

NYSACFO Syracuse Chapter

March 23, 2026

Girls' Flag
Mechanics for 4 Officials

Questions from Week 1 – New NFHS Rules

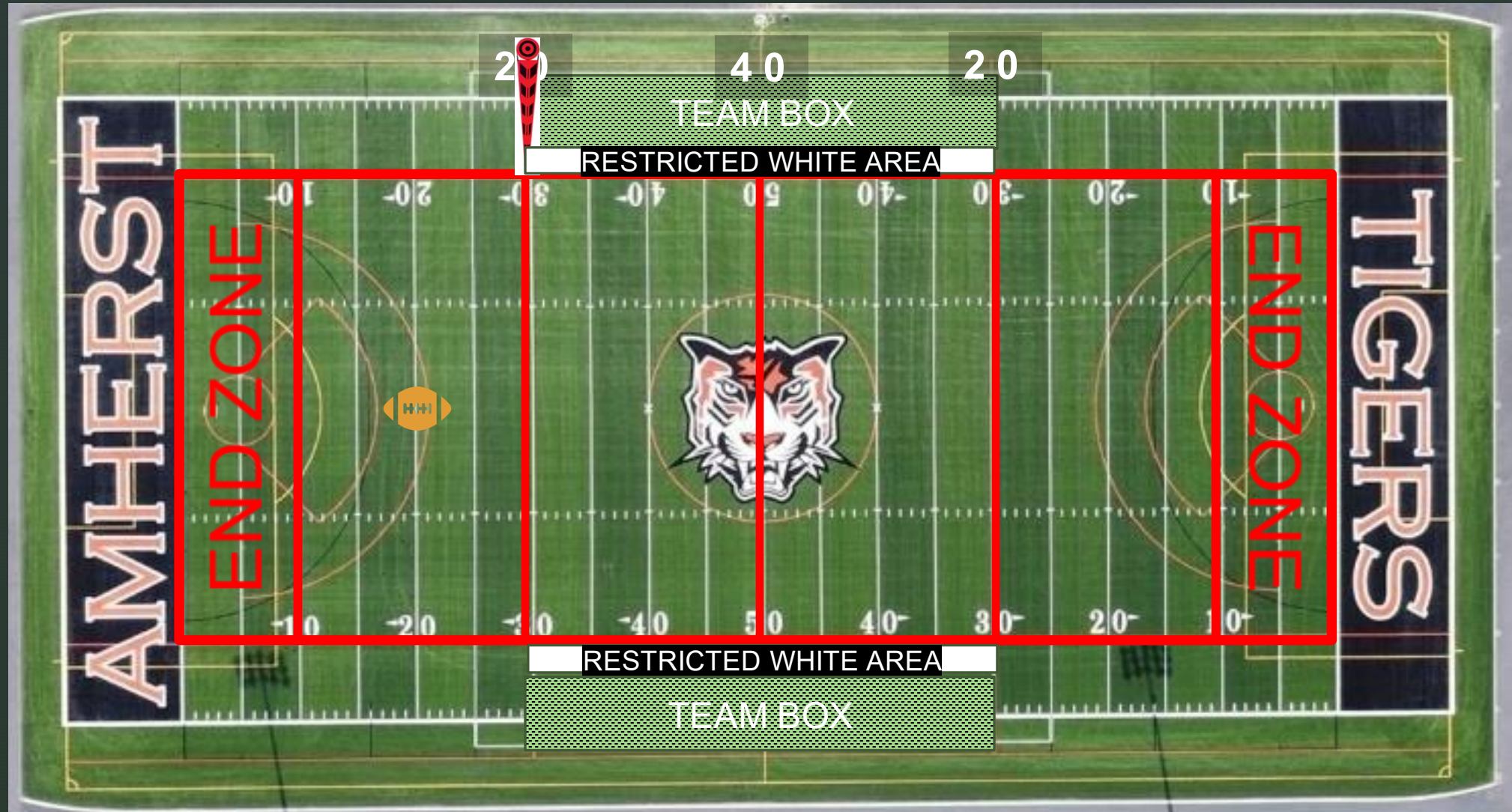
- 🏈 NYS is Re-Examining Non-Compliant Balls
 - 🏈 Youth are OK for Varsity/JV, while JUNIOR is OK for Modified
- 🏈 Test Questions covered next week (Timing, OT, etc.)

3-Man Mechanics

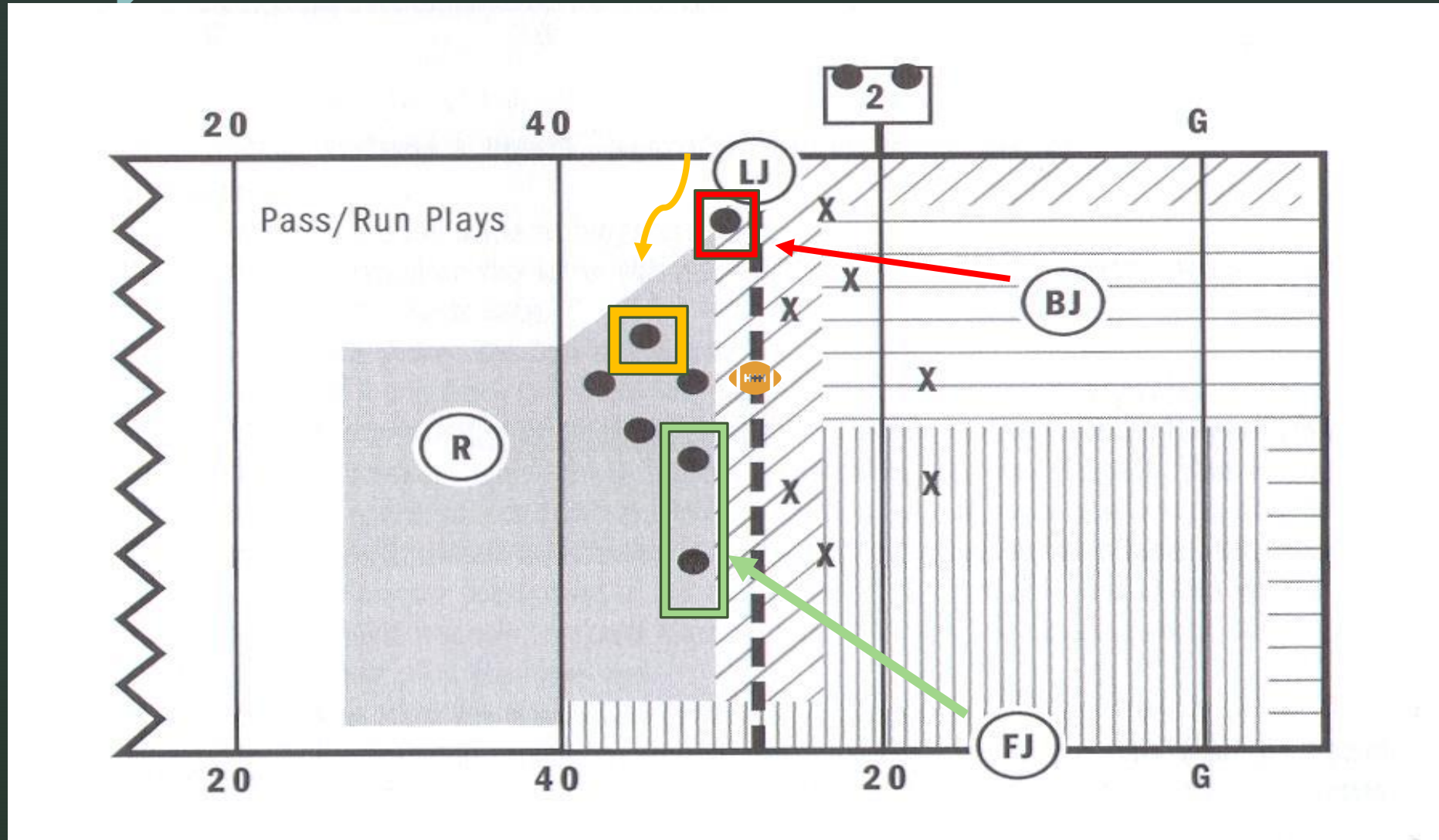
🏈 3-Man Mechanics (Modified Games)

- 🏈 Available on the website from 2024
- 🏈 Very similar to 4-man mechanics (virtually identical for LJ & R)
 - 🏈 The FJ basically becomes becomes the BJ (nearly identical mechanics, just different GL responsibilities)
 - 🏈 In other words, on these slides, just move the BJ to FJ (or cross off the BJ), and you've then got 3-man mechanics!

The Field Formations, Starting Field Position



4-man Mechanics: KEYS



Man – Zone – Ball!

4-Man Mechanics

Referee

- Set up the “pucks” (Rod’s Beanbags) – establishes the 1-yard neutral zone
- Place the ball in the middle of the field for every snap (no choice of hash)
- RFP Signal + Whistle (old tackle football mechanics)
 - R has 25-second play clock – starts when ball/pucks/R in position – announce 10 secs, chop final 5, *unless BJ takes it* (tell coaches pre-game)
 - Punts: chop down the 5 secs (R. 3-6-2)
 - School can run 25-second play clock, but BJ should discuss with game clock operator the differences between tackle/flag rules (watch the R!)
 - **Count** A/K (Offense) – Signal (or 🗣️ yell 🗣️) to LJ
- Setup at the 7s (7 yards wide x 7 yards behind the deepest back)
 - NYS says opposite LJ but it’s fine to take the throwing arm side of QB

4-Man Mechanics

🏈 Referee

- 🏈 **KEYS at or inside NZ:** G-C-G and backs to observe screens/blocking by *offense* (no umpire to help you out)
- 🏈 QB Primary Responsibility – “Balls Away”
- 🏈 Trail run plays, and come up to assist FJ with runner OOB to press box sideline (similar to 3-man mechanics in tackle football)
- 🏈 Mark forward progress for flag pull, bobbled snap, fumble (dead ball once it touches the ground) when occurring behind NZ
- 🏈 Ball Rotation: **HUSTLE** to set up ball and pucks for next down
 - 🏈 Important that the R is not left to do everything – L/B/F get him the ball!
 - 🏈 Each team will bring in their own ball to start a possession
- 🏈 **Penalty Enforcement:** face press box, signal, and announce (w/ number[s])

4-Man Mechanics

🏈 Referee Alerts

- 🏈 Pre-Snap: FST; ILL PROC (SNAP INF); DISCONCERTING ACTS; ILL SHIFT; ILL FORM (QB ≥ 2 yds); PUNTS – DOG (5 secs) & ILL KICKS
- 🏈 Post-Snap: *all* passes forward/backward; RTP, IG, ILL BLOCKING or PF (*Charging Into*) in or behind NZ; FST; FLAG GUARDING
- 🏈 Roughing the Passer: very liberal – D must “make a definite effort” to avoid contact or to get the flag; ZERO contact to passers arm or hand by D; D can not bat at ball while in passer’s hand
- 🏈 Int. Ground.: no FBZ & no exception – must have receiver in area, which is not difficult to do because all A are eligible

4-Man Mechanics

🏈 Referee and Line Judge Alert - **ILLEGAL BLOCKING or PERSONAL FOUL (Charging Into)**

- 🏈 Block/charge: if there's contact, it's similar to block charge call in basketball – you either have incidental, minimal contact (no call) —or— Personal Foul for Charging Into the Opponent (10 yds by A or B, but if by B, it's an *Automatic First Down*) —or— Illegal Blocking (10 yards by A or B) —or— Ill Use of Hands / Arms (10 yards) (R. 9-2, 9-3, 9-4-3-b)
 - 🏈 Did A/OL get “beat” to the spot and initiate contact? Very likely Ill. Blocking by A (so long as B didn't reach out to initiate contact)
 - 🏈 Did the A player establish position with arms and legs inside frame of the body before the contact? Very likely PF (Charging Into) by B (so long as A didn't reach out to initiate contact) or Ill Use of Hands/Arms by B
 - 🏈 Tip: if the contact initiated by B was more than minimal (i.e. not a ‘no call’), but did not cause opponent to stumble (i.e. displaced the opponent but didn't knock them over), you could use Ill Use of Hands/Arms (10 yards only)

🏈 Line Judge

4-Man Mechanics

- 🏈 Setup opposite the press box side
- 🏈 Set up the box / down indicator on **Line-to-Gain** (*different from 2025*)
- 🏈 **Count** A/K/Offense – Signal (or 🗣️ yell 🗣️) to R
- 🏈 Mark Forward Progress on all plays – Forward most point of the ball when player is down (OOB, grounded, flag pulled, or 1-hand touched if flag removed/fell out prior) (*different from 2025*)
 - 🏈 Fumbles in FOP – spot where ball touches down (forward or backward)
 - 🏈 Fumbles OOB – screw the offense – spot of fumble (white bean bag) or OOB spot, whichever is further back (clock RFP/wind it if forward and OOB)
 - 🏈 Fumbles across either GL – safety or TB
- 🏈 **Ball Rotation:** for *short* gains or losses *only* (i.e. +/- 5 yds), obtain dead ball from your hash to your sideline and toss to R (otherwise let BJ/FJ handle the ball rotation)

4-Man Mechanics



🏈 Line Judge

- 🏈 Take responsibility for players in motion for pass plays, potential ILL SHIFT or ILL MOTION, and assist R with *quick* pass that's either backward/forward
 - 🏈 **KEYS at or inside NZ:** Hold position for 1 second to read the play (run or pass) and to observe initial line play with your focus on the *defense* who must avoid contact (think: block/charge call in basketball)
 - 🏈 IF RUN: hold position at LOS and observe blocking around runner, trail play as normal and get forward progress / flag pull spot (alert for backward toss);
 - 🏈 IF PASS: float 3–5 yards downfield focusing on middle of the field and receivers pressing your boundary (remember: man–zone–ball)
- 🏈 **Penalty Enforcement:** walk off with FJ (like the HL & U in tackle)

4-Man Mechanics

Line Judge Alerts

- Per-snap: neutral zone for ENCROACHMENT (DBF); FST; ILL FORMATIONS (all A within the “5s”); ILL SHIFTS; ILL MOTION
- Post-Snap: *quick* pass forward/backward @ LOS; downfield toss/pitch/handoff (fwd/bkwd); FLAG GUARDING; SLI; HURDLING; HOLDING (run play); TRIP; Ill. Block or Use Hands, PFs
- Secondary Alerts: substitutions (ILL SUB/PARTICIPATION) (secondary to B/F); ILL BLOCKING or PF (*Charging Into*) in or behind NZ (secondary to R); RTP (secondary to R)

4-Man Mechanics

Back Judge

- Setup the LJ side of the field (opposite press box), 15 yards from the boundary (i.e. inside the hash on the LJ side), and *at least* 25 yards downfield or 5 yards deeper than the deepest defender
 - Count** B/R/Defense – Signal to FJ
 - Play clock: secondary to R (each crew discuss pre-game)
 - RUN: hold and observe blocking / holding beyond NZ
 - PASS: retreat and keep all players in front of you
 - ALL PLAYS: GOAL LINE & END LINE RESPONSIBILITY!
- KEYS Downfield**: all receivers (!) with initial focus on your side of the field (LJ / opposite press box)
 - Remember: man–zone–ball

4-Man Mechanics

🏈 Back Judge

- 🏈 Ball Rotation: Obtain dead ball and toss to R!
- 🏈 Primary dead ball official for UNSs
- 🏈 **Penalty Enforcement**: hold enforcement spot (like the L in tackle)
- 🏈 **ALERT**: substitutions (ILL SUB); ILLEGAL BLOCKING; PFs (*Charging Into*); OPI/DPI; HOLDING (run or pass); FLAG GUARDING; DOG / GAME CLOCK (secondary to R); ILL HANDING; SLI & ILL PARTICIPATION; PUNT – KCI; HURDLING; etc.

4-Man Mechanics

Field Judge

- Setup on the *sideline* of the press box side, 20 yards downfield (i.e. same as BJ in 3-man mechanics)
 - STAY ON YOUR SIDELINE – DO NOT ENTER FIELD OF PLAY!
 - Count B/R/Defense – Signal to BJ
 - RUN: hold and observe blocking beyond LOS (no moving screens downfield)
 - PASS: retreat and keep all players in front of you
 - Game Clock: if no clock on scoreboard, or if it goes down, FJ keeps it on the field
 - ALL PLAYS: GOAL LINE RESPONSIBILITY!
- KEYS** Downfield: all receivers (!) with initial focus on your side of the field (press box side) - Remember: man–zone–ball

4-Man Mechanics

Field Judge

- Ball Rotation: **Obtain dead ball and toss to R!**
- Mark Forward Progress on your sideline – Forward most point of the ball (see LJ slide for rules reminders)
- Penalty Enforcement:** walk off with LJ (like a U in tackle) – place ball and pucks while R signals and talks to coaches (as needed)
- ALERT:** substitutions (ILL SUB); ILLEGAL BLOCKING; PF's (*Charging Into*); OPI/DPI; HOLDING (run or pass); FLAG GUARDING; DOG / GAME CLOCK (secondary to R); ILL HANDING; SLI & ILL PARTICIPATION; PUNT – KCI; HURDLING; etc.
- GOAL LINE RESPONSIBILITY!

🏈 ALL OFFICIALS

4-Man Mechanics

- 🏈 Arrive on field no less than 30 minutes before first snap (parking lot 45 minutes before the game)
- 🏈 Dead Ball Officiating including equipment enforcement
 - 🏈 Random checks between quarters – everyone ask 1 girl to pop out flags and mouthpiece
- 🏈 Game Clock Status
- 🏈 Every play ends on a tic unless it's within 1 yard of LTG or EZ
- 🏈 HUSTLE, HUSTLE, HUSTLE for ball rotation, spots, etc.
- 🏈 Individual Pre-Game Responsibilities
 - 🏈 BJ talk to clock operator(s)—both game & play clock (expire pregame @ -5 mins)
 - 🏈 LJ & FJ: check balls, down indicator, and talk to box & ball people
 - 🏈 R & LJ conduct sportsmanship & walk out for coin toss
 - 🏈 BJ & FJ are the Fashion Police: either before or during coin toss, ask all girls to pull flags out, show flag belts tightened, & hold up mouthpieces.

4-Man Mechanics Special Situations

3rd/4th Down Coverage of LTG

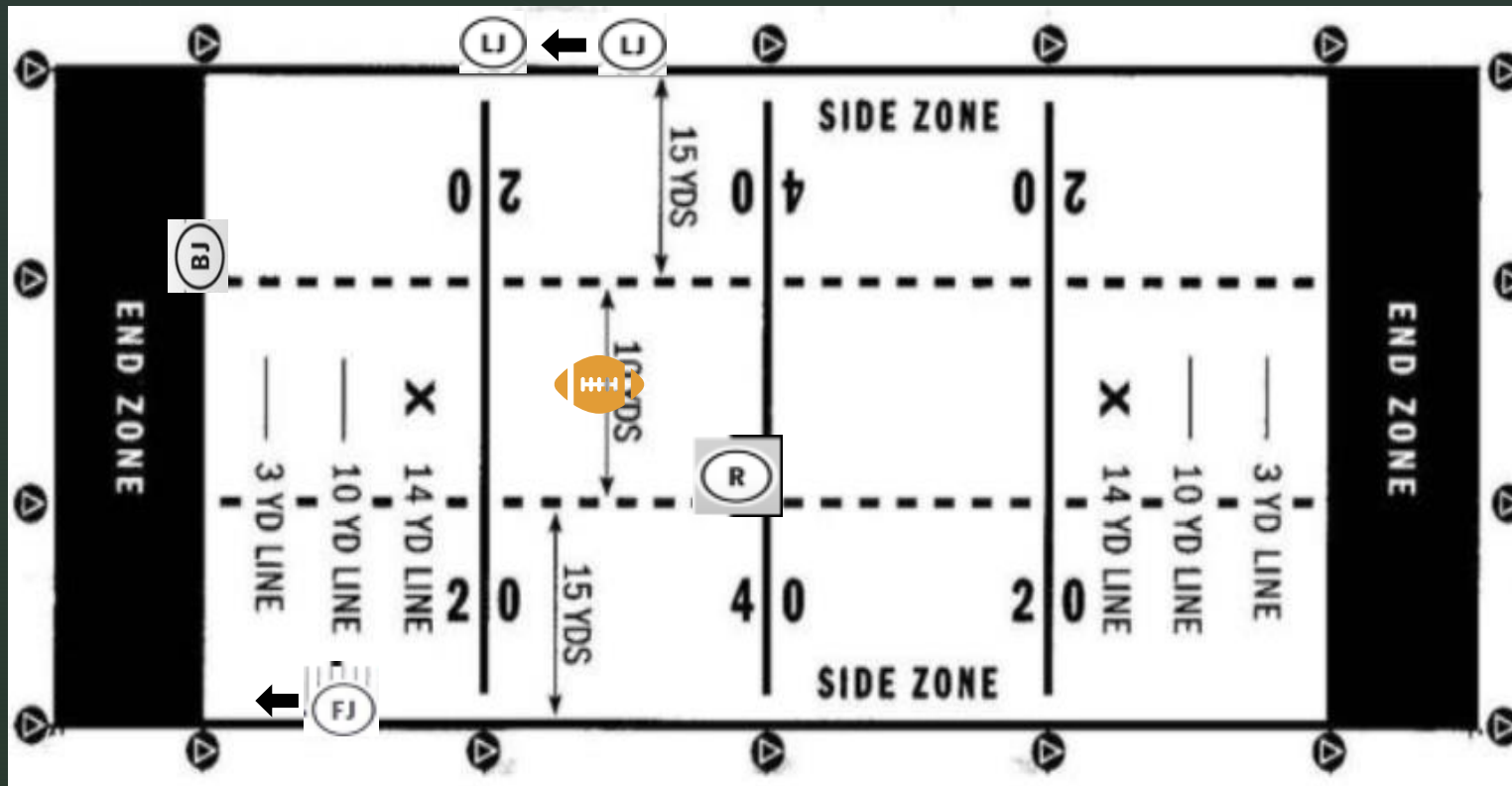
- LJ: If less than 10 yards, *immediately go to LTG* (i.e. 20/40/20) to judge whether runner makes LTG
- No measurements – all based on your spot and the accuracy of the field markings



4-Man Mechanics Special Situations

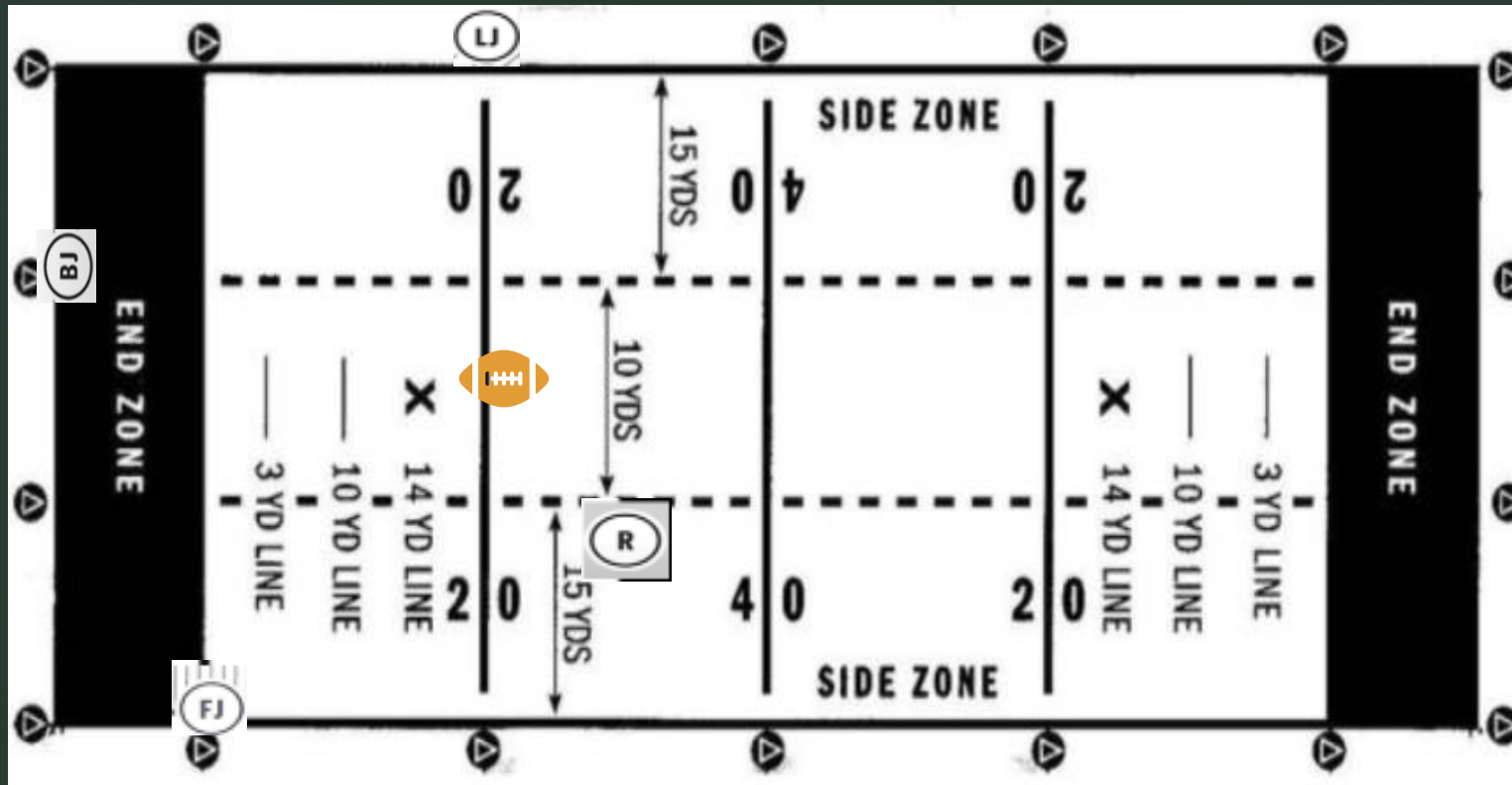
🏈 Goal Line Coverage (Inside the +30–21)

- 🏈 R/LJ/FJ: normal positioning (FJ still has GL responsibility)
- 🏈 BJ: start at and hold goal-line to judge whether TD (still shaded to LJ side) but be prepared to drop to end line if threatened



4-Man Mechanics Special Situations

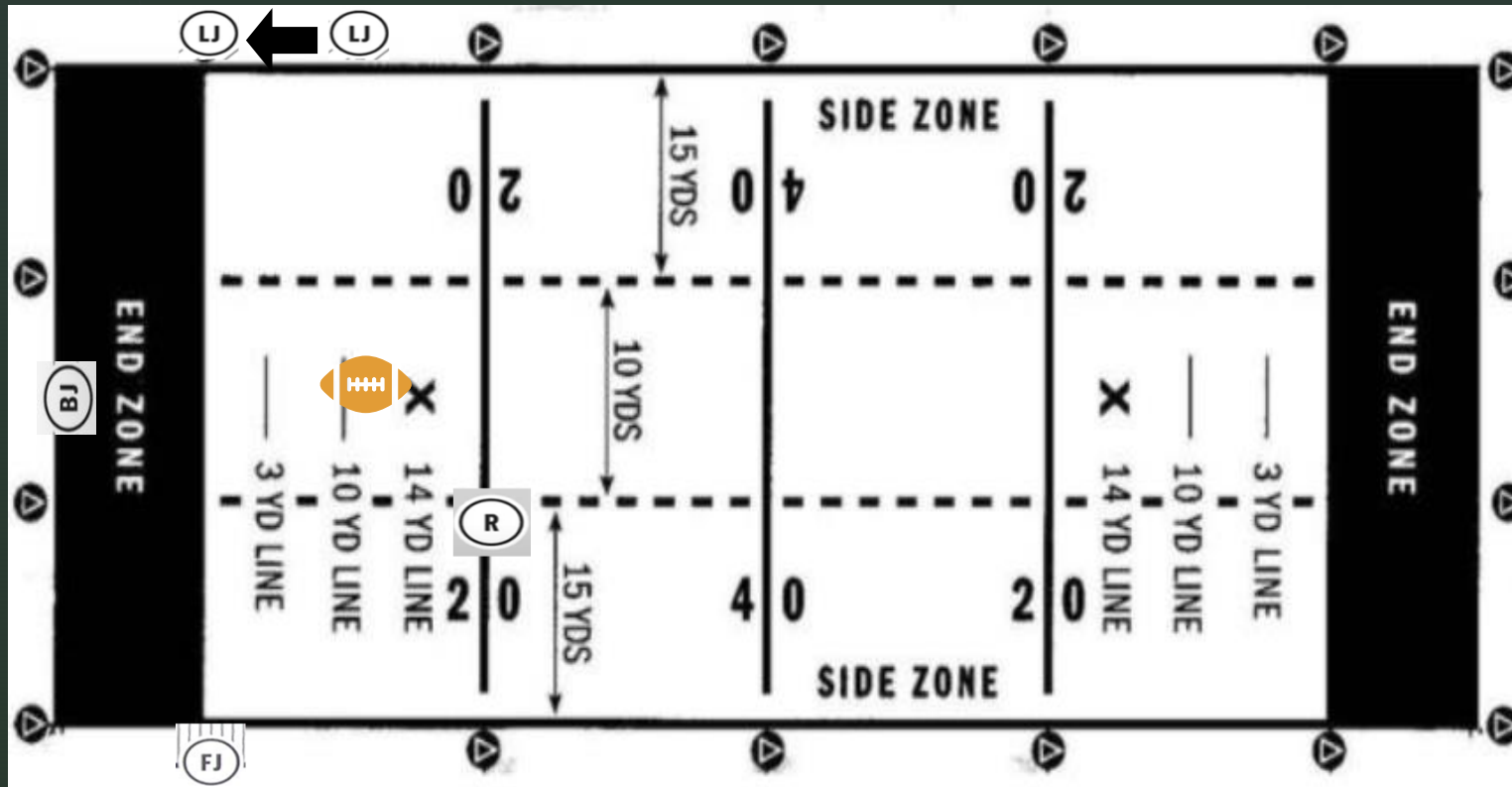
- ▶ Goal Line Coverage (Inside the +20–11)
 - R/LJ: normal positioning
 - FJ: start at and hold goal-line to judge whether TD
 - BJ: start at and hold endline (still *shaded to LJ side*)



4-Man Mechanics Special Situations

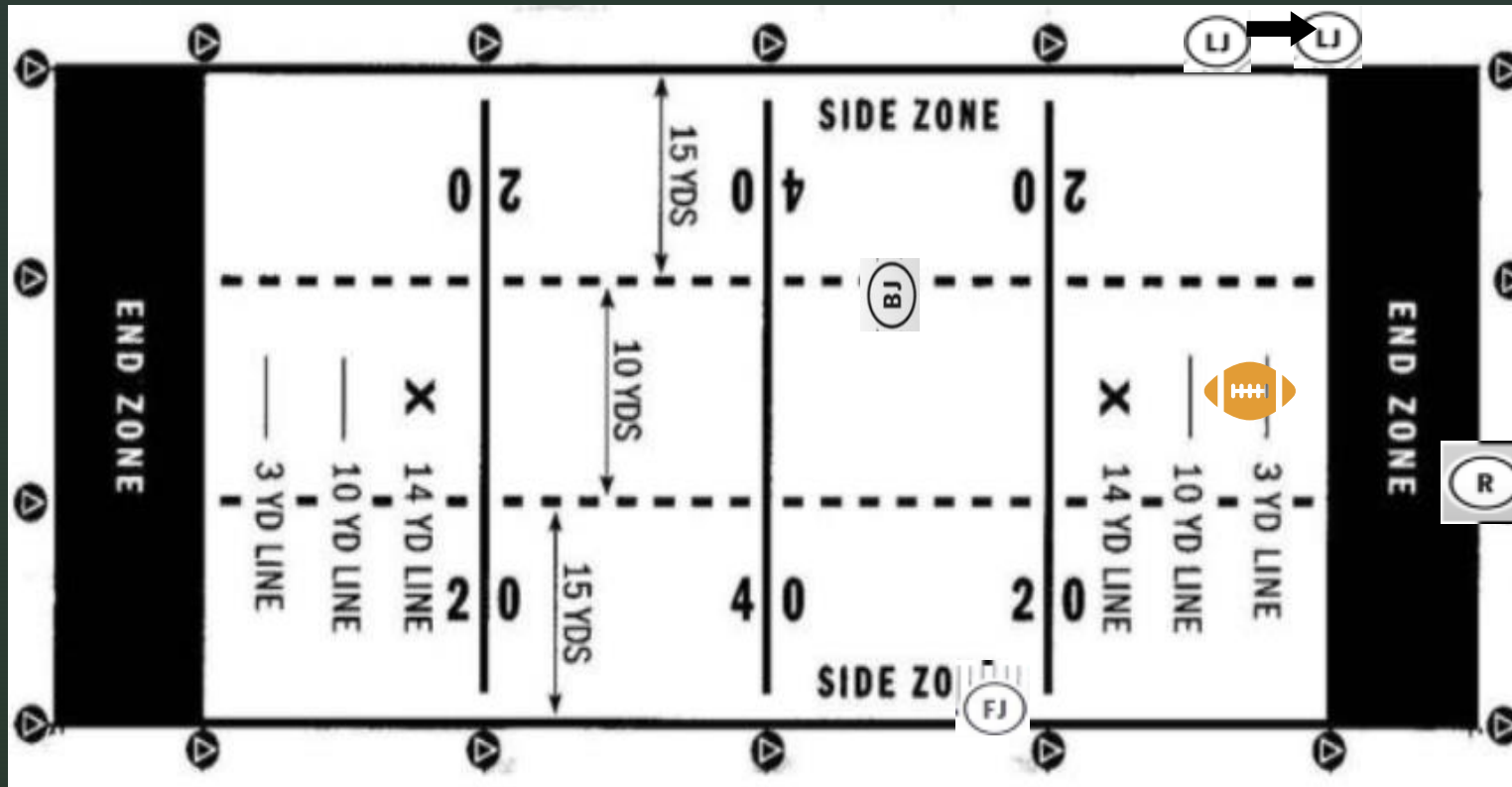
Goal Line Coverage (Inside the +10)

- LJ: *immediately* go to GL to judge whether TD
- FJ: start at and hold goal-line to judge whether TD
- BJ: start at and hold endline (centered)
- PATs: same but set box @ GL with number of points attempted (1 or 2)



4-Man Mechanics Special Situations






- Reverse Goal Line Coverage (Inside the -5)
 - R: endline (shaded to whatever side QB dictates) (at 6—10, start at GL)
 - LJ: *immediately* go to GL to judge whether SAFETY
 - BJ/FJ: normal positioning



4-Man Mechanics Special Situations



Punts (must be declared)

-  R/LJ/FJ: normal positioning
 -  R: chop down the 5 secs (R. 3-6-2)
 -  LJ: hold LOS until punt crosses ENZ and then float downfield
 -  LJ/FJ: rule on muffed punts striking ground or crossing sideline OOB on your side of snapper; watch for blocks/screens in advance of return
-  BJ: cover the punt as you normally would in a 5-man tackle football game, **blue** bag down for end of kick for PSK (i.e. where caught) and trail the return watching for Illegal Blocks, Blindside or BIB or BBW (just a PF), Holding, Flag Guarding, etc.

4-Man Mechanics Special Situations

🏈 Punts (must be declared)

- 🏈 Rules Reminders: Play is over if snap is (a) muffed/bobbled by punter *then* touches ground; (b) first touches the ground (snap “skips” to punter); or (c) punter whiffs on punt or attempts a drop kick
 - 🏈 Punt is also dead if muffed / bobbled by R and touches the ground or caught by R then fumbled and first touches the ground
 - 🏈 K possession is dead if caught cleanly or caught off R’s muff but remains LIVE if K “intercepts” R’s fumble
 - 🏈 Otherwise, a grounded punt remains LIVE! (K first touching or R may return)
 - 🏈 No fair catch but we still have KCI!
- 🏈 K & R may not break the plane for their LOS until ball is kicked – Encroachment, 5 yd penalty, previous spot (not PSK) (R. 7-1-7; 2-14-2-h-3)
- 🏈 Kick breaking plane of R’s GL (either in flight or grounded) is TB, but momentum rule allows R to retreat into EZ (**blue bean bag**)
- 🏈 K may bat at punt (i.e. not in player possession) at the GL to avoid TB

4-Man Mechanics

🏈 2:00 Warning Protocol / Mechanics

- 🏈 In the 2025 season, we had this whole complicated mess for determining when to re-start the clock, but NFHS *simplified the whole process*.
- 🏈 2-minute warning – we DO stop the clock, but this is NOT a timeout – we keep players out on the field and just declare it on the mic or to the team benches and then chop in the next play
 - 🏈 Play Clock: after the announcement, we ***immediately*** chop it in and start the 25 second play clock.
 - 🏈 Game Clock: We will ALWAYS start the clock on the **snap** for the next play
 - 🏈 This applies to all levels, from Varsity to JV to modified, and irrespective of whether we have a clock operator or on the field clock (managed by the F in 4-man, B in 3-man)

SIGNALS CHART

NFHS OFFICIAL FLAG FOOTBALL SIGNALS

1 Ball ready for play "Unleashed down"	2 Start clock	3 Time-out Disciplinary or injury time-out (followed by tapping hands on chest)
4 TV/radio time-out	5 Touchdown, Field goal, Point(s) after touchdown	6 Safety
7 Dead ball foul, Touchback (knee side to side)	8 First down	9 Loss of down
10 Illegal forward pass Penalty declined No play, as soon Time action deferred	11 Legal touching of forward pass or screenage kick	12 Inadvertent whistle
13 Staregird flag	14 End of period	15 Sideline warning
16 First touching (legal touching)	17 Reset play clock to 25 seconds	18 Enroachment
19 False start Illegal formation	20 Illegal shift (2 hands) Illegal motion (1 hand)	21 Delay of game

NFHS OFFICIAL FLAG FOOTBALL SIGNALS

22 Substitute injection	23 Disconcerting act	24 Unsportsmanlike conduct Noncontact foul	25 Illegal participation
26 Sideline interference (Free press box)	27 Illegal batting/kicking (followed by pointing toward toe for kicking)	28 Forward pass interference Kick catching interference	29 Roughing passer
30 Illegal pass/forward handing (Free press box)	31 Intentional grounding	32 Personal foul	33 Holding
34 Illegal block (legal use of hands/arms)	35 Helping runner intentional blocking	36 Flag guarding	37 Flag guarding Illegal Flag run
38 Tipping	39 Disqualification	40 Flag guarding	41 Flag guarding Illegal Flag run



LOSS OF 5 YARDS

Foul	Reference	Signal
Delay of game	3-6-2, 3-6-4	7-21
Illegal substitution	3-7	22
Encroachment	7-1-1, 7-1-5, 7-1-6, 7-1-7	7-18
Snap infraction	7-1-2, 7-1-3, 7-2-3	7-18
False start	7-1-8, 7-1-9	7-19
Disconcerting act	7-1-11	7-23
Illegal formation	7-2-1; 7-2-2b, c	19
Numbering violation	7-2-2a	19
Illegal shift or illegal motion	7-2-4, 7-2-5	20
Illegally handing ball forward (also loss of down)	7-3-2, 7-3-3	30-9
Illegal forward pass (by A; also loss of down)	7-5-2	30-9
Illegal forward pass (by B)	7-5-2	30
Intentional grounding (also loss of down)	7-5-2d	31-9
Helping runner	9-1	35
Sideline interference	9-8-1k	7-26
Attendant illegally on field	9-8-2	19
Nonplayer outside of the team box, but not on field	9-8-3	7-26

LOSS OF 10 YARDS

Foul	Reference	Signal
Kick-catching interference	6-3	28
Forward-pass interference	7-5-10	28
Illegal blocking technique	9-3-1	34
Interlocked blocking	9-2-1a	35
Holding	9-2-1b; 9-2-3c	33
Runner grasping a teammate	9-2-2a	34
Illegal use of hands or arms	9-2-3a, b, d, e	34
Flag guarding	9-2-2b, c	38
Charging into an opponent obviously out of the play (also first down if by defense)	9-4-3b	32
Hurdle an opponent (also first down if by defense)	9-4-3c	32
Tripping (also first down if by defense)	9-4-3i	36
Roughing passer (also first down)	9-4-4	32-29-8
Illegal personal contact in restricted area (also first down if by defense)	9-4-5	32-26
Unsportsmanlike conduct by player or nonplayer (also first down if by defense)	9-5, 9-8-1	24
Illegal participation	9-6	25
Illegal kicking or batting the ball	9-7	27
Sideline interference (third and subsequent) (also first down if by defense)	9-8-3	26
Nonplayer illegally on field	9-8-3	24
Unfair acts	9-9	24

Reminders: DPI ≠ Auto First; We have a lot of authority to clear the white, please use it!

FILM

