE-SNAP POSITIONS



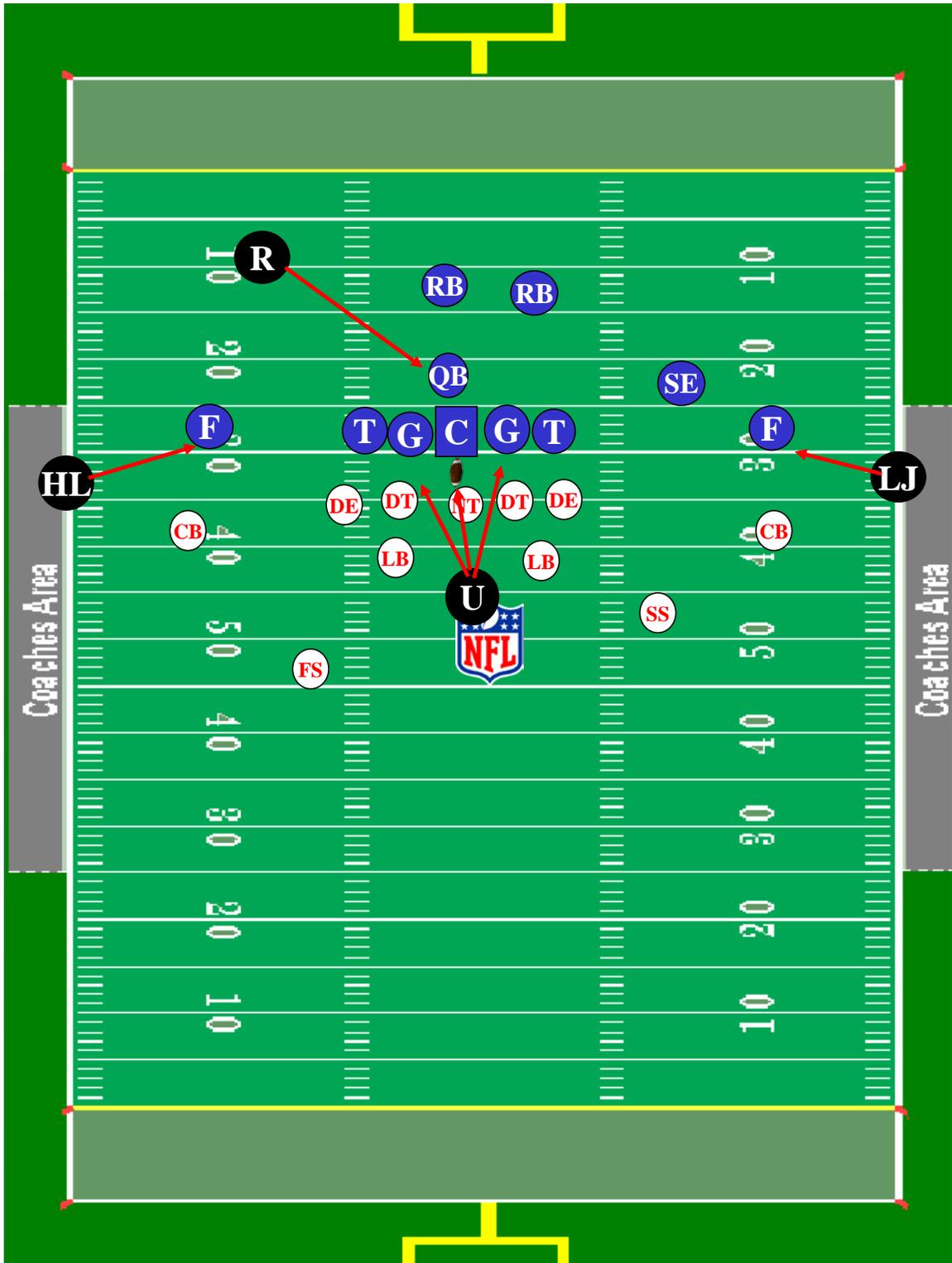
CREW OF 4 PRE-SNAP DUTIES



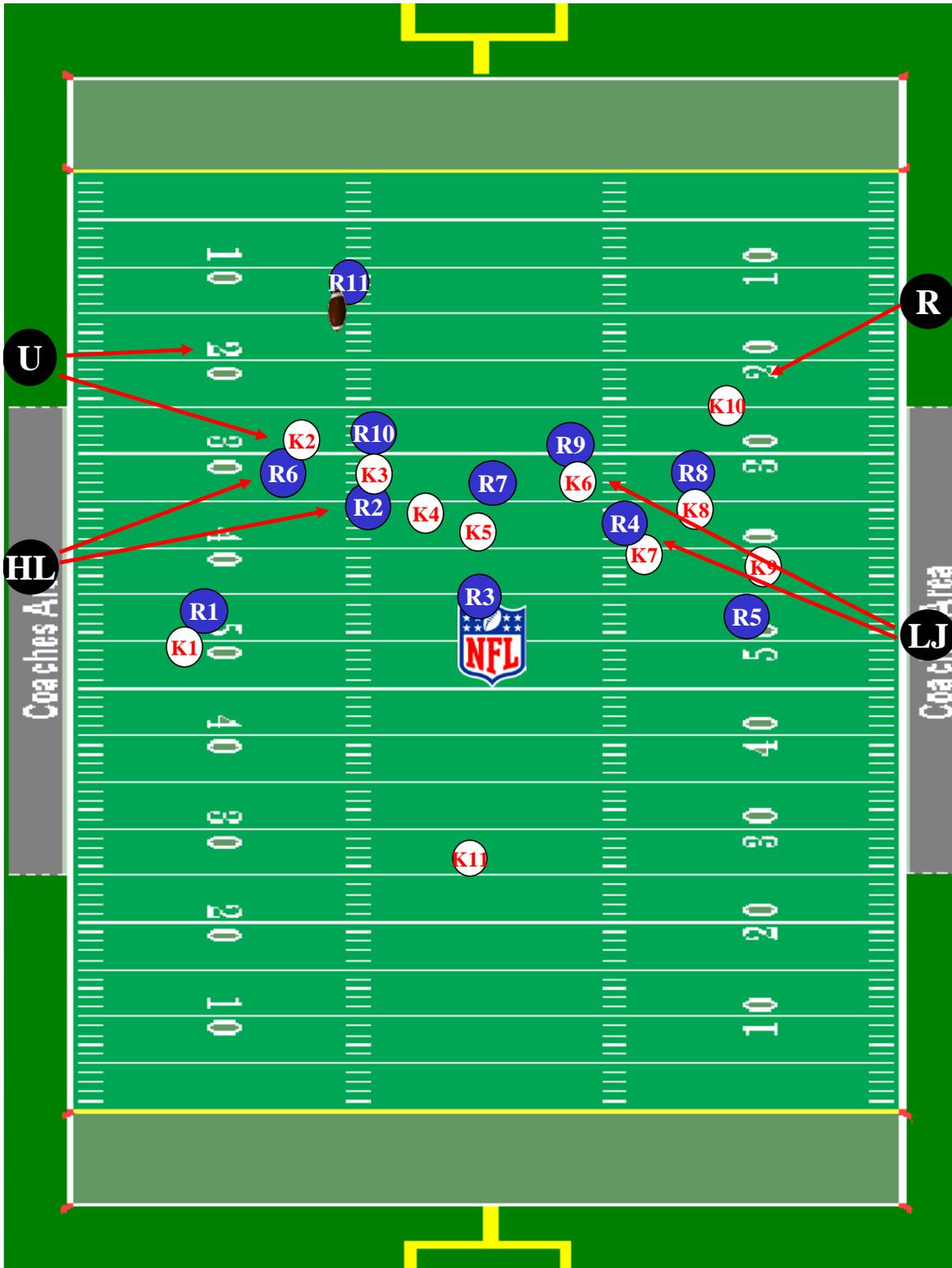
INITIAL KEYS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ON RUN PLAYS



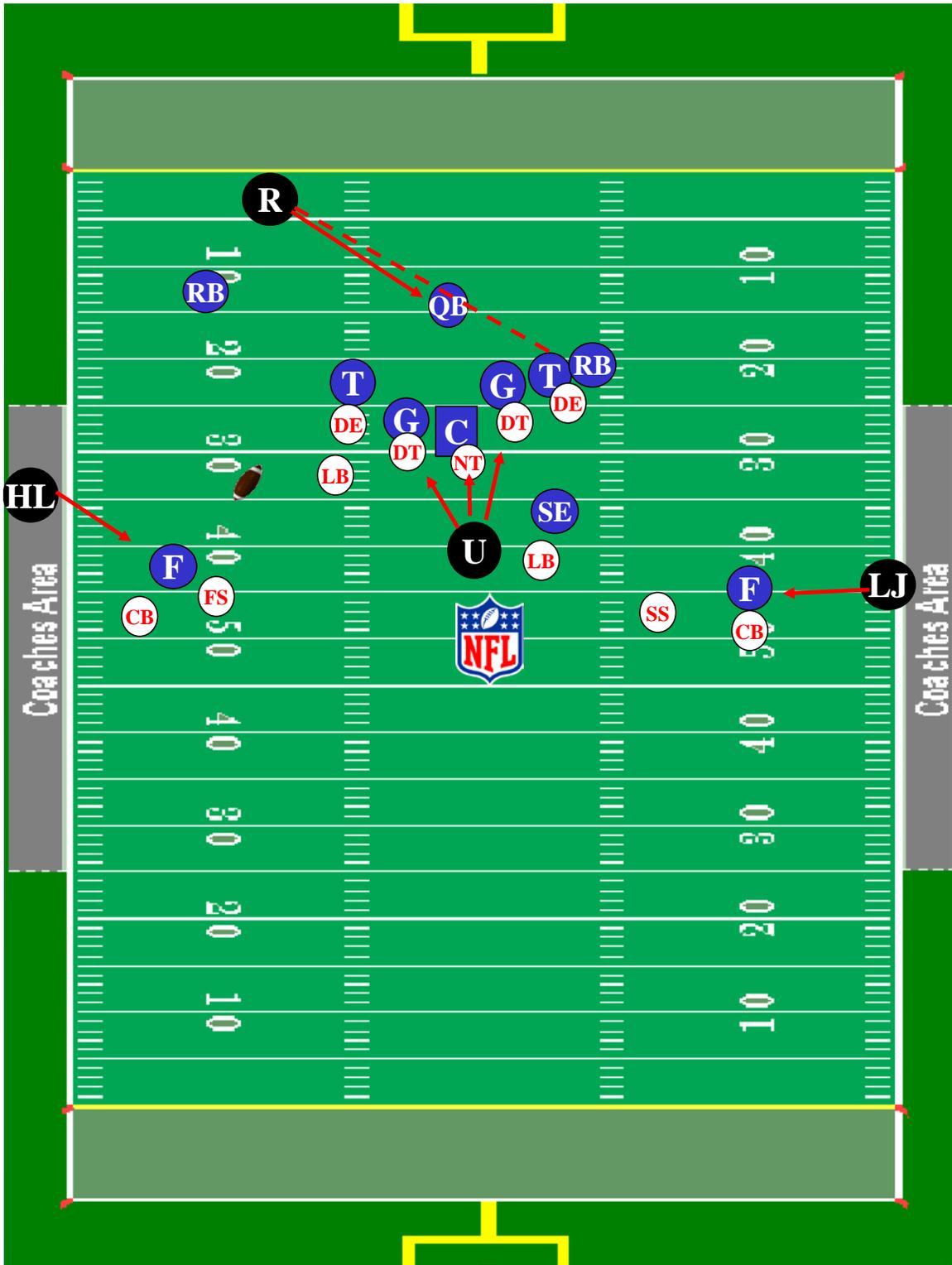
PASSING PLAYS: KEYS AND RESPONSIBILITIES



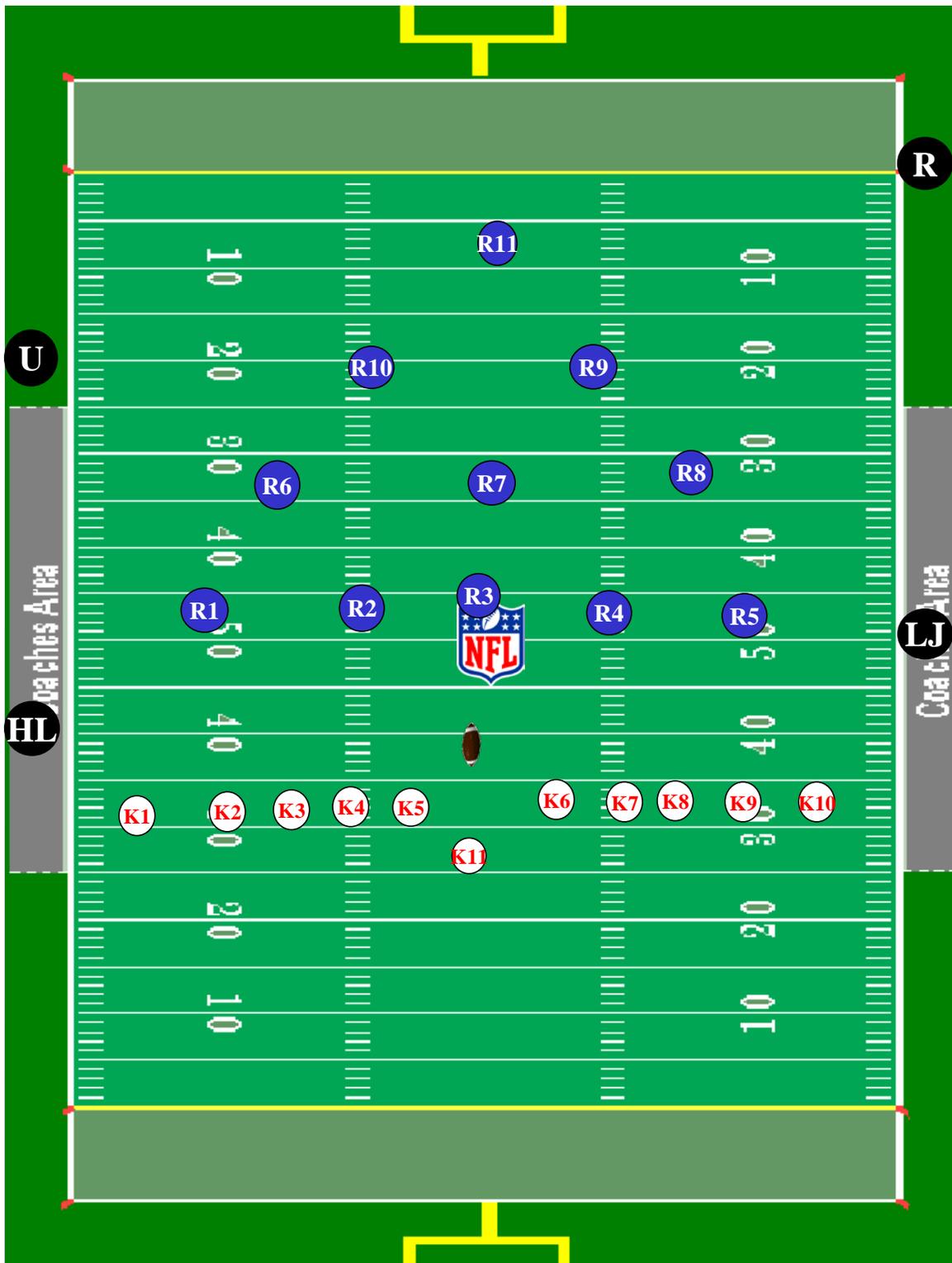
COVERAGE AREAS FOR FOULS ON KICKOFFS



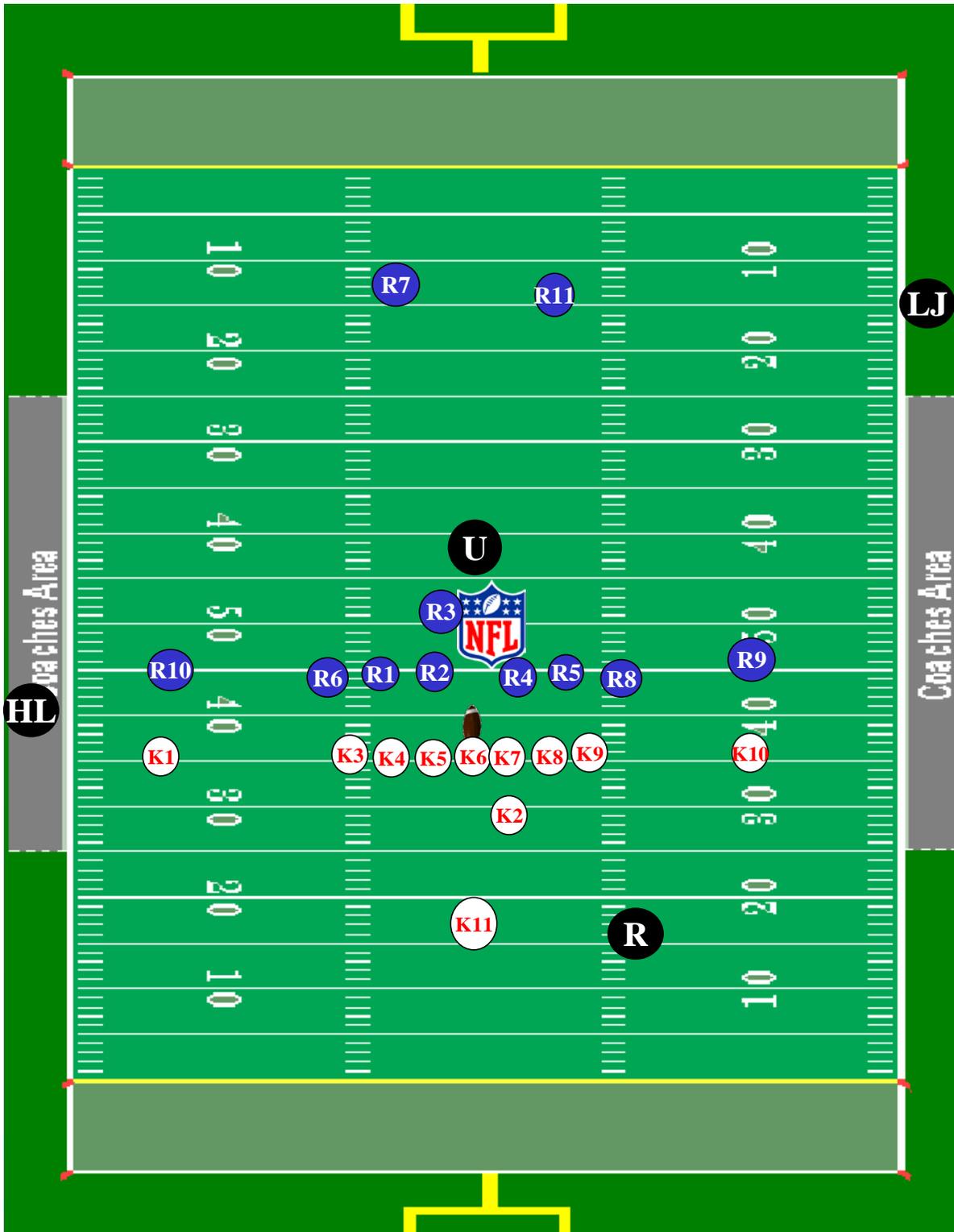
KEYS AND COVERAGE AREAS DURING PASS PLAYS



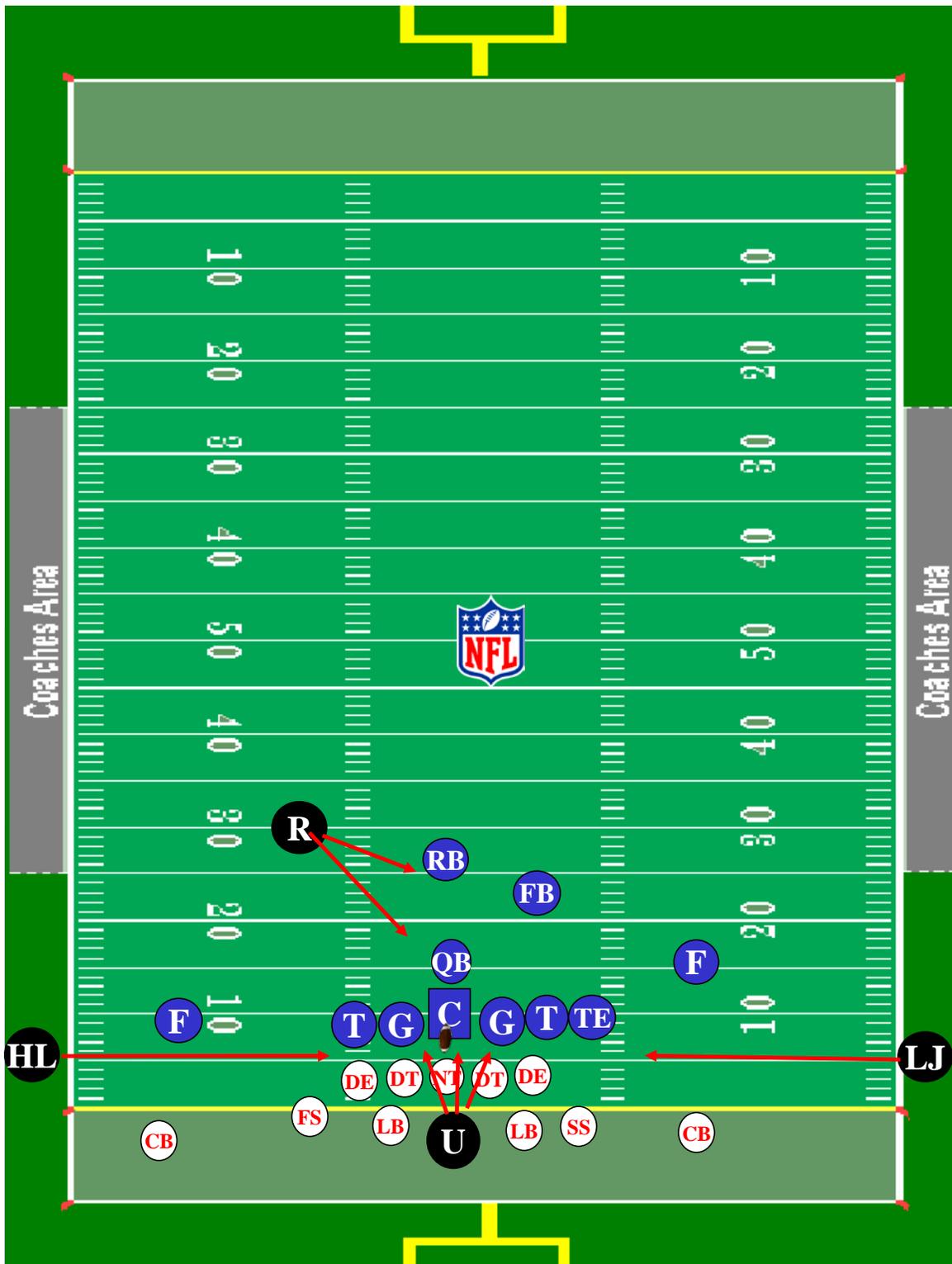
KICKOFF POSITIONS FOR CREW OF 4



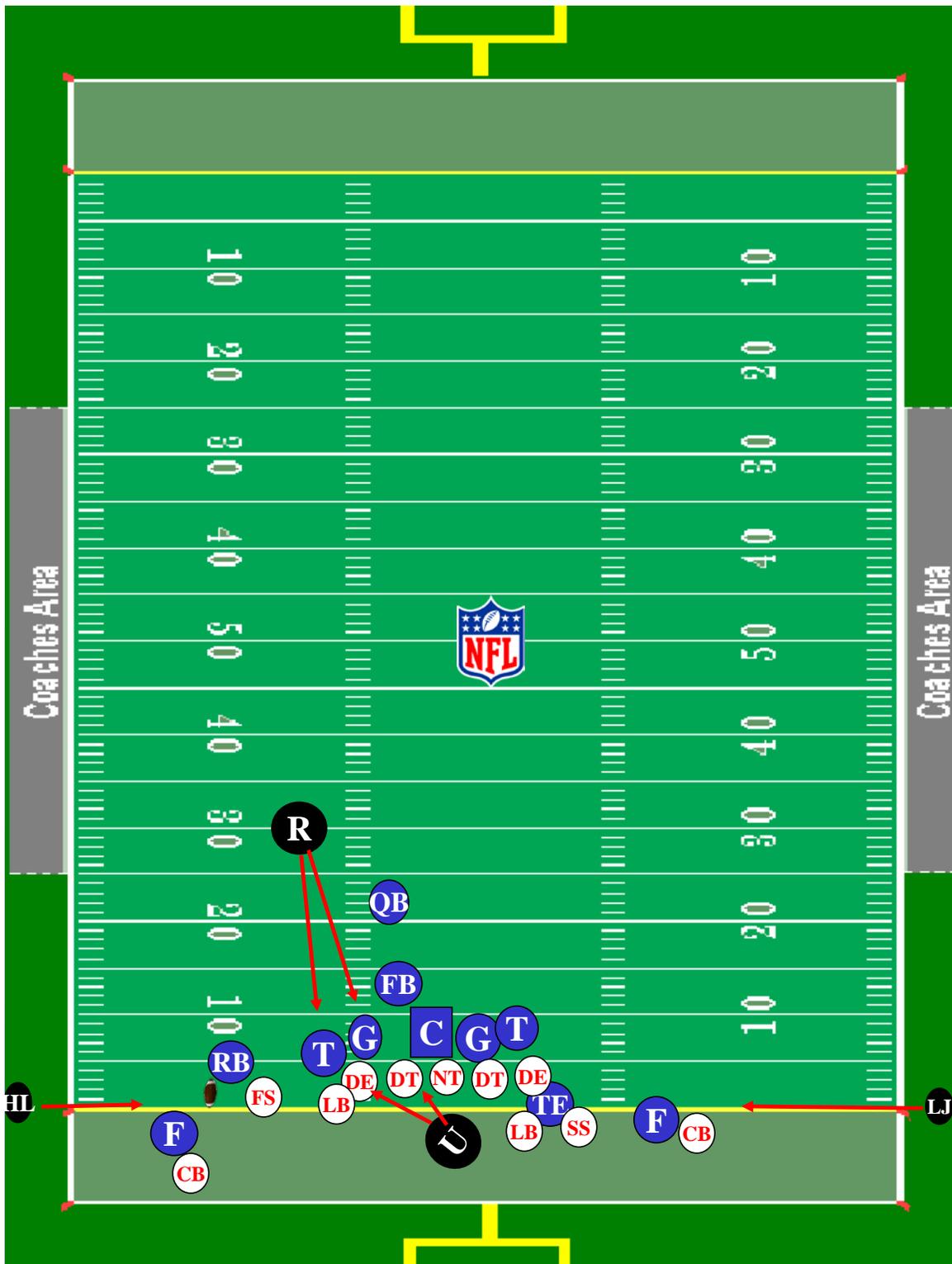
INITIAL POSITIONS ON PUNTS



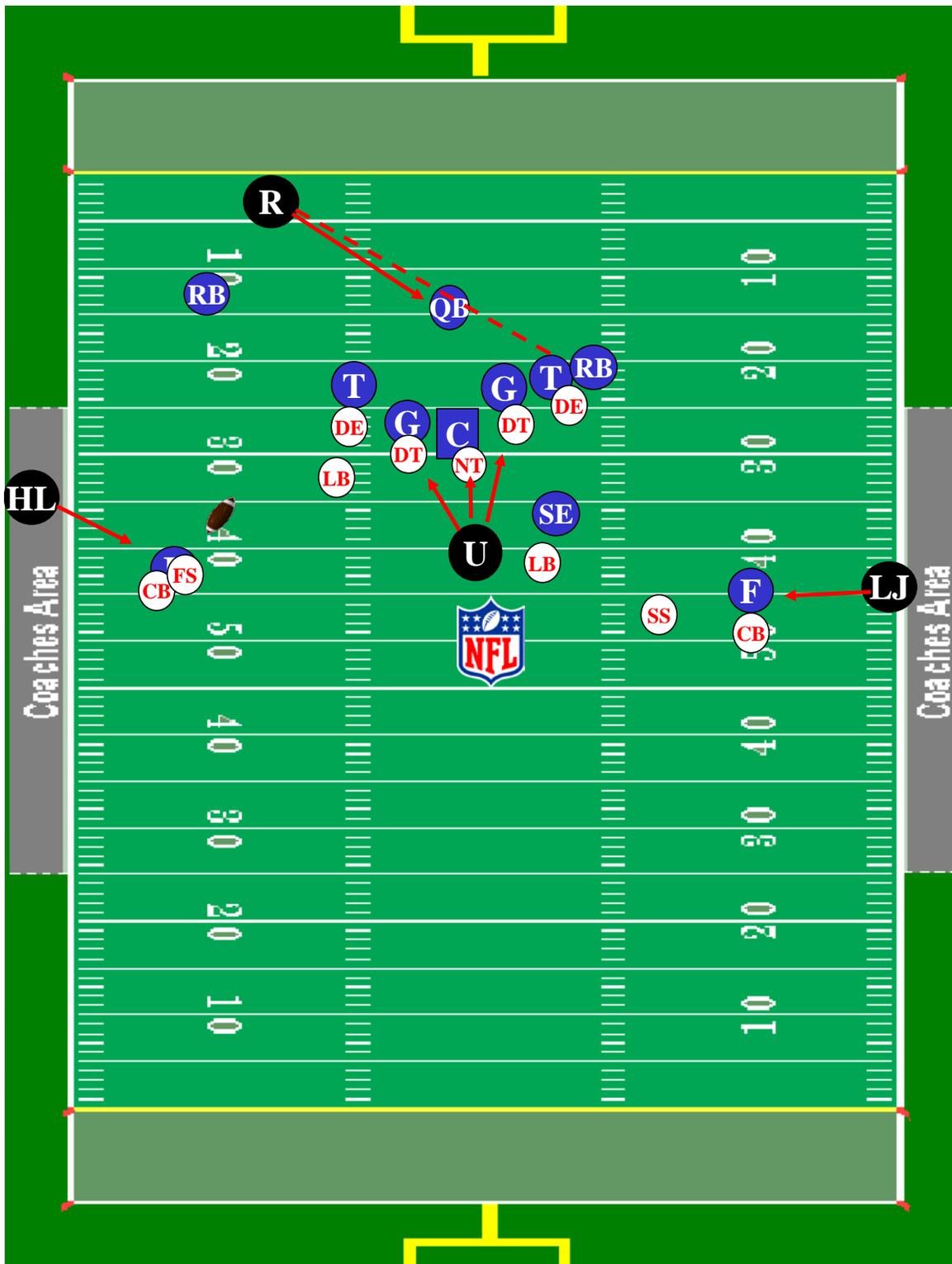
GOAL LINE RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE SNAP



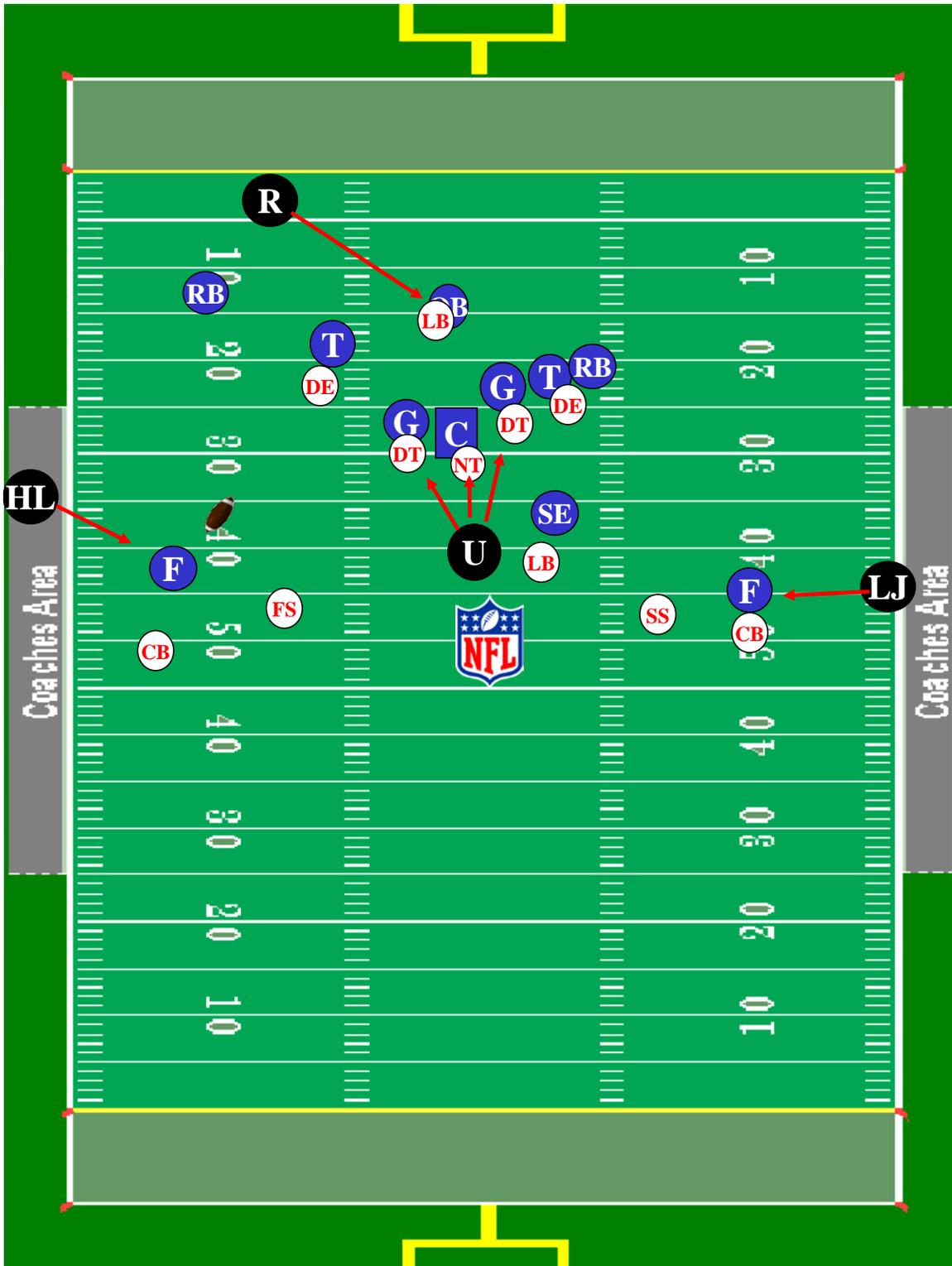
GOAL LINE RESPONSIBILITIES AFTER THE SNAP



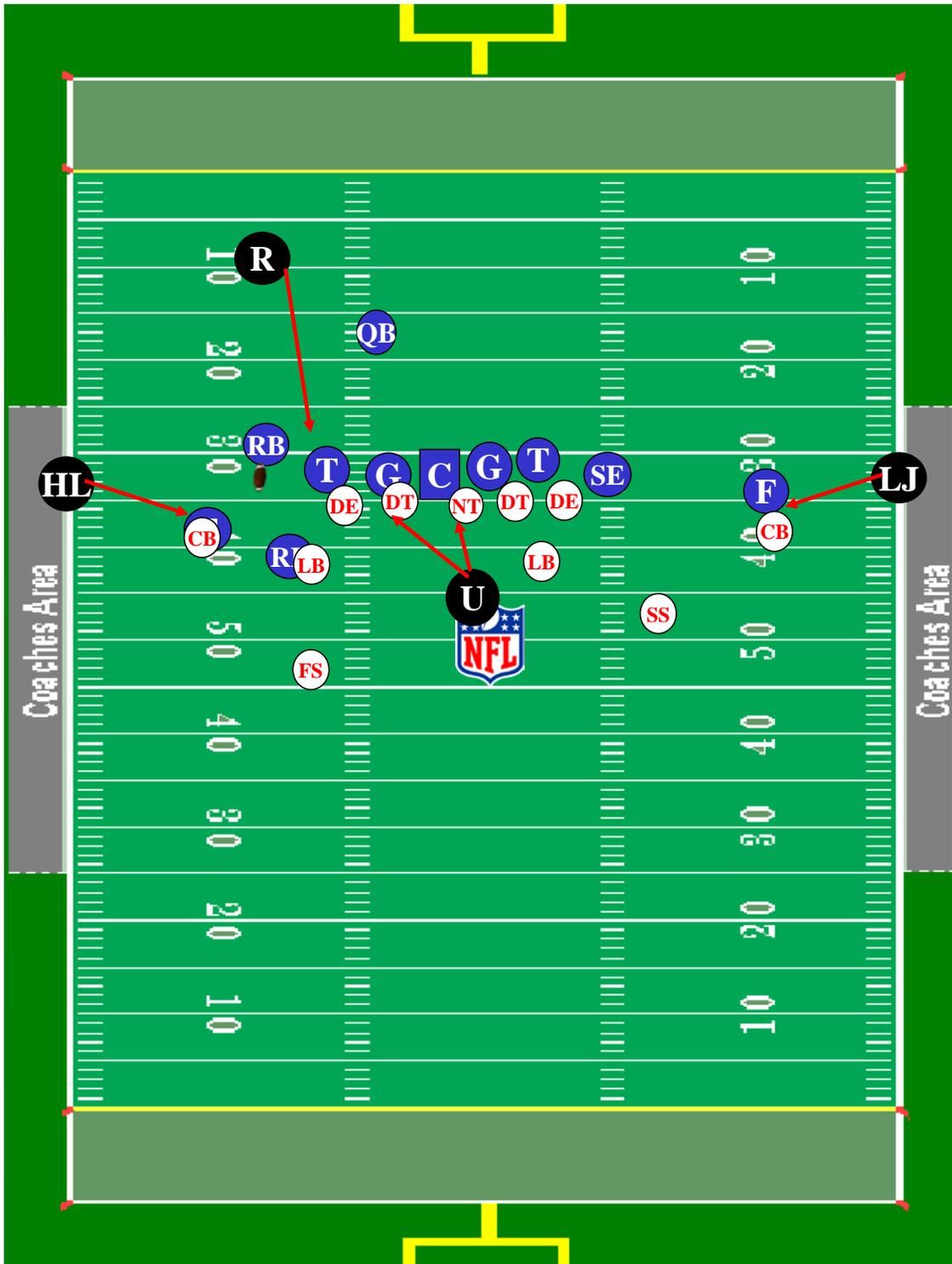
FOULS ON PASS PLAYS, DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE



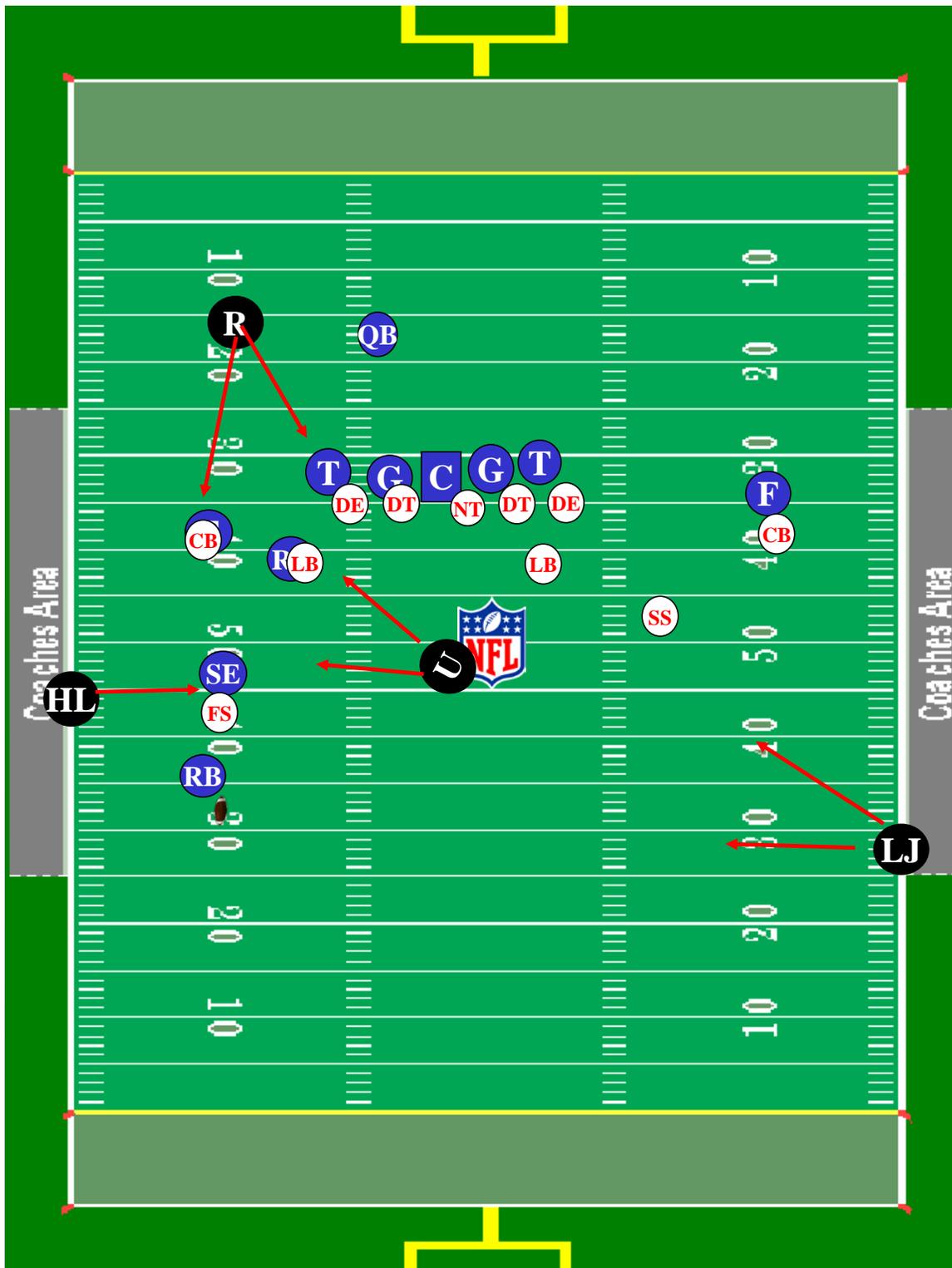
FOULS ON PASS PLAYS; ROUGHING THE PASSER



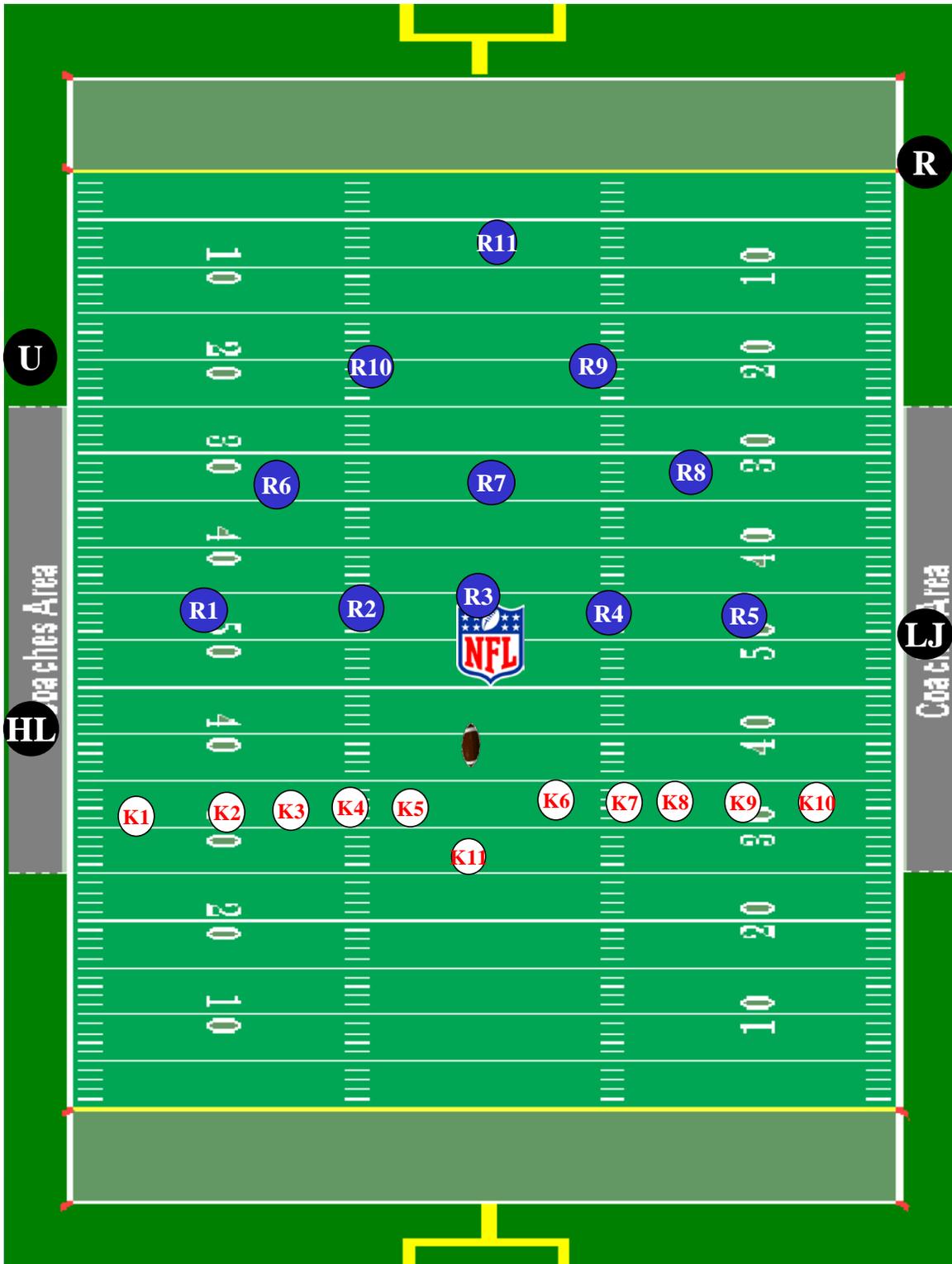
FOULS ON RUNNING PLAYS; HOLDING



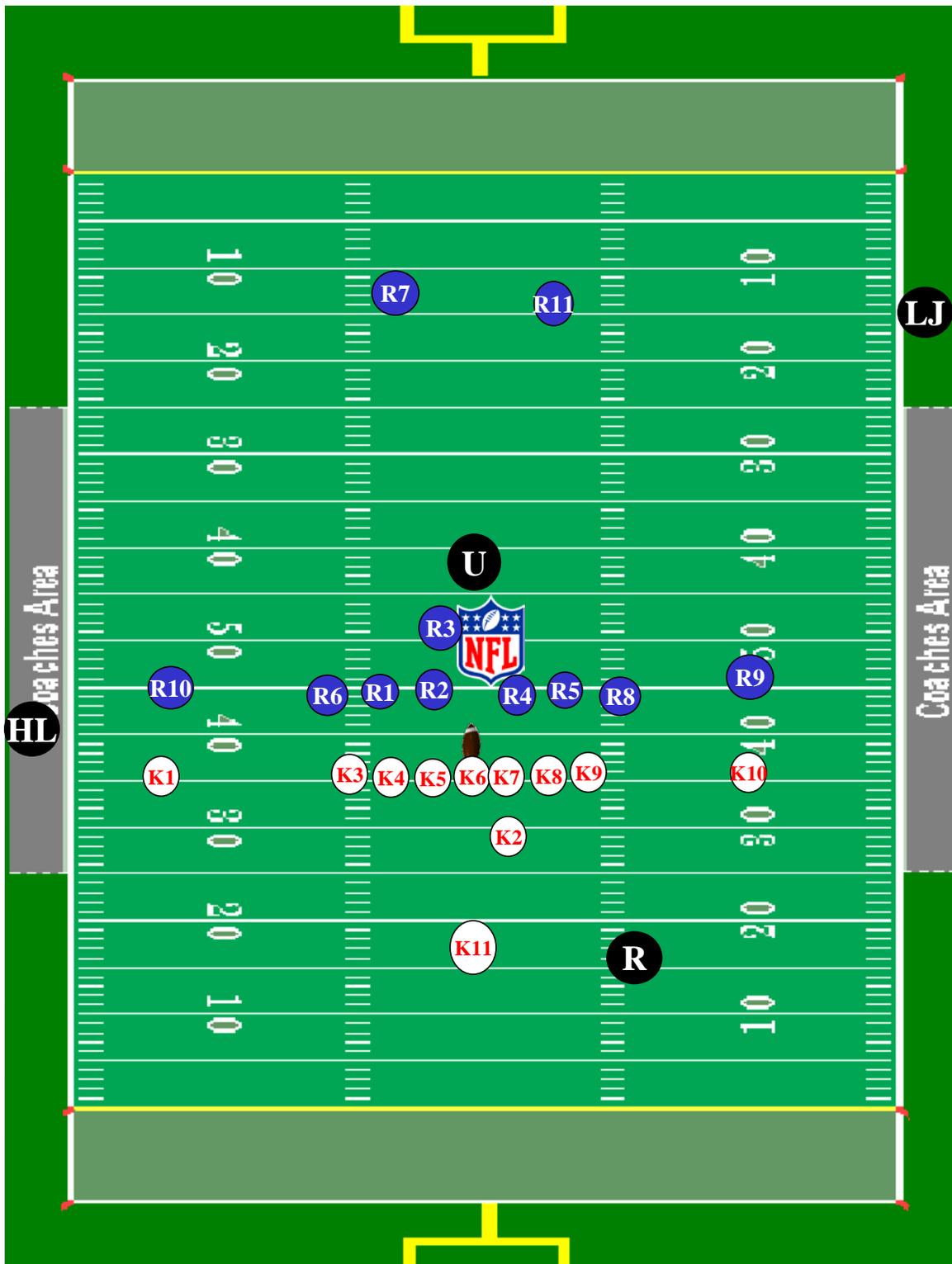
FOULS ON RUNNING PLAYS; BLOCK IN BACK



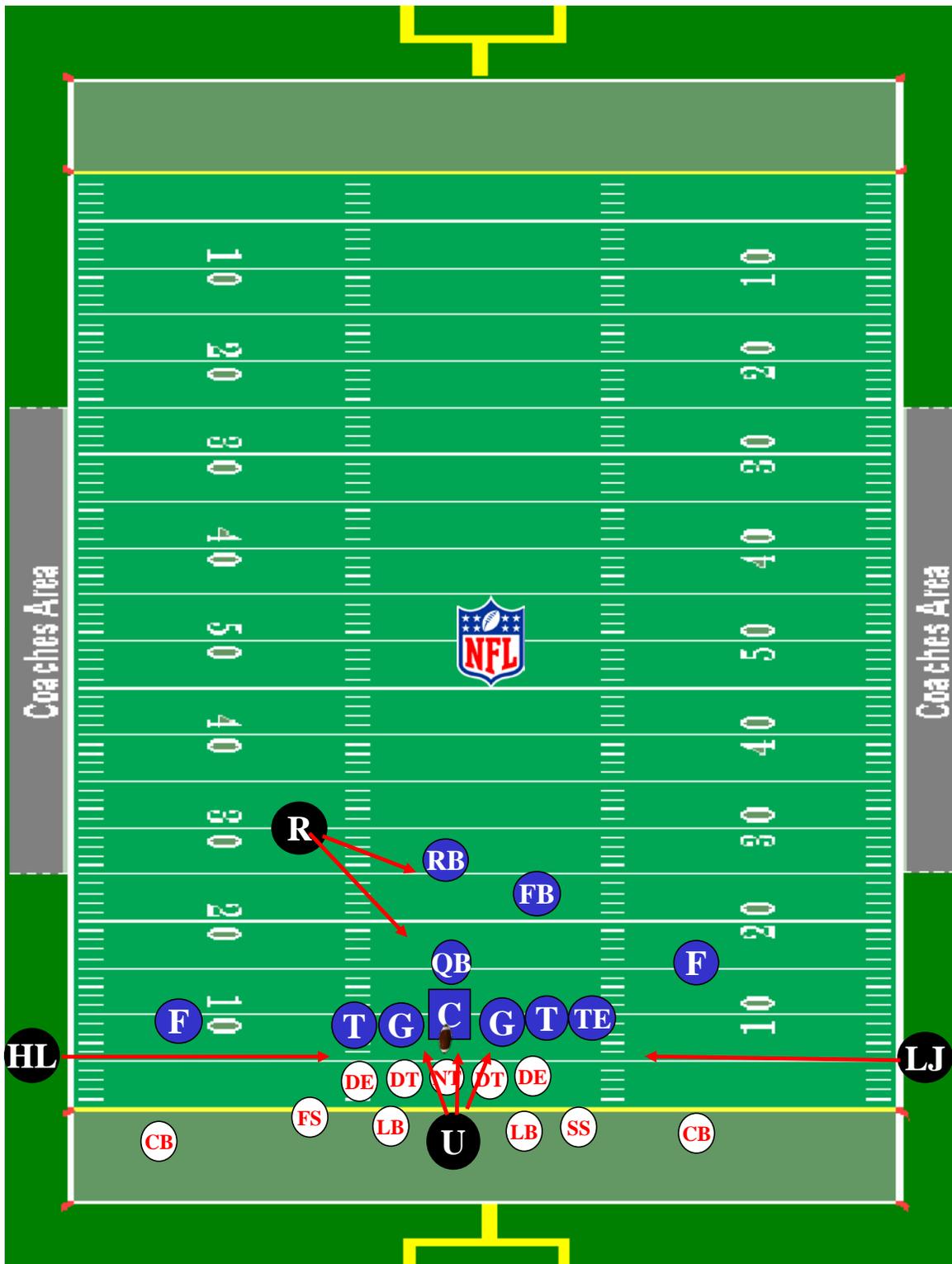
KICKOFF POSITIONS FOR CREW OF 4



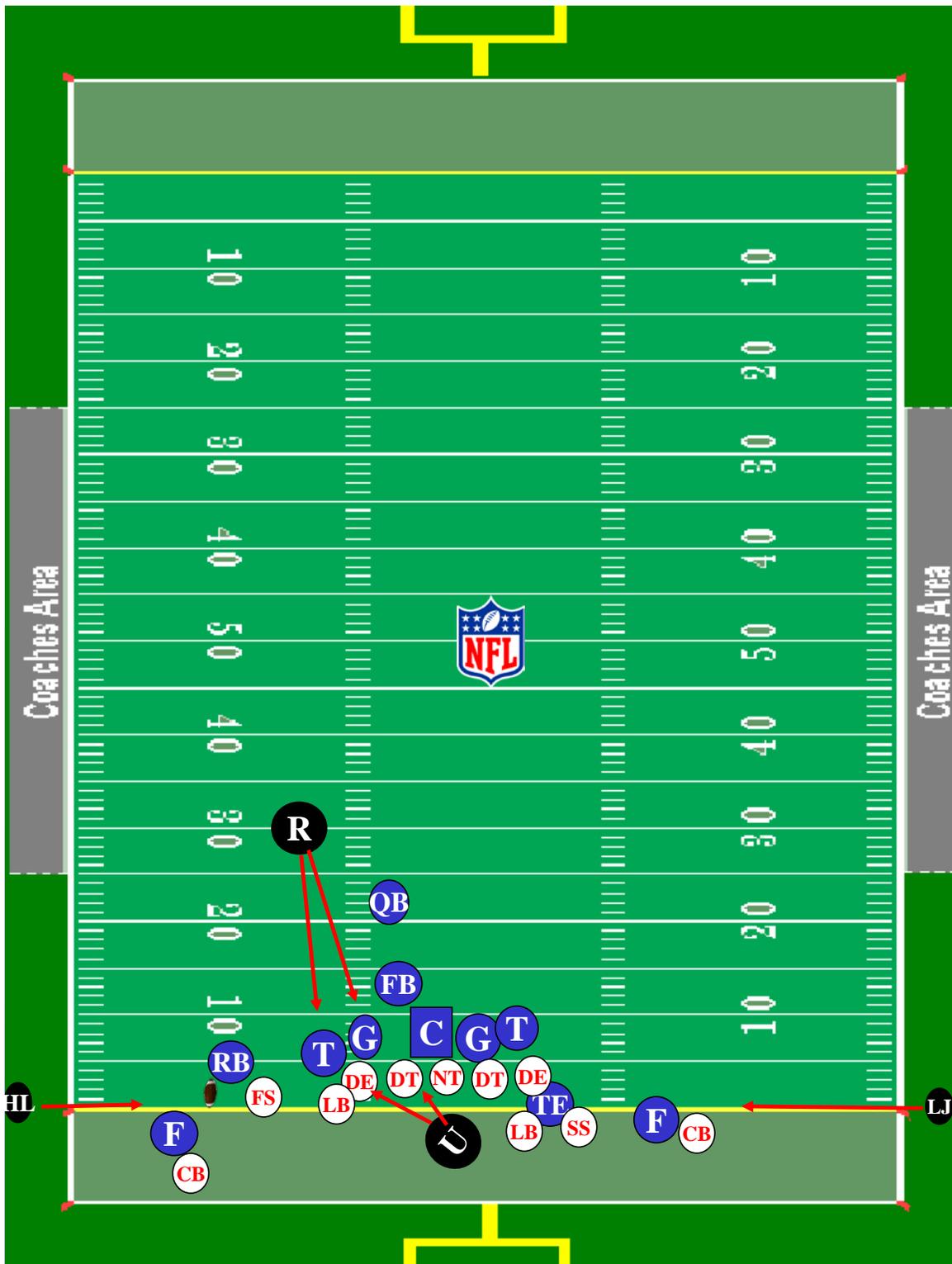
INITIAL POSITION ON PUNTS



GOAL LINE RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE SNAP



GOAL LINE RESPONSIBILITIES AFTER THE SNAP



OFFICIAL'S HAND SIGNALS



Touch Down
(Both arms extended above head)



Safety
(Palms together above head)



First Down
(Arm pointed towards defensive team's goal)



Crowd Noise
(One Arm above head with an open hand. With fist closed) Fourth Down



Personal foul
(One wrist striking the other above head)



Ball illegally touched, kicked, or batted
(Fingertips tap both shoulders)



Time out
(Hands crisscrossed above head.)



No time out or time in with whistle
(Full arm circled to simulate moving clock.)



Delay of game Or excess timeout
(Folded arms.)



False start, illegal formation, or kickoff or safety kick out of bounds
(Forearms rotated over and over in front of body.)



Holding
(Grasping one wrist, the fist clenched, in front of chest.)



Illegal use of hands, arms, or body
(Grasping one wrist, the hand open and facing forward, in front of chest.)



Penalty refused, incomplete pass, play over, or missed field goal or extra point
(Hands shifted in horizontal plane.)



Pass juggled inbounds and caught out of bounds
(Hands up and down in front of chest (following incomplete pass signal).)



Illegal forward pass
(One hand waved behind back followed by loss of down signal.)



Intentional grounding of pass

(Parallel arms waved in a diagonal plane across body. Followed by loss of down signal.)



Interference with forward pass or fair catch

(Hands open and extended forward from shoulders with hands vertical.)



Invalid fair-catch signal

(One hand waved above head.)



Ineligible receiver or ineligible member of kicking team downfield

(Right hand touching top of cap.)



Illegal contact

(One open hand extended forward.)



Offside, encroachment, or neutral zone infraction

(Hands on hips.)



Illegal motion at snap

(Horizontal arc with one hand.)



Loss of down

(Both hands held behind head.)



Interlocking interference, pushing, or helping runner

(Pushing movement of hands to front with arms downward.)



Unsportsmanlike conduct

(Arms outstretched, palms down.)



Touching a forward pass or scrimmage kick

(Diagonal motion of one hand across another.)



Illegal cut

(Hand striking front of thigh.)



Illegal crackback

(Strike of an open right hand against the right mid-thigh preceded by personal foul signal.)



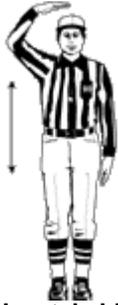
Player disqualified

(Ejection signal.)



Tripping

(Repeated action of right foot in back of left heel.)



Uncatchable forward pass
(Palm of right hand held parallel to ground above head and moved back and forth.)



Twelve men in offensive huddle or too many men on the field
(Both hands on top of head.)



Face mask
(Grasping face mask with one hand.)



Illegal shift
(Horizontal arcs with two hands.)



Reset play clock - 25 seconds
(Pump one arm vertically.)



Reset play clock - 40 seconds
(Pump two arms vertically.)



Roughing the Kicker
(One wrist striking the other above head followed by swinging leg)



Roughing the Passer
(One wrist striking the other above head followed by raised arm swinging forward)



Major Face Mask
(One wrist striking the other above head followed by grasping face mask)



Illegal block below the waist
(One hand striking front of thigh preceded by personal-foul signal.)



Chop block
(Both hands striking side of thighs preceded by personal-foul signal.)



Clipping
(One hand striking back of calf preceded by personal-foul signal.)

OFFICIATING PHILOSOPHY

Developing an officiating philosophy is an important skill for success. Retired Big Ten referee, Tom Quinn always referred to this as the three-legged stool. One leg being rule knowledge, another leg is mechanics, and the third leg is philosophy. If one leg is weak, the stool will topple. When all three legs of the officiating stool are strong we have a game the players can play, the coaches can coach, and the fans can enjoy. Officials cannot pick and choose the rules to enforce, but an official who combines both technical and practical skills can support the rules and still not call every play exactly by the book.

Philosophy is not something that comes easy. It takes seasons to develop and it's something that is ever changing. The best officials approach the game with an attitude that says we never stop learning. Those who feel they "know-it-all" will quickly be humbled in the world of officiating. With 22 players and nearly 150 plays per game to officiate, there will be hundreds of rulings and judgments to be made during the course of a game. Football can be a complex game that is not as black and white as the rules make it. Being able to handle the gray areas of judgment and enforcement is critical in applying the spirit and intent, which the rule was written.

Officiating philosophy is described as who we are and how we handle game situations. Remember, we have the responsibility to be the guardians of the game. This is an awesome, yet important, responsibility that we need to take seriously. The game belongs to the kids playing it. Remember no matter what the age of the kids, it's their game, not ours.

As we go through our careers we see different types and styles of officials. Some officials know the rulebook like the back of their hand. They can quote chapter, section, and paragraph when it comes to any rule imaginable but have a hard time calling pass interference, holding, and other situations. Other officials are not great with the rules but seem to have a feel for the game, maybe because they played. They seem to understand the "accepted" calls that really impact the game. These officials generally are successful but aren't able to help the crew in situations when rule knowledge is critical. The third official is the one who balances the rulebook with common sense or "game sense". At the professional and collegiate levels, officiating supervisors spend more time with their staff on how to call the game than with specific rules. At lower levels of officiating, the lack of immediate supervision and feedback limits officials in developing these skills. The lower levels are also where officials develop their own philosophies through trial and error and rely on mentors to hone their game skills. This is why officials must be lifetime learners.

Football officiating requires the crew to be more consistent in their calls than any other sport. Whether it is a three or seven-person crew, everyone must be on the same page and have compatible philosophies if there's going to be consistency throughout the game. Adapting to the level of play is another critical factor in officiating success. What is a foul at one level may not be a foul at another level. The ability to adapt to the play and judiciously apply the rules demands good officiating philosophy. Nothing will drive the players and coaches up a wall faster than having holding or pass interference called differently among crew members. Sideline officials must enforce the same standards for coaches on their sideline as their partner across the field. Successful officiating is not a science it's an art. Individual and crew success comes from everyone being well grounded in officiating philosophies.

KEY OFFICIATING PRINCIPLES

Block below the waist...is making initial contact below the waist from the front or side against an opponent other than a runner. If an opponent is airborne, blocks below the waist are legal as are blocks below the waist in the free blocking zone.

Dead Ball Officiating...watching the action before and after a play for any unnecessary conduct by players or coaches. Dead ball officiating is a team effort and the whole crew must be aware of actions after the play, out of bounds or around the pile. Primary responsibility is player safety and good sportsmanship

Don't blow the whistle...See leather! When you can't find the ball the last thing you want to do is blow your whistle. Be patient. What seems like an eternity is only a second longer. Find the ball in player possession when the runner goes down or is crossing the goal line before blowing on the whistle. Once the whistle blows, you've taken all opportunity for help from your crew away because you have an inadvertent whistle. When in doubt, go slow and don't blow your whistle until you are sure of your ruling.

Don't mirror signals...Too often we see officials mirror another official's signal on an incomplete pass or a touchdown. If you weren't a primary covering official or did not have the same call, leave it alone. If your partner is wrong and you mirror that signal it makes it difficult to overrule this call. Not only is your partner wrong, but you are too! Signal when it is your responsibility, but when in doubt, don't mirror another signal.

Don't throw the flag... MIBT...In most instances tight situations are not fouls. MIBT means Make It Be There! See the entire situation before throwing a flag. More errors are made from guessing and throwing than by holding the flag. Phantom fouls are less forgiving and lead to crew and individual inconsistency. If you "think" you have a foul, you probably don't. Know for sure that you have a foul. When in doubt, don't throw your flag.

Forward progress is stopped...Forward progress is a real art rather than a science. The official who can decide when to rule progress and when to let a run go is a master of this art. Remember something about progress and fumbles: If you decide progress, the runner cannot gain or lose yardage, nor can the runner fumble. If you decide the runner is free to run, then the runner can fumble. You cannot allow the runner to advance and maybe score unless you are willing to let the runner fumble. What appears to be an eternity is really only a one-second pause after reading the play and then seeing if the runner is really wrapped up and under control. Like other axioms, do not allow a cheap turnover to happen if you have doubt

It is a block below the waist, clipping, or a chop block...Player safety is paramount to the game of football. Ruling these situations as fouls when you are "in doubt" is a forgivable mistake. Not calling these fouls, especially when a player is injured from the foul is not easy to defend for your crew. When in doubt, err on the side of safety.

It's a fumble rather than the runner down...Over the years, replays show that nearly 90% of the fumble/down situations are fumbles. You take any chance of help from your crew away when you blow the whistle without seeing the ball dead by rule. Let the play continue and get help from a crewmate. Again, inadvertent whistles are tough to explain and usually a huge inequity occurs by rule when they happen. When in doubt, the ball is loose.

It's a touchback rather than a safety... Too often we see officials not in position try to rule a safety call when in fact, the ball never came out of the end zone. This is a fundamental axiom that needs to be followed. Don't put cheap points on the board and have the team giving up the ball on the ensuing free kick. When in doubt, it is a touchback.

It is roughing not running into the kicker... The kicker is in a vulnerable position unable to protect himself. Give him the benefit of the doubt and rule roughing when the contact puts him at risk of injury. Running into the kicker is contact that displaces the kicker or holder without roughing. When in doubt, never put the kicker at risk and call roughing.

Keep an eye on broken equipment... If a player's equipment seems to be broken or dangerous, remove the player from the game. Then inform the head coach that the player can return when the equipment is fixed. On your pregame walkthrough, if sideline equipment seems dangerous to participants, ask game administration to remove or safely cover the object. Always err on the side of safety when in doubt.

Penalty and Basic Spot... a penalty is action imposed by rule against a team that has committed a foul. A foul is a rule infraction for which penalty yardage is assessed with the basic spot being a point of reference to enforce the penalty. The basic spot is determined by the action that occurs during the down.

Scrimmage kick/formation... a scrimmage kick is any legal kick from in or behind the neutral zone either by punt, place kick or drop kick. A scrimmage kick formation has at least one player 7 yards or more behind the neutral zone to receive a long snap.

Stop the clock for potentially injured players... Be alert at the end of a play for players who are injured or in need of assistance from trainers and medical personnel. Err on the side of safety. Oftentimes, the type of contact or hit will be a clue to the potential for injury. Officials should never tend to injured players. Allow the trainers and/or medical personnel to do their job. Your role is to officiate the game not provide medical services.

The ball is accidentally touched with a foot rather than intentionally kicked... Many times during a loose ball on the ground, players will accidentally kick the ball while trying to gain possession. When in doubt, rule that the action was incidental and the ball was not illegally kicked.

The block is on the side... When in doubt if an open field block is on the side or in the back and the blocker is not chasing the defender, rule the action to be a legal side block. If the blocker is chasing, make sure you see the whole block and a hand on the back for a block in the back foul. When in doubt, it is a side block.

The forward pass is incomplete rather than a fumble... On a pass that comes out of the receiver's hands immediately upon contact, rule these incomplete. More times than not, the receiver never controlled the ball long enough to do something common to the game... run, pass or kick. Make sure that a receiver has tucked the ball away with control before ruling a fumble. When in doubt, make these plays incomplete passes!

The pass is backward rather than forward beyond the neutral zone... Beyond the neutral zone the benefit of the doubt goes to the pass being backward. Seldom do we have an official right on the same yard line as the pass. Watch the release point of the passer and the touch point of the receiver to make your

judgment. Tough plays to work but more times than not these will be backward. Remember if the pass is forward and it hits the ground, it becomes an incomplete illegal forward pass rather than a live loose ball. When in doubt, the pass is backward beyond the neutral zone.

The passer has thrown the ball forward rather than fumbling it... or the pass is forward rather than backward behind the neutral zone. Any action by the quarterback's arm moving forward and the ball coming out should be ruled a forward pass. Even if the arm is going forward, untouched and the QB loses the ball as he tries to pull it back. Also, on forward/backward pass situations remember that we seldom have an official on the same yard line looking directly across to the passer to see which direction the pass was thrown. When the pass hits the ground the covering official needs to rule these incomplete when in doubt.

The offense has seven players on the line of scrimmage...If you are not sure if a receiver is on the line of scrimmage, don't be too technical if it is very close. When in doubt, read the formation and give the player the benefit of being legally on or off the line of scrimmage depending on the formation.

OFFICIATING SKILLS

SKILLS	GUIDELINES
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication can be defined as the act of sending a message, whether it is verbal or non-verbal, as long as a person transmits a thought-provoking idea, gesture or action. • Be clear and concise. If you leave a lot of room for interpretation, it becomes more likely that the point or message will be lost. • Appearance, facial expression, voice tone and word choice are all factors that influence a message being sent. • If you feel something about someone or something, let it out. Bottling up emotion is unhealthy. • If you don't understand, ASK!
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider all the options. Consider potential consequences. Evaluate the "pros" and "cons." Make the choice. Take Action! • If you are feeling pressured to make a decision, see if you can obtain more time. It is difficult to think clearly and consider all the factors if you are feeling overwhelmed. • Adopt a "can-do" attitude. Evaluate the outcome, try another solution if necessary.
Ethics and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values can be defined as beliefs of a person or social group in which he or she has an emotional investment. • Values are subjective. They may be personal, cultural or religious. They guide our decisions and are often developed or instilled in us early in life. • Values are not set in stone. Life teaches us lessons, and we are always able to adjust our values accordingly. • It is important to follow through on commitments you have made. By joining a team, you are committing to working hard on and off the field. • Recognize those who are trying to help you have a better life and those who are hindering that ability.
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork can be defined as working together to achieve a common goal. • When your personal goals are aligned with the team's goals, success is inevitable. • Identify the personal goals that, if achieved, would make the team better and stronger. • Recognize the team's diversity and each member's individual skills. It takes all types of throwers, blockers, runners, kickers, etc.

**Time Management
Setting Goals**

- Check your schedule each day to see if you are prepared and have all the materials you need
- Keeping a daily “Things To Do” list and then crossing them off as you accomplish them will stimulate the pleasure centers in your brain.
- Prioritize your tasks. Ask yourself, “Does this need to get done today?”
- Goals must be: Specific, In your control, Realistic and Measurable

CHAIN CREW INSTRUCTIONS: “Hustle but Don’t Hurry”

1. Introduce yourself to the Chain Crew; remember their names
2. Conduct a meeting with Chain Crew prior to going on the field, especially if students are working the chains
3. Stress the importance of their job; they are part of the officiating staff
The Chain Crew is under the direct supervision of the Linesman
The Linesman accepts responsibility for all mistakes
Chain Crew must have unbiased attitude toward officials, coaches and players
Talk with the Chain Crew about how the Linesman handles the team area

Chain Crew assignments

- Down Box
- Sets and moves after instructed by the Linesman
- Changes number on box after moving to new spot; set box on heel of Linesman
- Spot box at 3 yard line on Points After Touchdown
- Drop box when players come at you from the field of play
- Chain Person
- Never move unless instructed by the Linesman, who will motion with arm for them to move
- Move chain off the field and at the 6’ foot restraining line
- Drop chains when players come at you from the field of play
- On first and goal, lay chains down out of bounds at 15 yard line
- On measurements, wait for the Linesman before moving onto the field to measure for a first down
- Be aware of hurry-up situations at end of half or game
- Clip Person (use 2 clips)
- Clip to chain at furthest back, thick 5 yard striped line, then move chains back from sideline
- Remove 2nd clip after conclusion of the first play of a new series
- Auxiliary Box
- Under supervision of the Line Judge
- Mirrors spot of Down Box
- On change of possession, wait until conclusion of the first play of a new series to move
- Drop box when players come at you from field of play

Helpful Tips for Chain crew

- Communicate with Linesman to acknowledge that a flag has been thrown
- Make sure there is tape exactly in the middle of the chains
- Remind crew to hold on fourth downs; wait for Linesman’s signal
- Review signal when a 5 yard penalty will make a first down
- Repeat down to each other after it is set on the down box
- Make sure there is an auxiliary set of chains
- Secure a “Get Back Coach” to help in team area
- Review duties to start the second half
- Timing the Game

HIGH SCHOOL RULES

1 st Quarter	12 Minutes
Teams change goals between quarter	1 Minute
2 nd Quarter	12 Minutes
Halftime; can be extended for special events	15 or 20 minutes with 3 minute warm up before start of 3 rd Qtr.
3 rd Quarter	12 Minutes
Teams change goals between quarter	1 Minute
4 th Quarter	12 Minutes
Overtime	Untimed play which begins after 3 minute intermission

Coin Toss

The referee accompanied by a fellow crewmate will toss a coin at midfield with the captains, preferably 3 minutes prior to kickoff. A designated visiting team captain will be asked to call “heads” or “tails” before the coin is tossed. The officials will repeat the captain’s choice before tossing the coin. A preferred mechanic is to let the coin land on the ground instead of catching. The coin toss winner has first choice of the following options for the first half:

- Defer the choice until the second half
- Choose whether their team will receive or kick
- Choose the goal their team will defend

The team who did not have first choice will then exercise the remaining option and alternate back to original captain if necessary. All officials must record the coin toss winner and their choices.

To start the second half, the team who lost the pregame coin toss will choose one of the following:

- Whether their team will receive or kick
- The goal their team will defend
- The team who did not have first choice will then exercise the remaining option.

Overtime coin toss: There is only one coin toss, no matter how many overtimes are played. The winner of the overtime coin toss will have the following options and cannot defer:

- Choose to play offense or defense first
- Select the end of the field to play in overtime, which is the same for both teams
- The team who did not have first choice in overtime will have first option in the next overtime with first choice alternating in further overtimes.
- Timing the Game

Starting and Stopping the Clock

Each half begins with a kickoff; the clock starts when the ball is legally touched in the field of play. Covering officials will wind their arms to signal starting the clock. If the free kick did not start the clock due to a kick out of bounds or touchback, the clock will start on the next legal snap. If a period begins with a scrimmage down, the clock will start on a legal snap. The clock does not run during a try, extended period or overtime. A running clock is stopped when:

- A live ball goes out of bounds

- A forward pass is incomplete
- A new series and first down is awarded for either team
- Any score; touchdown, safety, field goal
- The down ends and a live ball foul occurred
- A foul is committed prior to the snap
- Either team is granted a timeout
- An official's timeout is called for: measurement, injury, equipment repair, referee or coach conference, unusual heat, delay in changing balls
- There is no visible game clock, a four minute warning is given to both coaches

Starting the Clock

During a scrimmage down, the clock will start on the snap or ready for play signal. Starting the clock for the next play is determined by how it was stopped. These major clock stoppers cause the **clock to be started on the snap** with the next scrimmage down:

- A live ball goes out of bounds
- A forward pass is incomplete
- Either team starts a new series after a legal kick
- Team B is awarded a new series
- A score; touchdown, safety, field goal
- A charged team timeout
- A period ends
- A delay of game penalty is accepted

If a running clock was stopped after a scrimmage down for game administration, it will restart on the **ready for play signal** in these circumstances:

- An awarded first down with the clock running
- After a measurement if the clock was running before stoppage
- An inadvertent whistle if the clock was running before stoppage
- An injured player if the clock was running before stoppage
- The down ends in bounds and a live ball foul occurred
- If clock was running and a foul was called; except for delay of game and an illegal attempt to conserve time penalties
- An official's timeout is called for: measurement, injury, equipment repair, referee or coach conference, unusual heat, delay in changing balls
- After the four minute warning if the clock was running before the stoppage

Team Timeouts

Each team is allowed three timeouts per half; they do not carry over to next half

Successive timeouts are allowed by the same team, or by one team followed by the other team

Each team is allowed one timeout during overtime; they do not carry over to subsequent overtimes

One coach may enter the field to join the team's huddle to confer with players

All 11 participants may move near the sideline to confer with coaches or substitutes

PRE-SNAP CHECKLIST

Officials should have a checklist that runs through their mind before every snap. This mental exercise provides the repetition and confidence before each play to be prepared for possible rules violations.

Following are some important pre-snap points:

- Down and distance
- Player count
- Line of scrimmage location
- Line to gain for a first down
- Confirm down, distance and player count with other officials
- Status of clock: running or stopped
- Ball position between hash marks
- Amount of time left in quarter
- Number of timeouts remaining for each team
- Legal substitutions
- Communication to crewmates about goal line responsibilities
- Communication to crewmates about stopping clock if fourth down
- Remind yourself to give an extra second before blowing the whistle, throwing a flag or giving a signal

PREVENTATIVE DEAD BALL OFFICIATING

- The time between plays is the dead ball period
- The average play takes about seven seconds to complete
- The average interval between downs can be 30–40 seconds when you consider spotting the ball and starting a new 25-second clock
- This “down” time is a great time to talk to players and coaches in an attempt to be preventative
- Trash talking and taunting usually occur at the end of a play
- Some examples of good preventative mechanics are: telling a player to watch his hands; reminding a defender that he is close on a QB hit following a pass; or instructing a lineman to get up on the line of scrimmage
- Keep officiating after the play is over by watching the action on the perimeter of the pile
- Make your presence felt at the end of each play by using your voice and moving into the vicinity of the play
- Keep your composure and control when players and coaches are out of control

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

When Calling a Penalty...be able to describe:

- What the foul is you are calling
- Where the foul occurred
- The status of the football; live ball, dead ball, loose ball
- Who committed the foul (both team and number)
- When the foul occurred
- How to enforce the foul

Spots of Enforcement

The enforcement spot for fouls is called the **Basic Spot**

The basic spot can be the **Previous Spot**; where the play started

Succeeding Spot; where the play ends and where you enforce unsportsmanlike, dead ball and non-player fouls

The **Spot Where the Run Ends**; important on fumbles

Post Scrimmage Kick Spot; where a scrimmage kick ends or 20 yd line on touchbacks

Types of Plays

- Loose Ball Play (basic spot is previous spot)
- Free kick until there is position
- Action involving a legal forward pass
- Action which occurs in or behind the neutral zone involving any kick, backward pass (including snap) or fumble before a change of position
- Running Plays (basic spot is the end of the related run)
- All action not included in definition of loose ball plays
- The run after possessing a forward pass, kick or fumble
- True running plays

Determine the Basic Spot: The Basic Spot is determined by the type of play in progress at the time a foul occurs.

- Basic Spot is the Previous Spot for:
 - Fouls which occur simultaneously with the snap or a free kick
 - Fouls during a loose ball play
- Basic Spot is the Spot Where the Run Ends for:
 - Running Plays after a fumble
- Basic Spot is the Succeeding Spot for:
 - Dead Ball Fouls; enforce in order of occurrence
 - Unsportsmanlike Fouls; can be a live ball foul, but enforce as dead ball
 - Non-Player Fouls
 - Post Scrimmage Kick spot
- Fouls by the receiving team beyond the expanded neutral zone before the kick ends, enforce from the end of the kick or the 20 yd line on touchbacks

All But One Principle

All fouls are enforced from the basic spot but one. A foul by team A behind the basic spot is enforced from the spot of the foul or the end of the run, whichever is worse for team A.

Half the Distance to a Goal

A penalty cannot bring the ball more than half the distance toward the offending team's goal line

Fouls by team A which include loss of down:

- Illegal forward handing
- Illegal forward pass
- Forward pass interference
- Illegal touching of a forward pass by an ineligible behind the neutral zone

Fouls by team B which gives team A an automatic 1st down:

- Roughing the kicker or holder
- Roughing the passer
- Roughing the snapper
- Forward pass interference

PLAYER SAFETY FOULS

- There is no gray area when it comes to the safety of players, coaches, officials and spectators
- Safety fouls such as personal fouls, clipping, illegal low blocks and unsportsmanlike penalties must always be called no matter where or when they occur during the game
- Unsportsmanlike acts can quickly cause game control problems for your crew
- Officiating philosophy is always to err on the side of safety in these situations

SUMMARY OF MOST COMMON PENALTIES

Infraction	Description	Penalty Yards	Enforcement Spot	Type of Foul
False Start	Movement which simulates action at the snap; lift from three point stance or flinch	5	Previous Spot	Dead Ball
Encroachment	Any player who breaks the plane of the neutral zone after the snapper is set	5	Previous Spot	Dead Ball
Snap Infraction	Snapper makes any movement that simulates the snap; removes both hands from the ball; lifts or moves ball	5	Previous Spot	Dead Ball
Illegal Motion	Team A player is motion towards his opponents goal at the snap	5	Previous Spot	Live Ball
Illegal Shift	Failure of all offensive players at one time to be stationary for one second prior to the snap	5	Previous Spot	Live Ball
Delay of Game	Failure to snap or free kick the ball within 25 seconds after the ready for play	5	Previous Spot	Dead Ball
Free Kick out of bounds (three options)	Kick goes out of bounds between goal lines untouched by receivers or last touched by receivers	-Place ball 25 yards beyond previous spot. -Place ball at inbounds spot. -5 yd penalty and rekick		
Illegal Formation	At the snap, at least seven A players must be on their line of scrimmage	5	Previous	Live Ball
Intentional Grounding	Pass intentionally thrown to save loss of yardage, conserve time; thrown into an area with no receiver	5	Spot of foul; loss of down	Live Ball
Illegal Forward Pass	Forward pass thrown from beyond the neutral zone	5	Spot of foul; loss of down	Live Ball
Holding	Restricting an opponent by using hands or arms to hook, grasp or clamp opponent's ability to make play	10	Basic Spot	Live Ball
Block in the	Contact from the rear above the	10	Basic Spot	Live ball

Back	waist outside of free blocking zone			
Blocking Below the Waist	Blocking below the waist outside of the free blocking zone	15	Basic Spot	Live Ball
Clipping	Contact from the rear below the waist outside of free blocking zone	15	Basic Spot	Live ball
Defensive Pass Interference	Interference with an eligible offensive player's opportunity to move towards or catch a legal forward pass beyond the neutral zone	15 & First Down	Previous Spot & First Down	Live Ball
Offensive Pass Interference	Any offensive player interfering with a defensive players opportunity to cover, move towards or catch a legal forward pass beyond the neutral zone	15	Previous Spot & Loss of Down	Live Ball
Chop Block	A delayed block at the knees or below of an opponent who is in contact with a teammate	15	Basic Spot	Live Ball
Personal Foul	Make any contact which is deemed unnecessary and incites extra roughness	15	Basic Or Succeeding	Live or Dead Ball
Roughing the Passer (Two Options)	Team B must avoid charging into the legal forward passer after it is clear the ball released	15 & First Down	Previous (incomplete) Succeeding (complete)	Live ball
Roughing the Kicker/Holder	A defensive player shall not block, tackle or charge into a kicker or holder of a scrimmage kick	15 & First Down	Previous Spot	Live ball
Facemask	Twisting or turning the facemask or helmet opening	15 & First Down	Basic Or Succeeding	Live or Dead Ball
Unsportsmanlike conduct	No player or coach shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the officials assume authority of game	15 and possible disqualification	Basic Or Succeeding	Live or Dead Ball
Illegal Participation	12 or more players participating in a play	15	Previous Spot	Live ball

HOLDING

This is probably the most difficult area for officials to master. We've all heard coaches and/or fans say "You could call holding on every play!" Very little if any truth lies in that statement. Holding is subjective to the degree and effect on the play. It also changes from the level of competition. What is holding in lower level games may or may not be holding at the high school, college, or pro level. What if we called holding on every play until the players quit holding? The players couldn't play, the coaches couldn't coach, and the fans would leave. It would be you, the official, as the focal point, and that would lead to a very long afternoon or evening and hardly resemble the game of football. When making a judgment on holding try using these philosophies: Call any major take down that will embarrass you or your crew if it were not called. Even if it is not a take down, call holding at the point of attack. Did the blocker gain an unfair advantage from the hold? Did the defender have his jersey stretched or have to reach for the ball carrier with one arm? Was he taken in a direction by the hold that he didn't want to go in the first place? Did the defender give up on his pursuit? These are all factors to help make your decision. If you decide it's a hold and throw the flag, be able to describe in a few words what the foul was. Know if it was a take down, a hook and restrict, a jersey stretch, a twist and turn. If you can't put it into a category of holding than it probably wasn't a foul. The same holds true for defensive holding on pass receivers. Did the hold impede the receiver from running his pass route? Did the QB even look to this receiver before throwing to the other side of the field? No effect, no foul for holding.

Important Terms used when Officiating Holding:

Point of Attack: area around the ball where key blocking for the play occurs; attention of the covering official should be focused on blocks at the point of attack. The point of attack can change as the play develops

Engagement/Disengagement: initial action of blocker may grab defender (engagement) but releases when defender beats blocker (disengagement)

Advantage/Disadvantage: was the defender put at a disadvantage by the actions of the offense when he had the blocker beat

Effect on the Play: did the action of the blocker have an effect on the play? If a slight hold occurs away from the play, you can probably talk to the blocker about the possibility of a foul if the action was at the point of attack

Categories: grab and restrict, hook and restrict, takedown

Free Blocking Zone:

The free block zone is a rectangular area 8 yards wide and 6 yards tall around the ball where legal clips, blocks below the waist and in the back can occur. A player is in the free blocking zone if any part of his body is in the zone at the snap.

EQUIPMENT

Always look professional when you are walking onto the football field to officiate a game. This is when the coaches and spectators will begin forming an opinion of you. Make sure your uniform is clean with polished shoes.

Along with local and state association fees, a new official will incur costs to purchase equipment. A new starter package can cost over \$200, which includes the basic initial equipment. Most local associations will donate used equipment to new officials.

Listed are the equipment needs of football officials:

EQUIPMENT	DESCRIPTION
Collared Striped Shirt	Short Sleeve
Collared Striped Shirt	Long Sleeve
Black Lanyard	-
Socks	NFHS/NCAA
Fitted Hat	Black w/white piping or all white for referees
Knickers	White
Compression Shorts	White or Black
Compression Knickers	White or Black [Optional]
Polished Shoes, Multi-Purpose	Black
Jacket	Reversible [Optional]
Compression Shirt	Short Sleeve [Optional]
Compression Shirt	Long Sleeve [Optional]
Gloves	Lined/Receivers Style
Penalty Flag	Yellow, Nylon
Flipping Coin	-
Bean Bag	White or Blue
Down Indicator	Elastic
Bullet Pencil	-
Game Cards	Pack of 25
Watch w/Timer	-
Chain Clip	-
Whistle	Black
Belt	Black, Wide
"Ditty" Bag	Accessory Bag
Gear Bag	Optional
Ball Pressure Gauge	-
Collared Striped Shirt	Short Sleeve

WORKING WITH ASSIGNORS

Every state and local officials association handles assignments differently. In some states, games are assigned by coaches or athletic directors while others are assigned by the state officials association. The majority of youth and high school football games in the country are assigned by an assignment person in a local association.

As mentioned in the *Getting Started* section, officials need to inquire how the process works in their area. Contact an assignor and use these suggestions for a positive working relationship with them:

Honesty: be honest about your commitment, availability and extenuating circumstances. Tell the assignors if you are accepting games from others. If a question comes up after a game from an assignor, be honest about your role in the play and what you called or saw

Application process: mail a short introduction of yourself with all contact information to the assignor stating your desire to work football games. Some assign more than one sport

Availability: every year provide the assignors your open dates well before their stated deadlines. As soon as you receive games, send the assignors the closed dates in your schedule to avoid double bookings, which helps them when they have last minute changes

Flexibility: gain experience at all the positions on the field to broaden your development and help the assignor fill open assignments. Keep some flexibility in your schedule for location and time changes or last minute fill in opportunities

Communication: contact your assignor immediately if you have a conflict or an emergency that prohibits you from working a game. Do not send your own substitute unless the assignor asks you to do so when you call. If games are cancelled, offer to make the rest of the calls to your crew so the assignor can work on contacting other crews.

Help the assignor by having someone on your crew double check that weeks assignments by contacting the administrators of the games. A couple of phone calls each week can save the crew and assignor a lot of time. Divide up these responsibilities throughout the season

If the assignors are the supervisors also, communicate with them for feedback regarding your development and ask for suggestions to improve

Professionalism: enjoy the games you are working and don't complain about other people's assignments. Never ask to work certain games because they are higher profile or lobby for the top notch schedule. If you work hard and get better, the high profile games will eventually come your way



Code of Conduct for Sports Officials

1. **Officials shall** bear a great responsibility for engendering public confidence in sports.
2. **Officials shall** be free of obligation to any interest other than the impartial and fair judging of sports competitions.
3. **Officials shall** hold and maintain the basic tenets of officiating which include history, integrity, neutrality, respect, sensitivity, professionalism, discretion and tactfulness.
4. **Officials shall** master both rules of the game and mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, and shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.
5. **Officials shall** uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interactions with student-athletes coaches, school administrators, colleagues, and the public.
6. **Officials shall** display and execute superior communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal.
7. **Officials shall** recognize that anything which may lead to a conflict of interest, either real or apparent, must be avoided. Gifts, favors, special treatment, privileges, employment or a personal relationship with a school or team which can compromise the perceived impartiality of officiating must be avoided.
8. **Officials shall** prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, and shall comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.
9. **Officials shall** not be party to actions designed to unfairly limit or restrain access to officiating, officiating assignments or to association membership. This includes selection for positions of leadership based upon economic factors, race, creed, color, age, sex, physical handicap, country or national origin.
10. **Officials shall** be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.
11. **Officials shall** work with each other and their governing bodies in a constructive and cooperative manner.
12. **Officials shall** resist every temptation and outside pressure to use one's position as an official to benefit oneself.
13. **Officials shall** never participate in any form of illegal gambling on sports contest, may never gamble on any sporting event in which they have either a direct or indirect involvement, and may never gamble on events involving high school athletics.
14. **Officials shall** not make false or misleading statements regarding their qualifications, rating, credentials, experience, training or competence.
15. **Officials shall** accept responsibility for all actions taken.

KEY CONTACTS

Position	Name	Phone	Email
Local Official's Assoc. Coordinator			
Youth League Assignor			
High School Assignor			

NFL Officiating Academy Contacts

Position	Name	Phone	Email
NFL Recruiting Coordinator	Ron Baynes	212-450-2205	Ron.baynes@nfl.com
NFL Director of Officiating	David Coleman	212-450-2209	David.coleman@nfl.com
NFL Rep.	Terell Canton	212-450-2235	Terell.canton@nfl.com
NFL Rep.	Vanessa Streater	212-450-2451	Vanessa.streater@nfl.com
NFL Rep.	Brian LoPinto	212-450-2606	Brain.lopinto@nfl.com

References and Resources:

National Federation of High Schools; Rule Book and Case Plays
National Federation of High Schools; Rules by Topic
NASO & Referee Enterprises Inc.
Football Rules: Simply Stated; A.D. McPhilomy
USA Football; Youth Rules Book
Bill LeMonnier; Big Ten Referee
Tony Michalek; NFL Umpire

