

12. BACK JUDGE (5/6C-MAN CREW)

12.1 – Free kicks

12.1.a – Priorities

Prior to the kick:

1. Being aware of whether the Referee has instructed the crew to switch to onside-kick positions, and moving position (if appropriate) if he has.
2. Counting Team A players and signalling the count [one of Sup3, Sup4 or Sup24] to colleagues. Noting count signals from colleagues. Recounting if your count differs from that of colleagues.
3. Reminding the players to count their number if the team you are responsible for counting does not have precisely 11 players on the field. §
4. Checking readiness for play:
 - (a) Checking side areas to ensure that all non-players are out of the restricted areas, that non-participants are off the field of play, and that all team personnel are within the team area.
 - (b) Ensuring that the chain crew (and the alternate down box and line-to-gain marker operators, where provided) have moved themselves and their equipment well out of the way and that the equipment has been placed on the ground outside the team areas and behind the limit lines. Checking that the ball persons are in position.
 - (c) Ensuring that all Team A players are within the nine-yard marks prior to the kick (Rule 6-1-2-c-5) and that nobody other than the kicker is more than five yards behind the ball. §
 - (d) Holding your arm aloft [S7] until the Referee declares the ball ready for play, only when satisfied that all is ready, and that your colleagues (particularly the Umpire) are in position. †
 - (e) Lowering your arm, if your area is no longer clear before the ready for play. Sounding your whistle, if your area becomes dangerously unclear after the ready for play. §
5. Being alert always for short kicks.

During the kick play:

6. Observing whether a free kick goes out of bounds nearest you without being touched by the receiving team. Ruling whether a Team B player near the sideline touches the ball while out of bounds.
7. Watching players for a fair catch signal, and being prepared to rule on any interference with the opportunity to catch the kick.
8. If you are on a restraining line and the kick is short:
 - (a) Knowing where and by whom the ball was first touched.
 - (b) Observing illegal blocks by Team A (Rule 6-1-12).
 - (c) Marking any spot of illegal touching with a bean bag.
 - (d) Marking the dead-ball spot if you are the nearest official and there is little or no return run.
9. Giving the start the clock signal [S2] only if the ball is first legally touched in the field of play in your area of responsibility.
10. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) illegal touching of a short kick
 - (b) infractions of your restraining line
 - (c) kicking team players (other than the kicker) more than 5 yards behind their restraining line after the ready for play

- (d) illegal blocks in the back[◇] and holding fouls at the point of attack
- (e) blocks below the waist
- (f) illegal wedge formations
- (g) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
- (h) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
- (i) any player of the kicking team who enters the field of play after the kick or who voluntarily goes out of bounds during the kick

12.1.b – Initial positioning

Normal kicks:

1. Be in position F (see 26.1) outside the press box sideline on Team A's restraining line.

Onside-kicks:

2. Remain in the normal position.

Free kicks after a penalty or safety:

3. When a free kick is taken following a penalty or a safety, the same relative positions should be taken, moving up or down the field as appropriate.

12.1.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

Prior to the kick:

1. If anything happens that should prevent the kick taking place (e.g. a non-participant enters or approaches the field of play), toot your whistle, give the timeout signal [S3] and deal with the problem.

During any kick play:

2. If you see any player of the kicking team voluntarily go out of bounds during the kick, drop your bean bag or hat to mark his exit, and your flag if he returns.
3. If the clock should start when the ball is first legally touched in the field of play, give the start clock signal [S2] if you are the nearest official or the one with the best view.

During a kick play that goes deep:

4. After the ball is kicked, observe the players in your area of responsibility (see 26.1). After checking its initial trajectory, do not watch the flight of the ball. Move downfield along the sideline while the kick is in the air. During the return, stay ahead of the ball carrier, keeping him bracketed between you and the downfield official. On a long run, be at Team A's goal line before the ball carrier. Mark the dead-ball spot if it is between Team A's 2-yard line and the goal line, or if the ball carrier passes you.
5. If the ball goes out of bounds in your area go to and hold the spot, dropping your flag if appropriate. Place a ball or flag at the spot and ensure that another official relays a ball to the Spotter.

During a kick play where the kick is short:

6. Maintain a position where you can see the ball and the blocks by Team A players.
7. Particularly watch the blocks made by Team A players before they are eligible to touch the ball (Rule 6-1-12).
8. Know where and by whom the ball was first touched. Mark any spot of illegal touching with your bean bag (Rule 6-1-3).
9. If you are the nearest official when the ball becomes dead, signal timeout [S3] and mark the dead-ball spot.

12.1.d – Advanced techniques

1. If an expected onside kick is instead kicked deep, move into the field and leave sideline responsibility in your area to the Line Judge.[◇]

12.2 – Basic scrimmage plays

12.2.a – Priorities

1. Knowing the down and distance, and signalling the down to your colleagues. Noting the down signals given by colleagues. Checking that the down box displays the correct number. Not allowing play to start if there is a dispute about the down number.
2. Counting Team B players and signalling the count [one of Sup3, Sup4 or Sup24] to your colleagues. Noting count signals from colleagues. Recounting if your count differs from that of colleagues.
3. Identifying your key player(s) (see section 16.4). If the formation is new or unusual, verbally or visually confirming this with the other officials.
4. Noting eligible receivers and those players who would normally be eligible by position but who are ineligible by number. In addition, noting players (usually tight ends) who would normally be eligible by number but who are not eligible because a player is lined up outside them on the line of scrimmage.
5. Being aware of where the line to gain is in relation to the line of scrimmage so that you don't have to look at the chain to know if the dead-ball spot is close to the line to gain.
6. Observing substitution infractions by both teams for example:
 - (a) replaced players not leaving the huddle within 3 seconds of an incoming substitute entering it
 - (b) replaced players not being off the field before the snap[§]
 - (c) substitutes coming on to the field, communicating, and then leaving the field

12.2.b – Initial positioning

1. Normally be 15-20 yards or more from the line of scrimmage, inside the hash marks.
2. Be deep and clear of players, but able to see all receivers, especially your key player.
3. Normally, you will be deeper than the deepest back, but be sure to keep out of his way.
4. Favour the strong side of the formation, or, if it is balanced, the side of the player who is your key.

12.2.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Always be in position to cover play from the inside looking out.
2. Be aware of a backfield player in motion at the snap. Adjust your position if necessary to ensure that you always have him in sight. He becomes your responsibility after the snap if he crosses the neutral zone on a pass play or if he blocks outside the tackle on a running play.
3. If there is a pre-snap foul, maintain a position where you can see all players (especially on the fringes) who may commit a late hit.

12.2.d – Advanced techniques

Reasons for varying (or not) your initial position:

1. On "take a knee" plays, come up into a double umpire position. Tell other officials that you are doing this. Use your presence to deter unsportsmanlike acts.
2. On obvious "hail mary" plays, start deeper than normal and make sure you can get to Team B's goal line or end line before any Team A player.

Signalling the player count:

3. The latest time to make the player count signal is when the offensive team breaks its huddle (but it can and should be done earlier if possible).^λ
4. Normally the player count signal is shared between the Linesman, Line Judge and the Back Judge.

12.3 – Running plays

12.3.a – Priorities

1. Observing action ahead of the ball carrier.
2. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag if possible.
3. Ruling whether a touchdown is scored or not on a breakaway run.
4. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) illegal block in the back[◇] and holding fouls at the point of attack, especially those made by your key player or any wide receiver, tight end, lead back or pulling lineman
 - (b) illegal block below the waist fouls by your key player and other players in your area
 - (c) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (d) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
5. Getting to the goal line ahead of any ball carrier in order to be able to rule on a touchdown.

12.3.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Move to observe actions by players behind the Umpire and ahead of the ball carrier. Your first step should normally be backwards, even on a running play. Don't move forwards until you know where the ball is likely to become dead.
2. On line plunges up the middle, do not move too fast. Let the play come to you.
3. When a running play develops toward a sideline, move towards that sideline, keeping the ball carrier between you, the side official and the sideline. Stay ahead of the play and keep out of the way of the safeties.
4. On long runs, try to stay ahead of the ball carrier and keep him boxed in between you and the wing official. Keep out of the players' way.
5. If you are the nearest official when the ball becomes dead, blow your whistle and move to deal with the pile. Only if the wing officials are delayed (or obviously missed a knee down or similar event) do you need to mark the dead-ball spot.
6. Be on Team B's goal line before a touchdown is scored.
7. If you are not the nearest official to the dead-ball spot, nevertheless move towards it and observe the continuing action after the ball becomes dead. On plays when the ball carrier goes near the sideline or out of bounds, cover the area around him for extra-curricular activity. If you are the second official to the area, go out of bounds after the ball carrier and watch for and prevent fouls on him (Mechanic 5.9).
8. Maintain a position where you can observe player activity in fringe areas, particularly on wide-open plays.

12.3.c – Advanced techniques

1. Don't blow your whistle when the ball carrier's back is toward you or you are obscured by other players (or officials) – he may have fumbled the ball without you seeing it. See leather! Be certain that the ball is dead.
2. If a pile-up of players forms, give the timeout signal [S3], converge on the pile and determine who has possession (Mechanic 5.11).
3. If you're not the nearest official to the dead-ball spot, observe for late hits and other illegal acts. It is particularly your responsibility to observe action close to the wing officials as they are concentrating on the forward progress spot.
4. Because the Back Judge is not very often directly involved in running plays, it is important to maintain concentration throughout the game. You may be the only official to observe some action away from the ball, or behind another official's back.

12.4 – Pass plays

12.4.a – Priorities

1. Ruling whether the pass is complete or incomplete. While primarily this will be for passes to the middle of the field, in practice you may need to rule on any pass where the receiver is facing or at right angles to you, regardless of his position. Similarly, if the receiver has his back to you, you may need to defer to another official with a better view than you.
2. Ruling on touchdowns on passes into the end zone.
3. Observing the initial contact by and against your key player(s).
4. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) defensive and offensive pass interference
 - (b) defensive holding and illegal use of hands against eligible receivers
 - (c) illegal block below the waist fouls by any motion man and all receivers in the middle of the field
 - (d) illegal touching of a forward pass by a player who went out of bounds voluntarily (this may require consultation with a sideline colleague)
 - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (f) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (g) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
5. Advising the Referee if the pass was thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver.
6. Watching for players who go out of bounds beyond the end line.

Once the pass is complete, apply the same priorities as on a running play (above).

12.4.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Your progression on a pass play is (phase A) your key player; (phase B) your zone; (phase C) the destination of the pass. See also Chapter 16. [◇]
2. Backpedal to keep all receivers in front of you. After the snap, your first step should normally be backwards (unless you are on the goal line or end line). Don't move forwards until you know where the ball is likely to become dead. Ensure that you can see blocking and contact by and against any eligible receivers in the middle of the field. Never get beaten deep.
3. On long pass receptions, be prepared to rule on the goal line and the end line.
4. Only watch your key player during the initial action after the snap when there is a threat of illegal contact between receiver and defender. Switch to zone coverage as soon as that threat no longer exists. [§]
5. If receivers run routes into the end zone, move into position on the end line.
6. If a potential Team A receiver voluntarily goes out of bounds in your area, drop your bean bag or hat to indicate this, and observe him to see whether he touches a forward pass while still ineligible.
7. Once you are aware that the pass has been thrown, move into position to best be able to rule on whether the pass is complete or incomplete, and whether there is interference. While the ball is in flight, watch opposing players who are contesting for the ball, not the ball itself.
8. If the receiver is driven back, be prepared to give him his forward progress.
9. If you are not the nearest official, particularly watch for defenders slightly away from the ball who come in and target the receiver with the crown of their helmet or above the shoulders.
10. Blow your whistle if you see the ball become dead in your area.

11. If you rule that the pass is incomplete, give the incomplete pass signal [S10].
12. When contact that would have been pass interference occurs on a pass that is uncatchable, give the uncatchable pass signal [S17].
13. After an incompleteness, ensure that the thrown ball is removed from the field. Repeat the incomplete pass signal [S10] to the Referee (and Umpire, if necessary) in case they did not see the original signal.
14. If there is a run after the catch, respond as you would on a running play (above).
15. On plays when the receiver goes near the sideline or out of bounds, cover the area around him for extra-curricular activity. If you are the second official to the area, go out of bounds after the ball carrier and watch for and prevent fouls on him (Mechanic 5.9).
16. Maintain a position where you can see player activity in fringe areas, particularly on wide-open plays.

12.4.c – Advanced techniques

1. When an airborne player attempts to catch a pass near the sideline or end line, watch his feet first to see whether he comes down in bounds. If he does, then look to his hands to see whether he has control of the ball. If you look at his hands first, you may miss the instant when his foot touches the ground (Mechanic 5.17.8).
2. If the pass is incomplete having been thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver, move quickly towards the Referee to inform him of this. If there *was* a receiver in the area, and you believe the Referee may not be aware of that fact, move towards the Referee while pointing towards the eligible receiver. Calling out "Number 34 was in the area of the pass" (for example) is also permissible.

12.5 – Goal line plays

12.5.a – Priorities

Same priorities as on other scrimmage plays, plus:

1. Ruling whether a touchdown is scored or not. This includes all passes into the end zone, plus running plays if the ball is snapped outside Team B's 7-yard line.
2. Observing players' celebrations after a score.

12.5.b – Initial positioning

1. If the ball is snapped from outside Team B's 7-yard line but inside the 15, start in the end zone and move to cover the goal line, unless a pass into the end zone is likely in which case move to cover the end of the pass or whichever line (goal line or end line) it is near.
2. If the snap is from on or inside the 7-yard line, start on the end line.

12.5.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Move to observe all players in your area of responsibility. If a pass is thrown into the end zone, move to the best position to rule on the end of the pass. If the pass is thrown into a corner of the end zone, this will normally be somewhere between the hash marks and the nine-yard marks.
2. Indicate a score by blowing your whistle and giving the touchdown signal [S5] only when you clearly see the ball break the plane of the goal line in player possession or if you see a pass completed in the end zone.
3. If a pile-up forms at the goal line, come into the field of play until you can see the ball. If you are the nearest official, you may need to dig for it. Check with other officials that they did not see the ball carrier down (or fumble the ball) before he reached the goal line.

4. Do not give a score signal if you have thrown a penalty flag for a foul by the scoring team. Do not blow your whistle or give any signal if you are not sure about the outcome of the play.
5. If you have goal line responsibility, straddle the goal line – don't run after the player into the end zone unless there is a threat of trouble by or against him, but do turn to keep your eyes on him to observe late hits or unsportsmanlike conduct.
6. Maintain the touchdown signal until you know the Referee has seen it, but keep your eyes on the players – don't look to the Referee until all action has ceased. Don't run and signal at the same time. You should not echo the signals of other officials unless the Referee cannot see their signal.
7. It is especially important on goal line plays that all covering officials indicate the same point of forward progress. Communicate if in doubt. Signal only if sure.
8. If the end of the play is not in your area of responsibility, move into position to assist in the clean-up of continuing action around or away from the ball.

12.6 – Returns

12.6.a – Priorities

1. Observing the ball carrier and action around him while you are the nearest official.
2. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
3. Observing any illegal forward pass, especially if you have a view that is level or nearly level with the ball carrier.
4. Observing blocks by players in your area of responsibility ahead of and around the ball carrier, particularly:
 - (a) illegal block in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack
 - (b) illegal block below the waist fouls anywhere
 - (c) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (d) illegal forward handing
 - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (f) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
5. Observing any hand-off or backward pass where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.

12.6.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Keep out of the players' way.
2. Move towards Team A's goal line following the play.
3. Observe the ball carrier while he remains in the middle of the field or until he passes the nearest wing official.
4. If you are watching a block develop, stay with it before switching to the ball carrier or another block. Even if you expect another official to take responsibility for it, stay with the block until you are confident it is legal.
5. If the ball becomes dead in your area of responsibility, blow your whistle, give the time-out signal [S3], and then signal first down [S8] to show which team is in possession. Hold the signal until you know the Referee has seen it.
6. If you are not the nearest official to the dead-ball spot, nevertheless move towards it and observe the continuing action after the ball becomes dead. On plays when the ball carrier goes near the sideline or out of bounds, move laterally to cover the area around him for extra-curricular activity. If you are the second official to the area, go out of bounds after the ball carrier and watch for and prevent fouls on him (Mechanic 5.9).

12.7 – Punts

12.7.a – Priorities

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. Marking the end of the kick (if inbounds) with a bean bag.
2. Ruling whether players touched the ball or not.
3. Observing any fair catch signals by players in your area.
4. Observing kick catch interference against a player in position to catch the kick, if the kick comes down in your area.
5. If the kick does not come down in your area, observing players who have *not* committed kick catch interference because they were blocked by an opponent into the returner.
6. Marking all spots of illegal touching with a bean bag.
7. Ruling whether a momentum exception applies or not near the goal line.
8. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) blocking below the waist, especially by players in the middle of the field
 - (b) during the kick, illegal block in the back[◇] and holding fouls against Team A players trying to get down the field
 - (c) a Team A player returning inbounds after voluntarily going out of bounds during the down (drop your bean bag or hat to mark his exit, and your flag if he returns)
 - (d) illegal blocks made by players who have signalled for a fair catch
 - (e) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (f) unnecessary roughness fouls away from the ball
 - (g) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
9. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate.

During a punt return, applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

12.7.b – Initial positioning

1. Be behind and to the side of the deepest returner. Behind so that you can look through him and see the ball kicked. To the side so that you are out of his way, but still close enough to observe whether he touches the ball or not, or whether any opponent interferes with his opportunity to catch the kick. About 5 yards behind and 5 yards to the side is an appropriate distance. If the returner moves right, you can move to his left, and vice versa.[◇] If there is more than one returner deep, take position between the returners, maintaining coverage of them from the inside out.
2. Be prepared to adjust your position according to the strength and direction of the wind, and the ability of the kicker. Move closer to the sideline where the wind is likely to carry the kicked ball.
3. Have a bean bag readily available and a second one to hand.
4. The Back Judge will have responsibility for the end of the kick, unless it ends very close to a sideline, in which case it is the responsibility of the nearest sideline official.[◇]

12.7.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. When the ball is kicked, observe its initial trajectory, but do not watch the flight of the ball. Observe players in your area of responsibility (defined by the diagrams in section 26.4) – their eyes will tell you where the ball is going. However, if the returner moves as a decoy, do not follow him - observe the area where the ball will come down.

2. When it appears obvious that the kicked ball will *not* land in your area:
 - (a) If the kick is short and to either sideline, the sideline official will assume responsibility for the ball. They will give the punch signal [Sup28] to indicate this.
 - (b) Maintain a position where you can cover action in front of and around the returner. If you are the nearest official *other than* the official covering the punt returner, move to where you can observe players blocking in the vicinity of any returner who is in position to catch the kick. In particular, observe those *blocked by an opponent* into interfering and therefore immune to penalty (Rule 6-4-1-d).
 - (c) If a player in your area signals for a fair catch, watch that he does not block before he touches the ball (Rule 6-5-4).[◊]
 - (d) Do not hesitate to call a foul if you clearly see one occur in the area where you are the cleanup official even though you may be a considerable distance away from the action. Communicate with your colleagues to find out their view of the action.
3. When it appears obvious that the kicked ball *will* land in your area:
 - (a) Move into position wide of (at least 10 yards unless he is near the sideline) and slightly behind the returner to rule on the validity of the catch.
 - (b) [×] If the kick is first muffed (but not possessed) by a member of the receiving team beyond the neutral zone, you may give the legal touching signal [S11] to signify a free ball.
 - (c) Use bean bags to mark any spots of illegal touching and/or the spot where the kick ends. Only one official, the Coverer in each case, should mark each spot and give each signal. If you have more than one spot and only one bean bag, prioritise the spot most advantageous to Team B.
 - (d) If the ball becomes dead because it is caught or recovered by Team B after a fair catch signal, or caught or recovered by Team A, blow your whistle and give the timeout signal [S3].
 - (e) If the ball is not caught and goes deeper than the returner, follow the ball and be prepared to rule on its status. Stay far enough away from it that there is no danger of it touching you.
 - (f) If the ball approaches the goal line, be on the goal line to rule on whether it enters the end zone. Other officials will cover the players.
 - (g) If the ball does enter the end zone (untouched by Team B in the field of play) or is downed by Team B in the end zone, blow your whistle and signal touchback [S7], repeating the signal until you know the Referee has seen it.
 - (h) If the kick is recovered by Team A, blow your whistle, signal timeout [S3] and give the illegal touching signal [S16] and the first down signal [S8]. Momentary touching of the ball by a player of the kicking team should not be interpreted as control of the ball.
 - (i) If the ball rolls to a stop in your area, ensure no player is attempting to recover it before blowing your whistle and signalling timeout [S3].
4. During the return, respond as in the section "Returns" (above).

12.7.d – Advanced techniques

1. Be alert for blocked kicks and their recovery and advance. On fake kicks switch to normal run or pass coverage.
 - (a) If the play turns into a run or pass, respond as you would do normally for that type of play.
 - (b) Cover the goal line and end line as appropriate.
 - (c) Be aware of the jersey numbers of the eligible receivers.

12.8 – Field goal & try attempts

12.8.a – Priorities

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. Ruling the success or failure of the field goal attempt. You share this responsibility with the Line Judge (unless he remains on the line of scrimmage, in which case you have sole responsibility).
2. Observing illegal touching or batting of the ball.
3. Observing players' celebrations after a score.
4. Noting the numbers of players in eligible receiver positions and observing whether anyone else is the first to touch the ball or is ineligibly downfield if the play develops into a passing play.
5. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate.

If the kick is returned, applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

12.8.b – Initial positioning

1. Be in position about one yard behind the goal post furthest from the press box. You are responsible for ruling whether the ball passes inside your upright. In addition you are responsible for ruling whether the ball passes above the crossbar. The Line Judge has responsibility for the other upright.

12.8.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Observe the ball from kick to when it becomes obvious whether the attempt will be successful or not.
2. If you consider the kick to be successful, communicate ("good", nod) with your colleague (if you have one)[◇] behind the posts and together come out between the uprights (approximately one yard into the end zone) giving the score signal [S5] as you come to a stop.
3. If you consider the kick to have failed, give the no score signal [S10] or, if the kick is wide to your side, only the kick wide signal [Sup15]. Do *not* signal a touchback.
4. Hold either signal for at least five seconds and until you know the Referee has seen it.
5. Blow your whistle when the result of the kick is obvious.
6. If the kick is short or blocked and the ball is possessed by Team B,[◇] move into position to officiate the kick play as a punt.

12.8.d – Advanced techniques

1. On long field goal attempts (i.e. if the ball is snapped from outside Team B's 20-yard line), it is permissible for only the Back Judge to go behind the goal posts and for the Line Judge to initially be in his normal position on the line of scrimmage. This is known as the "One Judge" mechanic.
2. Be alert for cases where the kick is blocked or where there is a bad snap. This also applies if Team A switch to a run or pass formation.
 - (a) If a run or pass develops, read the play and respond as appropriate.
 - (b) On an obvious running play or passing play short of the goal line, you may need to come infield and cover the goal line.
 - (c) Stay on the end line if a pass into the end zone is possible, or a drop kick attempt is feasible.[§]

12.9 – After each down

12.9.a – Priorities

1. Observing dead-ball action by players of both teams.
2. Encouraging the players to unpile safely, and either return the ball to an official or leave it near the dead-ball spot, as appropriate.
3. Checking whether the line to gain has been reached or is close, and signalling appropriately.
4. Checking whether any penalty flags have been thrown, and, if so:
 - (a) Giving the timeout signal [S3].
 - (b) Reporting any fouls you have called to the Referee and Umpire.
 - (c) Covering penalty flags (and bean bags, if appropriate) thrown by colleagues.
 - (d) Ensuring that all penalties are enforced correctly.
5. Checking for injured players or other occurrences that may delay play.
6. [ON-FIELD PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR] Starting the play clock when necessary, giving a 10-second warning, and throwing a delay of game flag if the clock reaches 0 before the ball is put in play.
7. Allowing legitimate requests for timeouts. Checking that a request coming from the coaching box or team area was made by the head coach.
8. Echoing all timeout signals [S3] of your colleagues.
9. Assisting in relaying the dead ball or a new ball to the succeeding spot.
10. If you are not covering the play, assisting in maintaining order on the field by moving towards where the play ended.

12.9.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If you are the Coverer, check whether the line to gain has been reached.
 - (a) If it has, give the timeout signal [S3]. After all action has ceased, make eye contact with the Referee and signal first down [S8 or Sup35]. Hold the signal until he acknowledges it.
 - (b) If you are not sure whether the line to gain has been reached or not, signal timeout [S3] and yell "close". Encourage the Referee to come and look for himself.
 - (c) Only place a ball on the ground at the *actual* dead-ball spot – never at a spot level with it.
 - (d) If the play ended inbounds, inform the Referee that the clock should start on the ready by giving him the clock running signal [Sup12].
2. [WHEN A 40-SECOND PLAY CLOCK IS BEING USED] If you are the Coverer, signal that the ball is dead. This will be using the dead-ball signal [S7] unless the timeout signal [S3], touchdown/field-goal signal [S5], safety signal [S6] or incomplete pass/unsuccessful field-goal signal [S10] is appropriate instead. Give only *one* signal.
3. If a penalty flag has been thrown, follow the procedure in chapter 19. If a team or injury timeout has been called, follow the procedure in chapter 17. If a period has ended, follow the procedure in chapter 20.
4. [ON-FIELD PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR] If a 40-second clock should start by rule:
 - (a) If there is a stadium play clock, check that it started shortly after the end of the play.
 - (b) If there is no stadium play clock, start a 40-second count shortly after the end of the play.

Relaying the ball:

5. If you have the ball, but another official has the dead-ball spot and it is close to the line to gain, hand the ball to that official and allow him to spot it at the precise location (yard line *and* lateral position) where the ball became dead.
6. Unless you are the Coverer, assist in relaying a ball to the official who will place it at the succeeding spot (Mechanic 5.8).
7. If a ball has been placed at the dead-ball spot in a side zone, and another ball is being relayed in to the succeeding spot, do not move the ball at the dead-ball spot until the replacement ball has been positioned at the correct location on the inbounds line. [◇]

Getting ready for the next down:

8. Move into position for the next down. If the ready-for-play has been given (or is imminent), backpedal to keep your eyes on the ball. Do not take your eyes off it for long in case the play starts while you are not looking.
9. If the ball is not ready for play 20 seconds into the play count (Rule 3-2-4-b-3), signal to the Referee [Sup29] that the play clock should be reset to 25 seconds. [§]
10. When approximately 10 seconds remain on the play clock, raise a hand high in the air [signal S7] until either the ball is snapped or a delay of game flag is thrown. Do not give any additional signal (e.g. a countdown).

12.9.c – Advanced techniques

1. The priority at the end of a play is to get into position ready for the next one. Only if a serious incident occurs (such as a foul or misconduct, an injury, or a breakage of the chain) should your routine be interrupted.
2. If Team A makes substitutions while the snapper is at, near or moving towards his position at the line of scrimmage:
 - (a) Check whether Team B responds to Team A's substitutions.
 - (b) If so (or if in doubt for up to 3 seconds after a Team A incoming substitute enters the field of play or end zones), signal [Sup36] to the Referee and shout "subs on".
 - (c) Drop the signal [Sup36] once it is clear that Team B has completed its substitutions (or does not make any).
3. If you want to speak to a player on the field (e.g. to warn him that he was close to fouling), it often saves time to relay the message via the Referee (for a Team A player). Don't delay the game unnecessarily by entering either team's huddle, unless a timeout is still in progress.
4. Maintain your concentration, and think about the next play.