

## 8. BEFORE THE KICKOFF

### 8.1 - Before the game – off the field

1. Meet with the other officials at the stadium at the agreed time. This should normally be at least 1½ hours before kickoff time for a regular game, and 2-3 hours for a playoff, international or other important game (unless the pre-game conference has been held in another place).
2. A pre-game conference is mandatory, either at the venue or at another time or place (including online) prior to the game. The Referee should ensure that sufficient time is allocated for a thorough pre-game conference. Anticipate any problems with changing rooms and allow extra time if multiple changing rooms may have to be used, since this may mean that the pre-game cannot happen while people are changing. Arrival times and the time to change should be planned and adjusted accordingly.<sup>◊</sup>
3. As early as possible after arriving at the stadium, inspect the facilities and the playing surface, particularly for hazards and obstructions. Seek the co-operation of game management to rectify any faults. **The sooner game management is informed of a problem, the more time it has to fix it before kickoff.** <sup>§</sup>
4. [REFEREE] Lead a thorough pre-game conference to prepare the crew mentally for the game. Ensure that all members of the crew contribute to it. A pre-game conference guide can be found in chapter 7. [OTHERWISE] Participate in the pre-game conference. If the Referee is delayed or has to leave the conference for any reason, the conference should be led by<sup>×</sup> the senior official present.
5. [REFEREE] [UMPIRE] Prior to the game visit each team (normally in its changing room or on the field) at least one hour before kickoff.
  - (a) Identify and introduce yourself to the Head Coach.
  - (b) Verify that each Head Coach provides a roster and signs a Coach's Certification to confirm that all players have been issued with the mandatory equipment and have been instructed in its use, etc. Confirm the game kickoff time, and any other timing details concerning the teams' arrival on the field of play.
  - (c) Review with the Coach the items listed in section 4.3.
  - (d) Review any unusual game procedures or situations with the Coach. Note any trick plays that may be used.
  - (e) [UMPIRE] Spot-check players' equipment and taping. Record numbers of players with illegal equipment or without mandatory equipment so that they can be re-checked when they get out onto the field of play.
6. [OTHERWISE] While the Referee and Umpire are visiting the Head Coaches:
  - (a) If one or both teams are running drills on the field, you may choose to take advantage of this to get into position and (without whistles, flags or overt signals, and without making your presence too obvious) practice your keys, movement and response to the play.
  - (b) The officials responsible for briefing the chain crew and ball persons may go out onto the field and do this.
  - (c) Return to the changing room once you have completed your tasks or the teams have finished their drills.
7. [IN xx0 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] [LINE JUDGE]  
 [IN xx1/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6C/7/8)] [BACK JUDGE]<sup>§</sup>  
 [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] [FIELD JUDGE]<sup>†</sup> Examine the game balls provided. If they are acceptable, mark each ball. <sup>×</sup> Be responsible for ensuring that the game balls are conveyed to the field (seeking the assistance of other officials if necessary). <sup>‡</sup>
8. Complete any pre-game paperwork that is required by the competition or your officiating organisation.
9. [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER] Before leaving the changing room:
  - (a) Ensure that you have the correct time. Have a countdown stop-watch available and be conversant with its use. Check that another member of the crew is carrying a spare stop-watch in case the primary one becomes defective.
  - (b) Confirm the kickoff time and relay this to the other officials. It is your responsibility to ensure that all officials arrive on the field at the correct time.
  - (c) Ensure that the other officials also synchronise their watches with the correct time.
10. Check that you and all your colleagues are wearing the correct uniform and are carrying their necessary equipment. The Umpire normally leads on this.
11. Do the radio checks stipulated in section 25.2.
12. Leave the changing room with the other officials in time to arrive at the field 10-20 minutes before the scheduled start time (earlier if the chain crew and/or ball persons still need to be briefed, or the field is some distance away; later if not). Arriving at the field earlier is appropriate and necessary if you judge that there is a significant risk of misconduct there or if the crew wishes to conduct its preparations there. <sup>×</sup>

### 8.2 - Before the game – on the field

1. All officials should arrive at the field no later than 10 minutes before the scheduled kickoff time. Be earlier than this if you anticipate any difficulties with the teams, chains, chain crew, balls, ball persons, field markings or equipment, or are required to do so by the schedule for pre-game activities.
2. Note the location of the press box. If there is not a formal press box, the side deemed to be the press box is determined solely by the position of (in usual order of priority) the primary TV camera, the

announcer/commentator or the majority of spectators, *not* by which side of the field the home team chooses to use.

3. Note the location of the medical personnel and<sup>§</sup> facilities.
4. Check that game management has made any necessary changes to rectify faults in the facilities or playing area.
5. Summary of pre-game responsibilities:

Responsibility	3	4	5	6C	6D	7	8
Re-inspect field (primary)	R	R	B	B	S	B	B
Re-inspect field (secondary)			R	R	R	S	S
Spot check players' equipment (primary)	R	U	U	U	U	U	U
Spot check players' equipment (secondary)		R	R	C	R	R	C
Check teams and officials are ready on field	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Check chain and brief chain crew	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Ensure game balls are available	L	L	B	B	F	B	B
Brief ball persons (and alternate chain crew)	L	L	L	L	F/L	F/L	F/L
* Brief stadium game clock operator and announcer	L	L	L	L	L/F	L/F	L/F
* Brief stadium play clock operator	L	L	B	B	S	B	B
Meet with medical personnel	L	L	B	B	S	B	B

6. [REFEREE]
  - (a) [IN xx0/xx1/2x2/3x1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C/6D)] Assist the Back Judge or the Side Judge with re-inspecting the whole of the playing area and its immediate surrounds. [IN xx0 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] You will need to do this inspection alone.
  - (b) [IN 2xx FORMATION (NO C)] Assist the Umpire with spot-checking players' equipment.
  - (c) Check that both teams are at the field and are ready for play.
  - (d) If a competition mandates a minimum number of players and/or coaches must be present before kickoff, check this. There is no need to count heads if there are obviously more or less than the minimum number. If the minimum number is not reached, inform the Head Coach.
  - (e) If an on-field play clock is being used (and time permits), brief the quarterbacks and scrimmage kickers on how they will be notified that the play clock has reached 10 seconds remaining. Do not interrupt any pregame preparation the players may be doing. If appropriate, speak to the coach running a drill and ask to speak to the players when the drill has finished. <sup>§</sup>
  - (f) Verify that all the other officials have completed their duties.
7. [UMPIRE] [CENTRE JUDGE] Spot-check player equipment. Get other officials to assist you once they have completed their own duties.
8. [DOWN JUDGE]
  - (a) Locate and check the chain for length, kinks, and knots. You should carry tape or string against which to measure the chain (between the inside edges of the stakes).
  - (b) Mark the mid-point of the chain (5 yards from each end) with a piece of tape or supplementary clip to help determine whether or not a defensive penalty will result in the line to gain being reached.
  - (c) Introduce yourself to the chain crew and brief them in the procedures detailed in section 22.1.
9. [LINE JUDGE]
  - (a) [IN xx0 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)]
    - (i) Ensure that the game balls are available.
    - (ii) Discuss with the available medical personnel what signals are to be used to summon them on to the field. Inform the other officials of the agreed signals.
    - (iii) If stadium play clocks are available, brief their operator
  - (b) [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C)]<sup>†</sup> OR  
[IF THE FIELD JUDGE IS THE ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER]
    - (i) Introduce yourself to the ball persons and brief them in the procedures detailed in section 22.3. Retain possession of the balls until the ball persons are briefed – do not allow players to practice with them.
    - (ii) Organise and brief the alternate down box and line-to-gain marker crew (if provided) in the procedures detailed in section 22.2.
  - (c) [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER]
    - (i) If a stadium clock is available, brief its operator
    - (ii) If there is an announcer, instruct them on signals and procedures, and inform them of the names and positions of the officials. Check and confirm with them details of the following:
      - (1) Kickoff time
      - (2) Pre-game ceremonies (anthems, announcing teams, etc.)
      - (3) Half-time activities (time to clear field)
10. [BACK JUDGE]
  - (a) Ensure that the game balls are available.
  - (b) If stadium play clocks are available, brief their operator
  - (c) Discuss with the available medical personnel what signals are to be used to summon them on to the field. Inform the other officials of the agreed signals.

(d) Re-inspect the whole of the playing area and its immediate surrounds. Note any unusual markings and notify other officials. Ensure that game management has rectified any faults.

(e) If time permits, brief the punt returners about fair catch signals. §

11. [FIELD JUDGE]

(a) [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] Ensure that the game balls are available. ▲

(b) [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER]

- (i) If a stadium clock is available, brief its operator
- (ii) If there is an announcer, instruct them on signals and procedures, and inform them of the names and positions of the officials. Check and confirm with them details of the following:
  - (1) Kickoff time
  - (2) Pre-game ceremonies (anthems, announcing teams, etc.)
  - (3) Half-time activities (time to clear field)

(c) [NOT ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER]

- (i) Introduce yourself to the ball persons and brief them in the procedures detailed in section 22.3. Retain possession of the balls until the ball persons are briefed – do not allow players to practice with them.
- (ii) Organise and brief the alternate down box and line-to-gain marker crew (if provided) in the procedures detailed in section 22.2.

(d) [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] If time permits, brief the punt returners about fair catch signals. §

12. [SIDE JUDGE]

(a) [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)]

- (i) ✗ If stadium play clocks are available, brief their operator.
- (ii) Discuss with the available medical personnel what signals are to be used to summon them on to the field. Inform the other officials of the agreed signals.

(b) Re-inspect the whole of the playing area and its immediate surrounds. Note any unusual markings and notify other officials. Ensure that game management has rectified any faults.

13. [DOWN JUDGE AND LINE JUDGE]<sup>2</sup> Ask the Head Coach to appoint or identify a "get-back coach" to assist you in keeping personnel well clear of the sideline during the game.

14. [DOWN JUDGE, LINE JUDGE, FIELD JUDGE AND SIDE JUDGE]<sup>2</sup>

(a) Ensure that yardage markers and other sideline equipment are out of your way, particularly close to the goal lines and end lines.

(b) ✝ If you have not already done so, identify and introduce yourself to the captains and coaches of the team on your side of the field.

15. [ALL OFFICIALS] [USING O2O/CREW RADIO] When you have completed your duties, notify your colleagues of this. §

### 8.3 - Ceremonies

1. There are a number of different formats for ceremonies prior to kickoff. This section attempts to address the officials' roles and responsibilities at these times. Game management may vary the procedure, but equally may seek the officials' advice in how to organise the ceremony.

2. At a tournament or when a series of games is being played at the same venue, try to achieve consistency about the way the ceremonies at each game are conducted.

3. Ceremonies are often used for one or more of the following purposes:

- (a) to introduce the teams
- (b) to play the national anthem(s)
- (c) to observe a minute's silence in respect of someone who has died or to commemorate a national day of mourning or remembrance
- (d) to involve some notable<sup>2</sup> person (e.g. politician or celebrity)

The coin toss may take place before, after or during these, provided that Rule 3-1-1 is not infringed.

4. Principles to aim to achieve:

(a) If national flags are on formal display (i.e. not just being waved by spectators), it is a good idea to face them during the playing of the national anthem(s).

(b) You should very much avoid having either or both teams behind you or out of your sight. Try to adopt a position or angle where you can see both teams at all times during the ceremony.

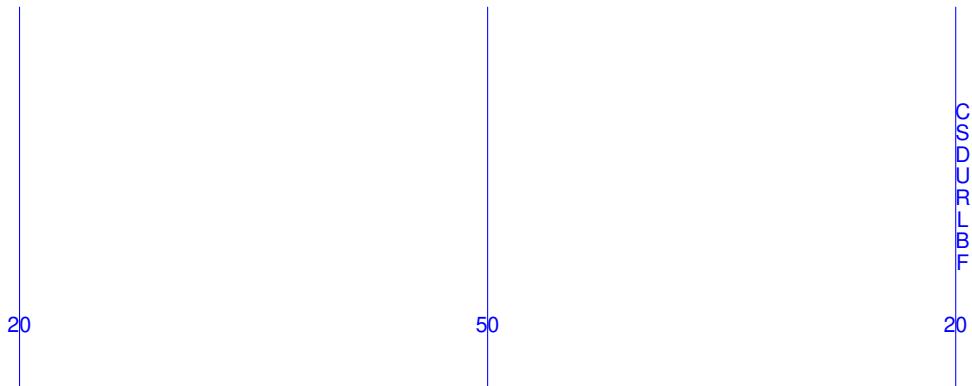
(i) It is preferable that both teams remain in their team area during the ceremony, but game management may wish to have both teams on the field.

(ii) If both teams are on/near their sideline facing the middle of the field, be near the centre of the 20-yard line at one end of the field, facing the opposite end line, so that both team areas are in your view. If national flags are on formal display at one end of the field, use the end that enables you to face them. Otherwise, use the end that places you to the right of the press box.

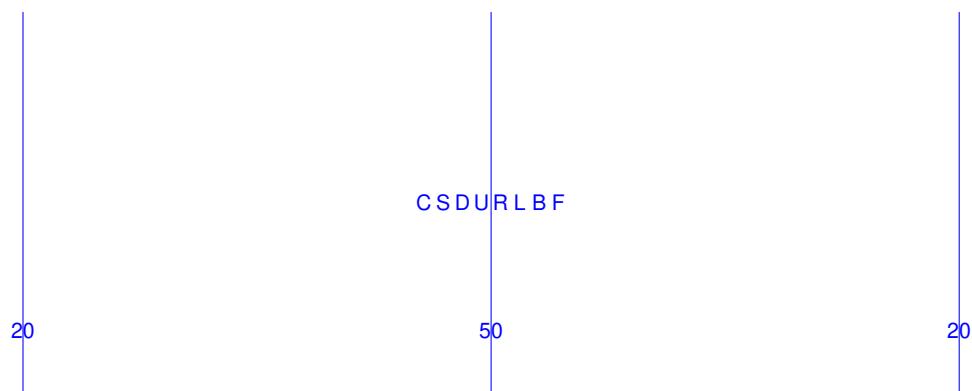
(iii) If both teams are lined up together, face the same way as them, with you between them and keeping sight of them at least in your peripheral vision.

(iv) Do not be so far away from the players that you cannot easily intervene (e.g. verbally) if they behave inappropriately.

- (c) The officials should line up in single file abreast. The Referee should be in the centre of the line.
- (d) If the principles above are adhered to, the officials' positions on the 20-yard line are shown in the following diagram:<sup>§</sup>



or at midfield in this diagram:



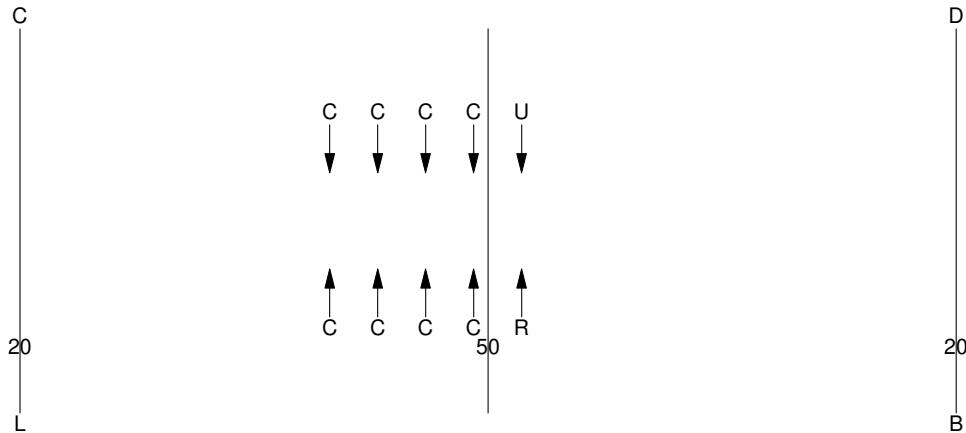
- (e) All officials must remove their cap during the playing of any national anthem or holding a minute's silence. It is a matter of personal taste whether an individual official holds it over their chest, lower down, or at their side.
- (f) If there is no master-of-ceremonies and/or game management ask the Referee to start the anthem(s) or minute's silence, the Referee will signal the start by taking off their cap. Under these circumstances, the Referee should time the duration of the silence, and signal the end of it by replacing their cap on their head.
- (g) If the ceremony is entirely under the control of the officials, it is best to do the coin toss first, then play the anthem(s) or have the minute's silence once the captains have returned to their teams on the sideline. In this case the officials should line up as in (b.ii) and (d.i)<sup>§</sup> above.
- (h) If both a minute's silence and national anthem(s) take place, the protocol is for the minute's silence to take place before the playing of any anthem. This ensures that the ceremony ends on a "happy" note rather than a "sad" one.

## 8.4 - Coin toss

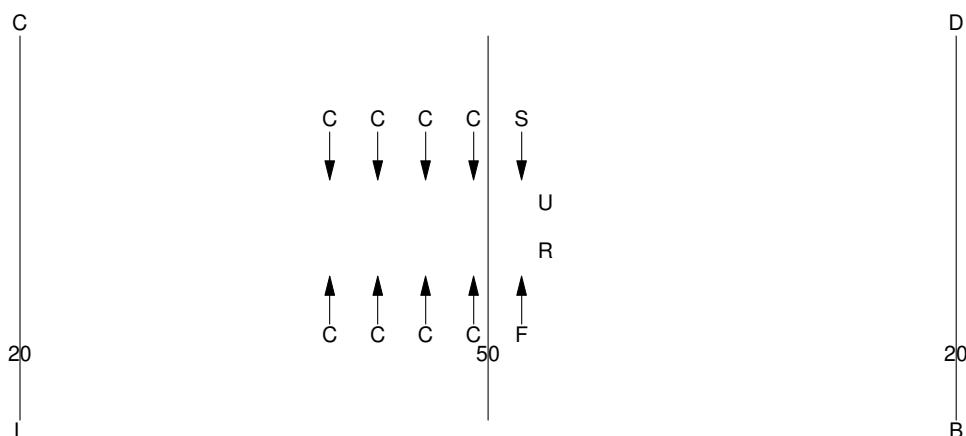
1. After completion of pre-game duties, the Referee, Line Judge, Back Judge and Field Judge go to the press box sideline and the Centre Judge, Umpire, **Down Judge** and Side Judge go to the opposite sideline.
2. Get the team captains of the team on your side of the field and have them ready on the sideline 5 minutes before scheduled kickoff time.
  - (a) Ensure that there are no more than four captains (excluding non-playing mascots) and that they are carrying rather than wearing their helmets.
  - (b) The captains should be lined up on the sideline. On the press box sideline, they should be lined up on the left shoulder of the Referee or Field Judge. On the sideline opposite the press box, they should be lined up on the right shoulder of the Umpire or Side Judge.

## 3. Positions and duties during coin toss ceremony:

(a) [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C)] On the Referee's signal, the Referee and Umpire shall escort their respective captains to the centre of the field at **normal walking pace<sup>§</sup>** (see diagram below). The Umpire will introduce their captains to the Referee and then step back to a position where they can witness the toss.



(b) [IN xx2/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D/7/8)] The Referee and Umpire shall take up position in the centre of the field. The Field Judge and Side Judge shall escort their respective captains on to the field at **normal walking pace<sup>§</sup>** and introduce them to the Referee (see diagram below). Once they have done this, they should **turn round and walk back<sup>◊</sup>** to the sideline.



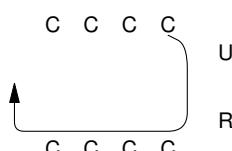
(c) The remaining officials should monitor the players in the team area on their side of the field.

- At least one official should be positioned on or near each 20-yard line in order to be able to monitor the entire team.
- If one or more of the remaining officials is still carrying out their pre-game duties (such as briefing the chain crew), that takes precedence over this ceremonial duty.
- One official will be holding the ball for the kickoff. [IN xx1/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6C/7/8)] This is the Back Judge. [IN xx0 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] This is the Line Judge. [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] This is the Field Judge.<sup>◊</sup>

(d) During the toss ceremony, only those participating in the ceremony should be on the field. All other players, coaches, etc. should be in the team area (Rule 3-1-1). The officials not involved in the toss ceremony should enforce this (unobtrusively whenever possible).

4. It is not necessary for the Referee to introduce the officials to the captains, nor for any of the officials to shake hands with any of the captains.

5. [REFEREE] Ask the captains to introduce themselves to each other. Have the home team stay still and have the visiting team walk around and shake hands with them (see diagram below).



## 6. [REFEREE]

(a) [USING PUBLIC RADIO] Turn the radio on and leave it on until you have announced and signalled the result of the toss. If something goes wrong, turn it off temporarily while you resolve the problem, but if at all possible turn it back on once you are able to proceed.

(b) Show the speaking captains both sides of the coin, and clarify any doubt there may be as to which side is heads and which side is tails.

Change codes: <sup>†</sup> better coverage; <sup>§</sup> fill gap; <sup>◊</sup> clarification; <sup>‡</sup> better communication; <sup>×</sup> deleted; <sup>®</sup> rule change <sup>‡</sup> editorial

- (c) Ask the visiting captain to call the toss clearly (ask them again if their call is not clear).
- (d) Announce clearly the captain's call.
- (e) Toss the coin and either catch it or let it drop to the ground in view of the captains.
- (f) Indicate the winning captain by placing a hand on or near their shoulder.
- (g) Ask the winning captain for their chosen option.

7. [UMPIRE]

- (a) Witness all the significant parts of the coin toss ceremony, including the visiting captain's call and both captains' options.
- (b) Ask the Referee to clarify or correct any part that you think has not been communicated clearly and correctly.

(c) Record who won the toss and both teams' choice of options immediately. §

8. The winning captain can choose to:

- (a) defer their options to the second half;
- (b) receive the ball or kick off;<sup>1</sup>
- (c) defend either goal.

If the captain's option is unusual (e.g. choosing to kick off or choosing an end),<sup>2</sup> confirm that you heard their choice correctly.

9. If the winning captain elects to defer their options to the second half, the Referee should, after placing a hand on or near the captain's shoulder, step well clear and give the option deferred signal [S10] towards the press box. The losing captain should then be given the remaining options.

10. [REFEREE]

- (a) Instruct the captains to face each other with their backs to the goal that they will be defending.
- (b) Step back to be in front of the captains of the team that had the options for the first half, ensuring that your position is not obscured from the press box.
- (c) Signal the choice by making a kicking [S30] or catching motion [Sup13] while facing the same direction as the captains. There is no need to give the opposite signal for the other team.
- (d) If the captain elects to defend a goal, point with both arms towards the goal line and then give an appropriate signal for the choice of the other captain.

11. At the request of game management, the toss of the coin may be performed by a VIP or attended by a small group of people. The following represents best practice when this is the case.

- (a) Prior to the coin toss ceremony, the VIP should be located a few feet out of bounds on the press box side of the field, near the midfield line.
- (b) [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C)] Have them accompany the Referee to the field (usually on their right shoulder). [IN xx2/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D/7/8)] Have them join the Referee and Umpire in the centre of the field.
- (c) For the duration of the coin toss ceremony, the VIP should stand between the Referee and Umpire.
- (d) [REFEREE] If the VIP has not been introduced by the public address announcer, try to introduce them yourself (e.g. "Here to toss the coin is the Honourable Archibald Zebra, Mayor of Frumfrum").
- (e) [REFEREE] Get the captain's choice of heads or tails before asking the VIP to toss the coin. If you have the coin, do not give it to the VIP until you are ready for them to toss it. Ask them to toss it a few feet (about a metre, if they are more familiar with metric units)<sup>3</sup> into the air and aim it to come down between the speaking captains.
- (f) [UMPIRE] Once the captains' options have been determined and the Referee is announcing them, gently remind the VIP to leave the field (normally to the press box sideline).

12. **Summary:**

- (a) indicate the team that has won the toss, and if they have deferred their options;
- (b) determine who is going to receive, and at which end;
- (c) move the captains (this tells everyone which goal each team is defending);
- (d) indicate either who is receiving or who is kicking off, but not both;
- (e) it is not necessary for spectators to be told which option each captain has chosen other than in the case of a deferral.

13. Unless there is a national anthem/minute's silence ceremony, go directly to your kickoff position<sup>4</sup> after the coin toss ceremony has been completed.

14. [ALL OFFICIALS] Record who won the toss and both teams' choice of options. [USING O2O/CREW RADIO] [REFEREE OR UMPIRE] notify colleagues while the captains are returning to their sidelines. §

15. Before going to your position,  
 [IN xx0 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] [LINE JUDGE]  
 [IN xx1/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6C/7/8)] [BACK JUDGE]  
 [IN xx2 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D)] [FIELD JUDGE]<sup>5</sup> bring the ball for the kickoff on to the field and pass it to the Umpire.