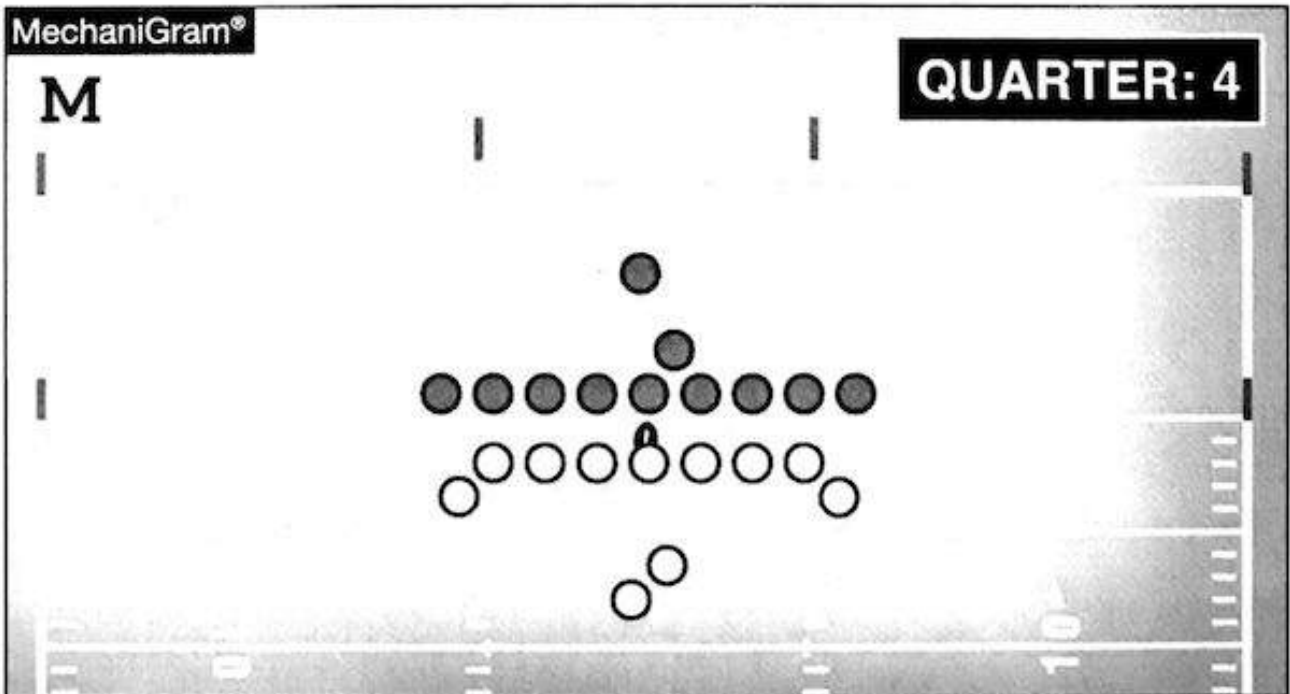
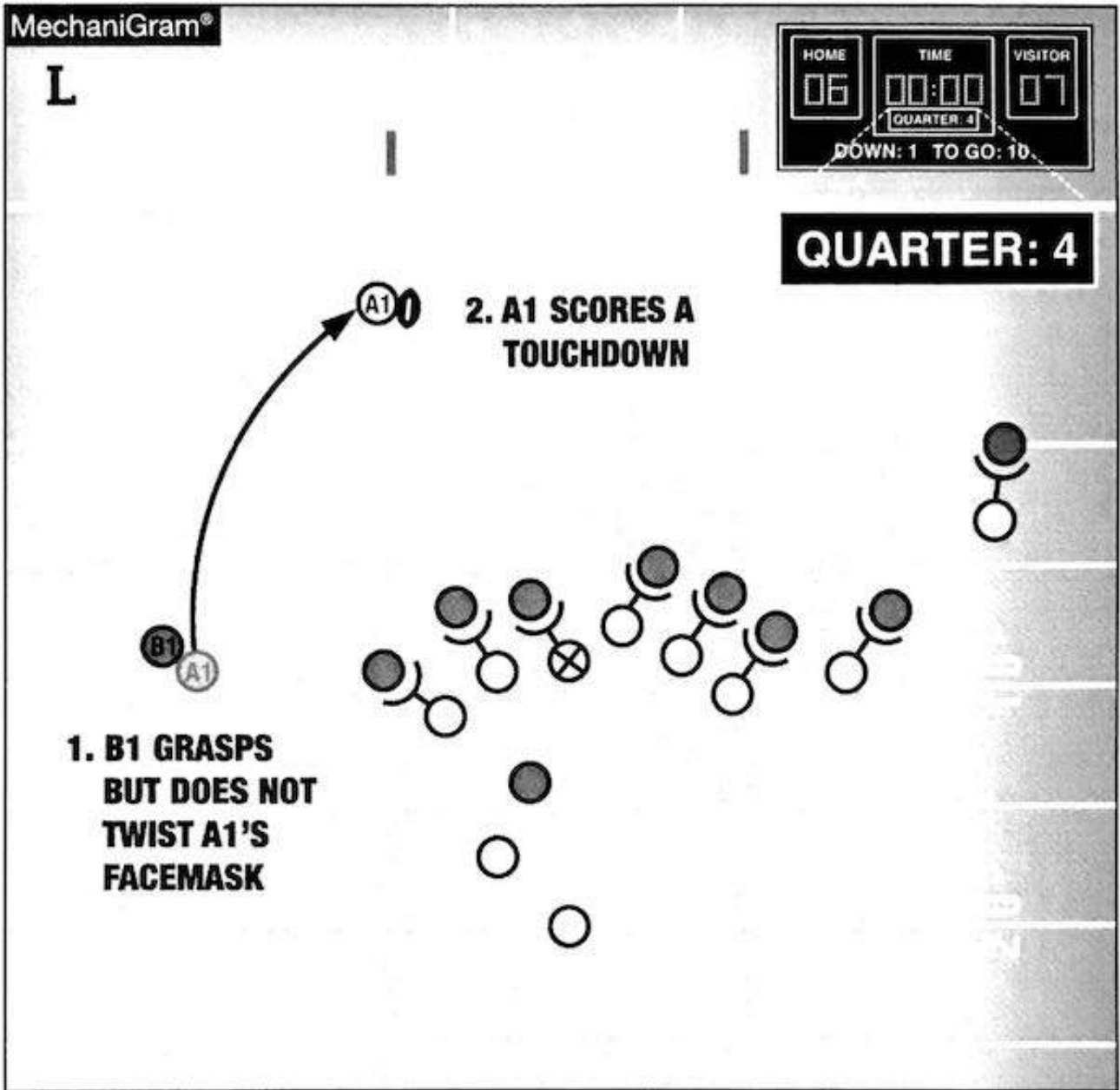


PENALTY ENFORCEMENT ON KICK PLAYS



When there will be no subsequent kickoff, the scoring team may only choose enforcement on the try.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT ON KICK PLAYS

with a replay of the down, or choose to have it enforced on the first play of overtime.

Fouls on a Kick Try

For the most part, fouls on a try are treated the same as fouls that occur on scrimmage plays. Live-ball fouls enforced as dead-ball fouls are always enforced from the succeeding spot and cannot be combined with live-ball fouls to create a double foul.

If team A fouls during an unsuccessful try, there is no replay if team B declines the penalty. There is no carry over to the kickoff or succeeding spot in overtime.

If team A fouls during a successful try, team B must accept the penalty to have the down replayed. The down is over and there is no replay if the foul includes loss of down.

If team B fouls during an unsuccessful try, team A must accept the penalty for team B's foul to get a replay of the down. There is no carry over to the kickoff or succeeding spot in overtime.

If team R fouls during a successful kick try, team K may choose previous-spot enforcement or carry over the penalty to the kickoff or succeeding spot in overtime. If team K accepts the penalty and replays the down, there can be no carry over to the kickoff or extra period. A team cannot be penalized twice for the same offense, nor can the offended team accept the penalty for more than one live-ball foul on the same play.

Play 35: As seen in MechaniGram N, K1 is attempting a kick try from team R's three yardline. R2 grasps but does not twist K3's facemask at the line of scrimmage and R4 roughs kicker K1. The kick is successful.

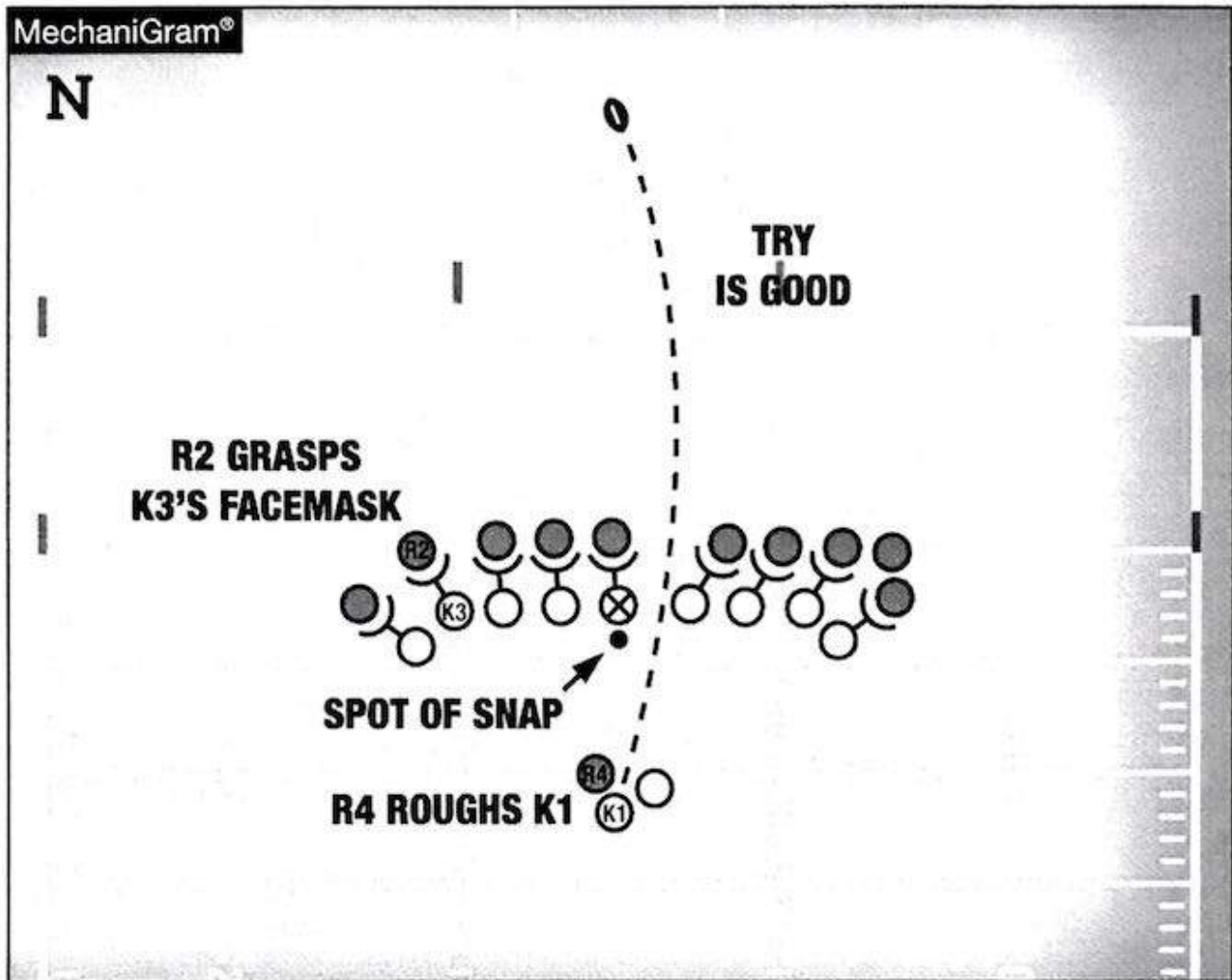
Ruling 35: Team K may accept enforcement from the previous spot or enforcement on the subsequent kickoff. Team K does not have the option of accepting previous-spot enforcement for one foul and carrying the other to the kickoff or succeeding spot in overtime.

If team B fouls during a successful two-point try, team A may only choose to carry over the penalty to the kickoff or succeeding spot in overtime. There can be no replay of the down.

The penalty for a foul that occurs during a touchdown-scoring play may carry over to the next kickoff. However, the offended team may still opt for enforcement on the try.

Play 36: With 4:37 to play in the first quarter, team A attempts a try from team B's three yardline. B1 grasps but does not twist A2's facemask

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT ON KICK PLAYS



Multiple fouls by the opponent may leave the scoring team with multiple enforcement options, but it may not accept enforcement for both penalties.

during A2's run. The try is good for two points. **Ruling 36:** Since the penalty may carry over to the kickoff, team A will likely choose to accept the penalty with succeeding-spot enforcement.

If during a touchdown-scoring play either team commits a foul that has succeeding-spot enforcement, the penalty may be enforced on either the try or on the next kickoff. The same choice exists for the penalty for a foul that occurs after a touchdown and before the initial ready-for-play signal on the ensuing try. In essence, all fouls that occur by the opponents of the scoring team from the moment the scoring play begins through the ready for play on the try have the same penalty options.

Play 37: A1's run from scrimmage results in a touchdown. During A1's run, B1 is flagged for (a) grasping but not twisting A1's facemask, or (b) cursing at the official. **Ruling 37:** In (a) or (b), the touchdown counts and team A may choose to have the penalty enforced on the try or on the subsequent kickoff.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT ON KICK PLAYS

Play 38: A1's run from scrimmage results in a touchdown. After the ball has crossed the goalline, (a) B1 tackles A1, or (b) B1 curses at the official.

Ruling 38: In (a) and (b), the touchdown counts. In (a), because the dead-ball foul occurred before the ready signal for the ensuing try, team A may choose to have the penalty enforced on the try or on the subsequent kickoff. In (b), because an unsportsmanlike foul has succeeding-spot enforcement, team A has the option to choose enforcement on the try or on the next kickoff.

Play 39: A1's run from scrimmage results in a touchdown. After A1's run, B1 is flagged for a dead-ball foul. Team A's captain chooses to have the penalty enforced on the subsequent kickoff. During the successful try, team B's coach is flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct. **Ruling 39:** If team A wants to accept the penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct, it must be enforced on the subsequent kickoff along with the previously accepted foul. That would result in team A kicking off from team B's 30 yardline.

Play 40: Team A trails by seven points when A1's run results in a touchdown as time runs out for the second quarter. B2 is flagged for a personal foul (a) during, or (b) after A1's touchdown-scoring run. **Ruling 40:** In (a) and (b), the touchdown counts. In either case, team A may choose to have the penalty enforced on the try or on the kickoff to start the third quarter.

Play 41: Team A trails by seven points when A1's run results in a touchdown as time runs out for the fourth quarter. B2 is flagged for a personal foul (a) during, or (b) after A1's touchdown-scoring run. **Ruling 41:** In (a) and (b), the touchdown counts. In either case, if team A wants the penalty, it must be enforced on the try. The penalty cannot carry over to overtime if team A ties the score.

Play 42: On a try, A1 is flagged for a false start. As the penalty is being enforced, B1 curses the official. **Ruling 42:** B1's foul occurred after the initial ready-for-play signal (the one that preceded the false start). Team A does not have the option to carry over the penalty to the next kickoff. Dead-ball fouls are enforced in the order in which they occur. Therefore, after the penalty for A1's false start is penalized, the penalty for B1's unsportsmanlike foul is enforced half the distance to the goal. The result is a try from team B's four yardline.

Play 43: A1's run from scrimmage results in a touchdown. B1 curses the official (a) before, or (b) after the referee has signaled the ready-for-play for the try. **Ruling 43:** In (a), team A may choose to have the penalty enforced on either the try or the subsequent kickoff. In (b), because the foul occurred after the ready signal, the penalty must be enforced on the try.

Play 44: K1's kick try is good. During the kick, R2 is flagged for roughing K1. After the ball is dead, K3 shoves R2 to the ground. **Ruling 44:** A live-ball foul by one team and a dead-ball foul by the opponent cannot be paired to create a double foul. When a live-ball foul by one team is followed by a dead-ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. Team K must first choose whether to accept the penalty for roughing the kicker and have the try replayed, or accept the result of the play and have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot. In the play cited, that would be the succeeding kickoff. If team K chooses to replay the try, the roughing penalty would be enforced half the distance to team R's 1-1/2 yardline. The penalty for K3's dead-ball foul would then be enforced, placing the ball at team R's 16-1/2 yardline. If team K chooses enforcement on the subsequent kickoff, both penalties would be enforced and they would effectively offset. Thus, the kickoff would be from team K's 40 yardline.

When giving the captains their options, the referee must be sure to explain the possible enforcements and their ramifications.

All-But-One Principle

The vast majority of penalties during kick plays are either enforced from the previous spot or using post-scrimmage kick enforcement. A few, however, are penalized using the all-but-one principle.

Simply stated, if there is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot, the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul unless the spot is otherwise specified by rule.

Play 45: R1 catches a punt at team K's 35 yardline and advances to team K's 30 yardline. During R1's run, R2 holds K3 at team K's 40 yardline. **Ruling 45:** The spot of the foul is behind the basic spot (the end of R1's run), so the all-but-one principle applies. The penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul and yields first and 10 for team R from the 50 yardline.

CHAPTER 7

FREE KICKS

- TEAM K FORMATION
- ONSIDE KICKS
- BLOCKING RESTRICTIONS

THERE ARE FEW ABSOLUTES IN THE FOOTBALL RULES, but here is one: Every half of every game begins with a kickoff.

For a free kick or kickoff, the ball may be placed on the ground or kicked off of a legal tee. A holder may hold the ball in place on the ground or on a tee. The ball must be in a fixed position, however. A team may kick off with any football approved by the referee.

Each team has a free-kick line. For a free kick to start either half or after a try or field goal, the free-kick line for team K is its 40 yardline while team R's free-kick line is the 50 yardline. After a safety, team K's free-kick line is its 20 yardline and team R's is team K's 30 yardline. If a free kick follows a fair catch or awarded fair catch, the free-kick line is the yardline through the spot of the fair catch or awarded fair catch. The spot of the free kick could be moved due to enforcement of a penalty.

When executing a place kick, the ball must be kicked from a spot between the hashmarks and on team K's free-kick line. Not *behind* it; on it. If team K is utilizing a punt following a safety, the ball must be kicked no more than one step behind team K's free-kick line.

For a kickoff or the free kick that follows a safety, fair catch or awarded fair catch, team K may choose the spot between the hashmarks from which the ball will be kicked. The referee should not sound the ready for play until that choice is made. Once team K has designated the spot from which it will kick off, that spot cannot be changed. To do so results in a foul.

Play 1: Team K will free kick from its 40 yardline. The official hands the ball to K1, who places the ball on a tee which is in the middle of the field. After team K huddles, K1 picks up the ball and tee and moves them to a spot on a hashmark. **Ruling 1:** That movement results in a dead-ball foul. K1 changed the designated spot. The penalty is five yards.

Team K may change locations for the kick if a dead-ball foul prevents the kick or if the down is to be replayed.

Play 2: Team K will free kick from its 40 yardline. The official hands the ball to K1, who places the ball on a tee, which is in the middle of the field. Team K is flagged for (a) encroachment before the ball can be kicked, or (b) kicking the ball out of bounds, with team R choosing enforcement from the previous spot. **Ruling 2:** In both cases, team K may choose a different spot between the hashmarks on its 35 yardline from which to kick.

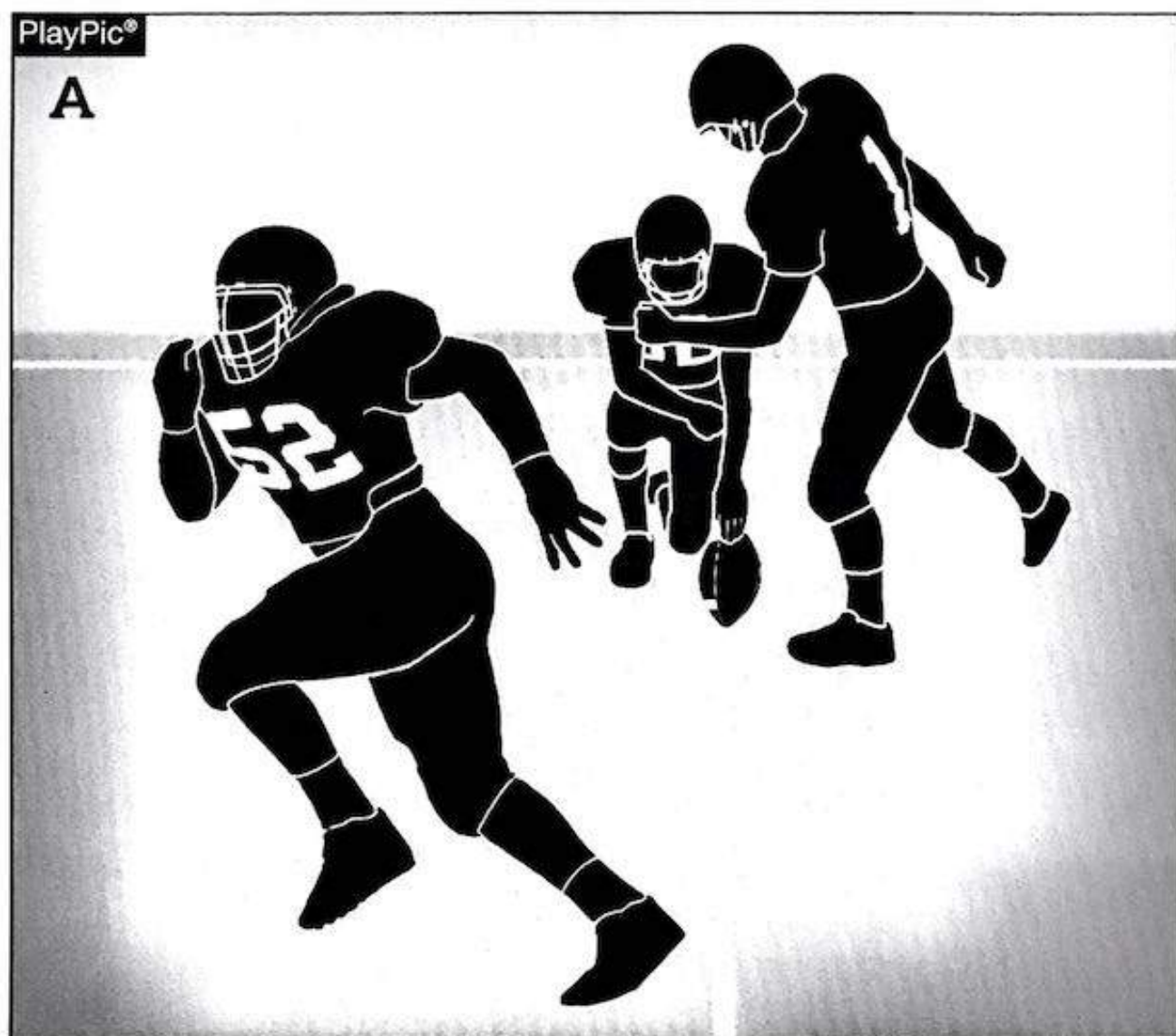
FREE KICKS

Neutral Zone

Here is another absolute: The neutral zone for a free kick is the 10 yards between each team's free-kick line. The referee does have the authority to move the ball to a different spot if necessary (the rulebook uses the example of a pool of water that has rendered the usual free-kick line as unplayable). But even in that rare instance, the 10-yard neutral zone is maintained.

All players other than the kicker or holder must be behind their free-kick lines between the ready signal and the kick. Violations of that rule result in a dead-ball foul for encroachment, which carries a five-yard penalty. Encroachment is illustrated in PlayPic A.

Except for the rule regarding encroachment, there are no restrictions on how team R aligns itself for a free kick. There was a time when team R was required to have at least five players within five yards of its free-kick line. But with the advent of new blocking rules and different coaching strategies, that requirement was eliminated in 1996.



Encroachment causes the ball to remain dead and results in a five-yard penalty.

Team K Formation

At the time the ball is kicked, team K must have at least four players on either side of the kicker. Also, no team K player other than the kicker may be more than five yards behind team K's free-kick line. The feet are the factor in determining the location of team K players relative to the five-yard distance. A player satisfies the rule if no foot is in on or beyond the line five yards behind the restraining line. If one team K player is more than five yards behind this restraining line and any other player kicks the ball, it is a foul.

The rules are designed to prevent kicking teams from loading up one side of the formation and sending a horde of players rushing into the outnumbered opponent. The rules work hand in hand with the blocking rules covered later in this chapter.

Play 3: After the ready for play and prior to the ball being kicked, team K has five players on each side of the kicker. K1 is eight yards behind the free-kick line. All other team K players are less than five yards behind the free-kick line. K1 approaches the ball, but K2 cuts in front of him and kicks the ball. **Ruling:** Dead-ball foul for encroachment.

Onside Kicks

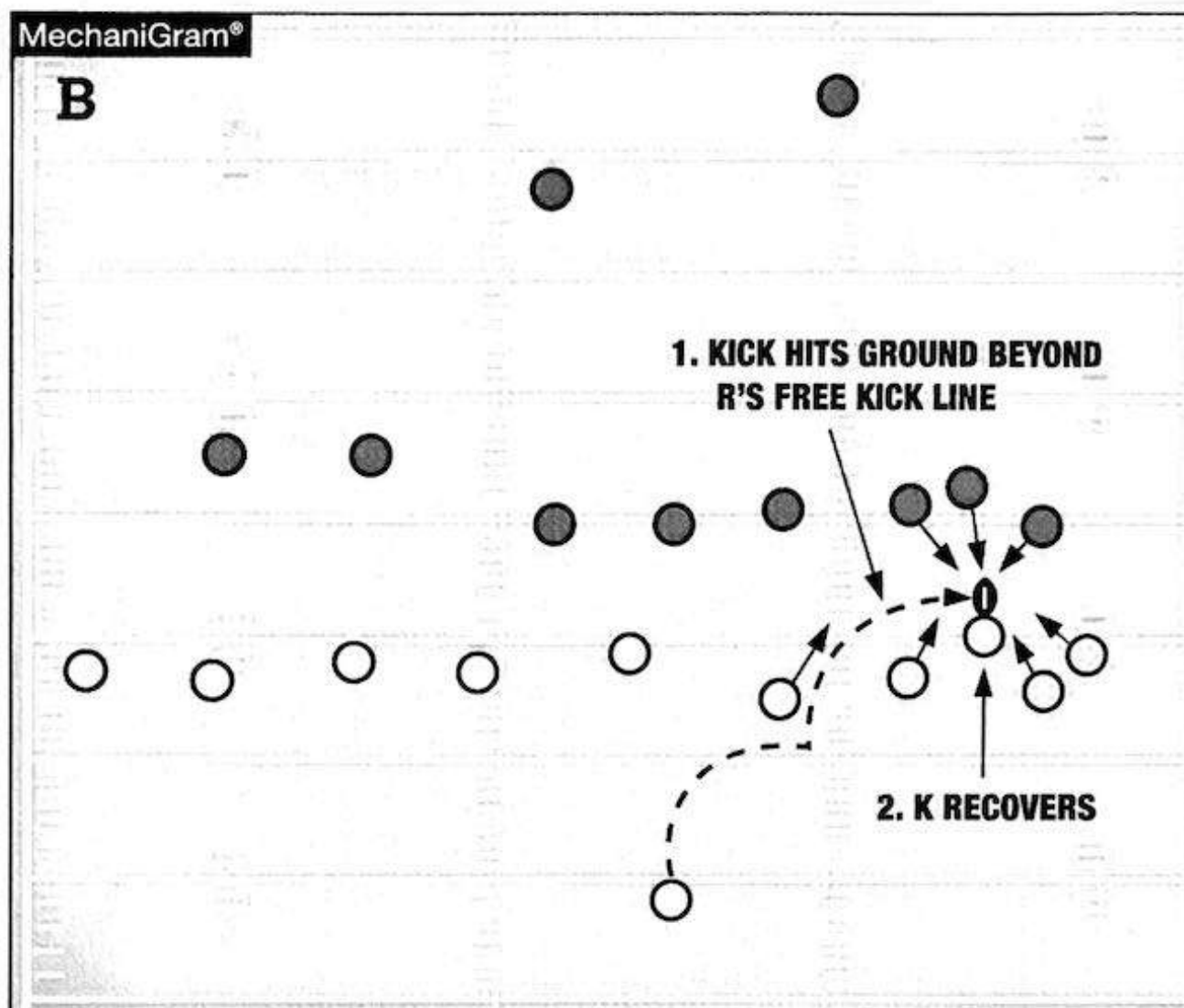
At any time, team K may try an onside kick. An onside kick is a free kick deliberately kicked a short distance in an attempt to regain possession of the ball. Most onside kicks occur late in a game when team K trails in the score. But some teams will try to surprise the opponents with an onside kick at other times. It is not unheard of for a team to attempt an onside kick to start the game.

As seen in MechaniGram B (p.72), any team K player may recover any free kick (onside or not) if the ball touches the ground and the ball goes beyond the plane of team R's free-kick line. Those events may occur in either order.

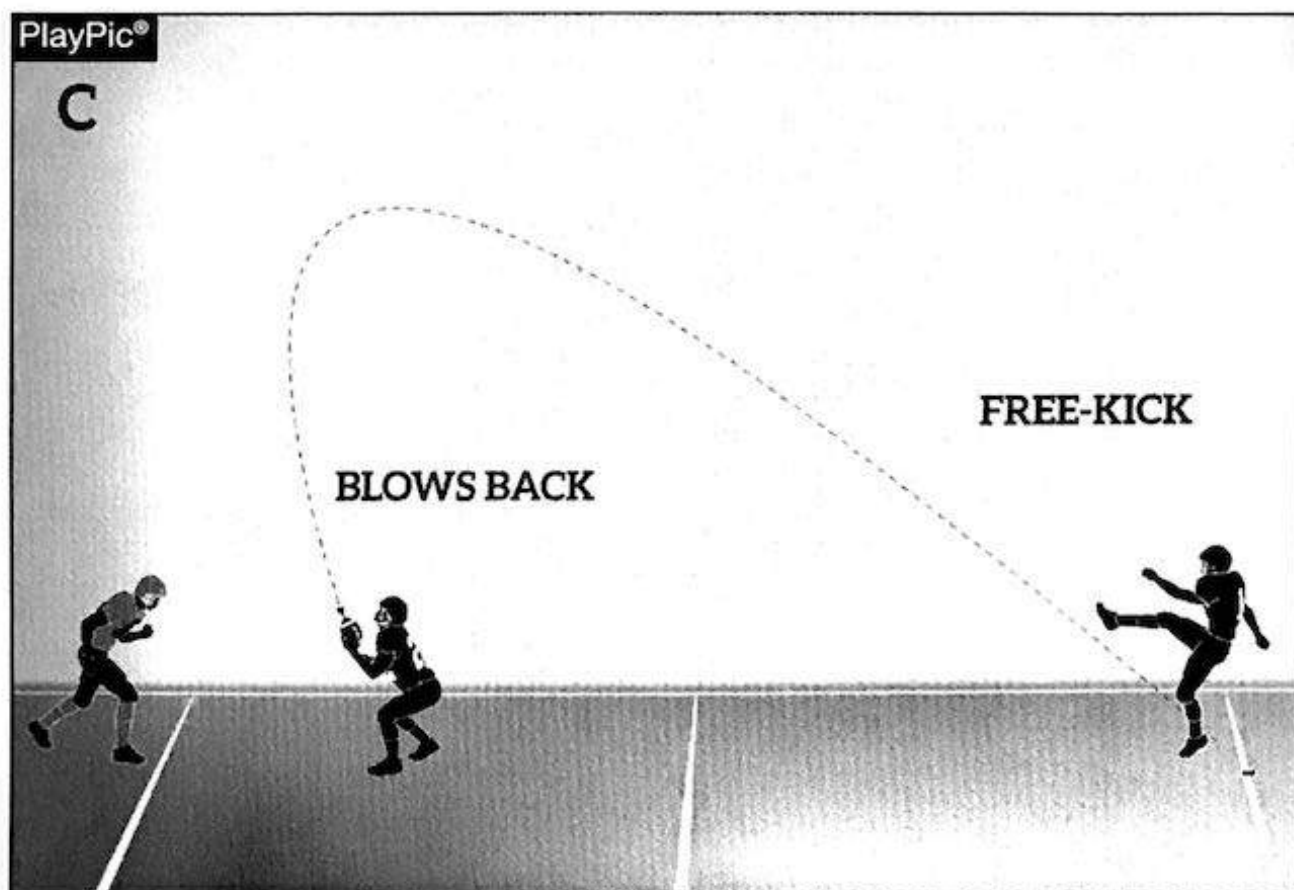
If any team K player recovers or catches a free kick, the ball becomes dead and may not be advanced.

Play 4: As seen in PlayPic C (p.72), on an extremely windy day, K1 kicks off from his own 40 yardline. The ball travels 12 yards in flight and is untouched when the wind blows it back to team K's 47 yardline. K2 catches the ball at team K's 44 yardline. **Ruling 4:** The ball is dead when K2 recovers. Although the ball went beyond the plane of team R's free-kick line, it did not strike the ground. Therefore, team K has committed kick-catching interference.

FREE KICKS



Team K may recover a free kick once it has gone 10 yards and has touched the ground. Those events may occur in either order.

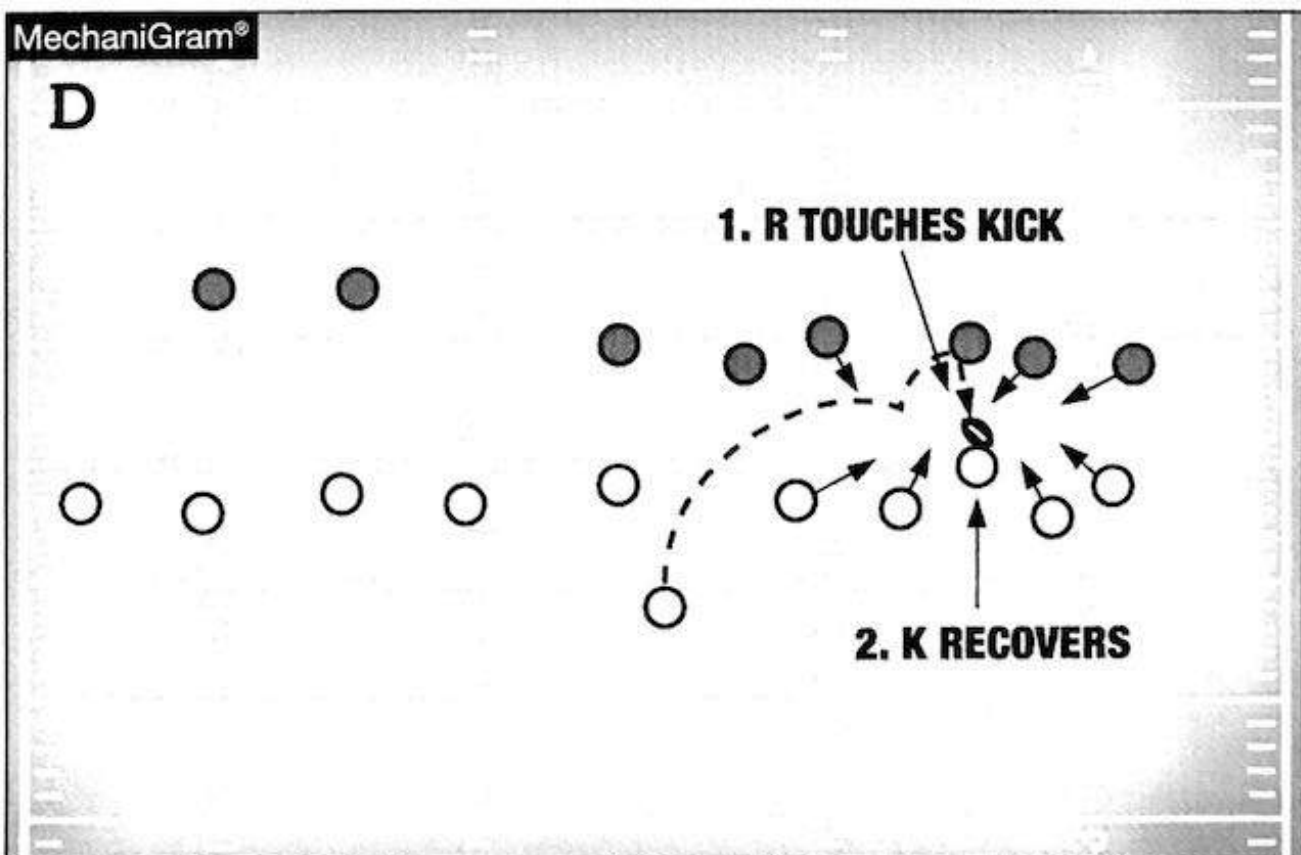


If team K touches the ball before it strikes the ground or goes 10 yards, it is first touching.

Play 5: K1 attempts an onside kick from his own 40 yardline. K2 muffs the grounded kick at team K's 47 yardline. The ball is then (a) recovered by R3, (b) recovered by K4, or (c) muffed by R3 and recovered by K4. **Ruling 5:** In all three cases, K2's muff is first touching. In (a), the ball remains live and R3 may advance if he wishes. Assuming team R does not foul after R3's recovery, or the penalty is accepted for any foul committed during the down, team R may choose the result of the play or take the ball at the spot of K2's first touching. In (b) and (c), the ball is dead when K4 recovers. Team R may choose to take the ball at the spot of first touching or at the spot of K4's recovery.

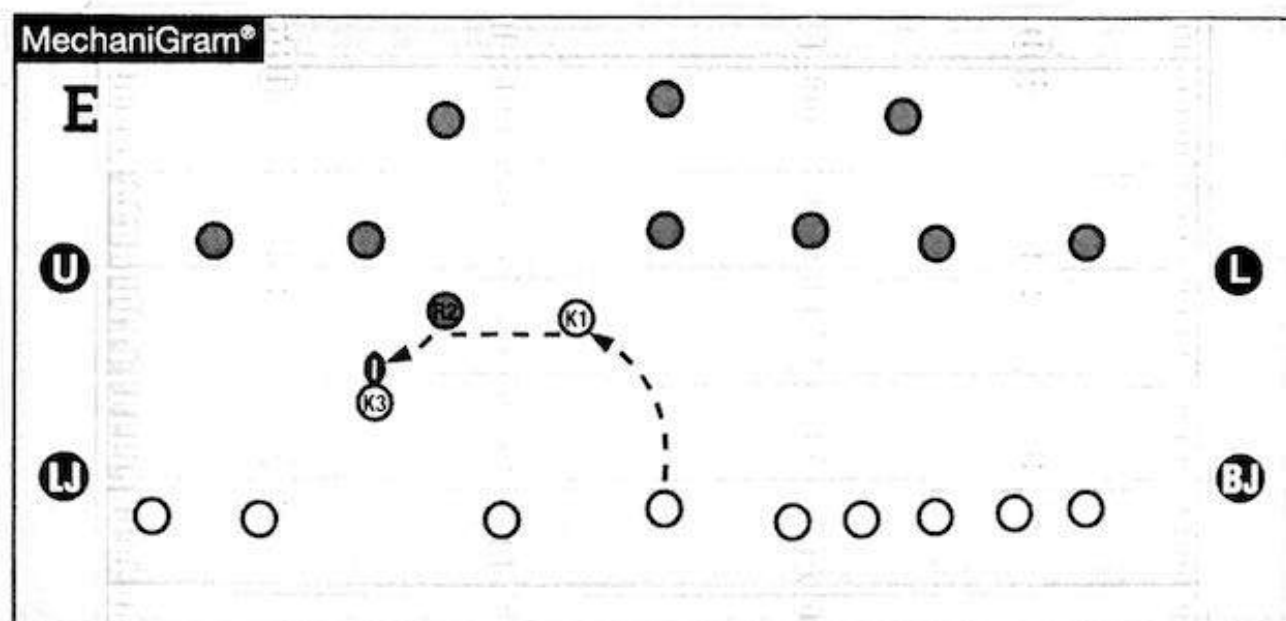
If a team R player is first to touch the kick, team K may catch or recover the ball.

Play 6: As seen in MechaniGram D, K1 attempts an onside kick from his own 40 yardline. A team R player muffs the kick. The ball is then recovered by team K. **Ruling 6:** Since team R was first to touch the kick, whether or not it traveled 10 yards and whether it was in flight or grounded, team K may legally recover the ball. The ball is dead when K3 recovers and it will be team K's ball at the spot of K3's recovery.



If team R is first to touch the kick, team K may recover even if the ball hasn't touched the ground or gone 10 yards.

FREE KICKS



Because team R's contact with the ball was caused by team K, the touching is ignored.

As noted in Chapter 2, touching of a free kick may be ignored if action by an opponent caused contact with the ball.

Play 7: As seen in MechaniGram E, team K attempts an onside kick from its own 40 yardline. The ball is at team K's 48 yardline when K1 muffs the ball. The ball then rolls and deflects off R2's leg and K3 recovers. **Ruling 7:** The touching by team R is ignored and team R will be awarded possession of the ball at the spot of first touching or at the dead-ball spot.

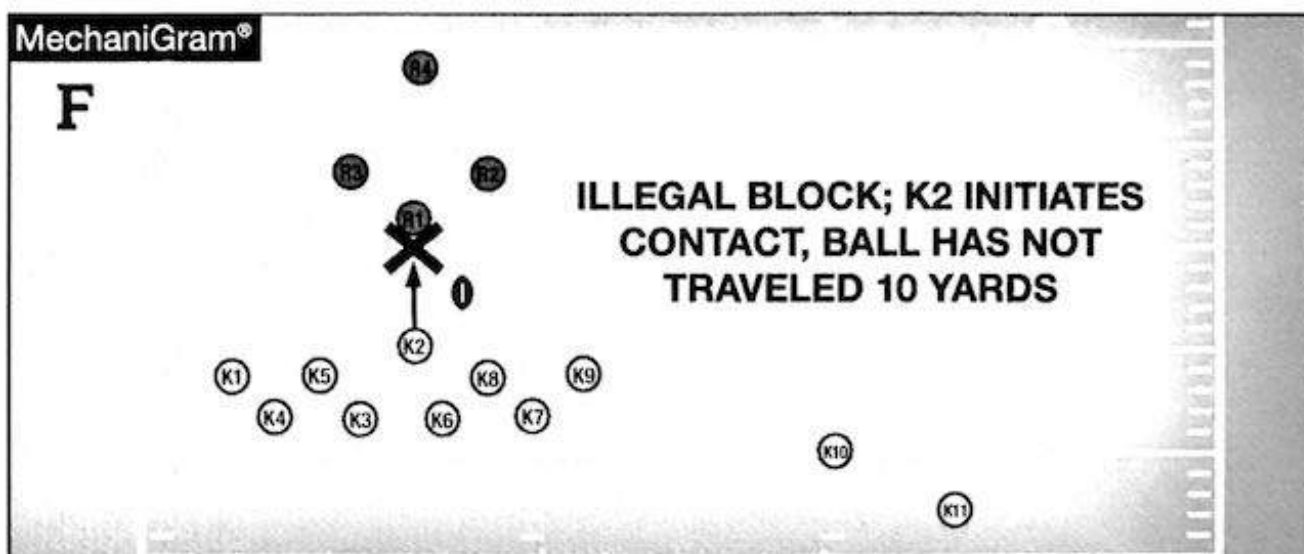
Play 8: K1 attempts an onside kick from his own 40 yardline. The grounded ball is at team K's 47 yardline when R2 blocks K3. The contact causes K3 to recoil and the ball touches K3's leg. The ball is recovered by K4 at team R's 48 yardline. **Ruling 8:** Because K3's contact with the ball was caused by R2's block, that touching is ignored. Since K4 recovered the ball after it had touched the ground and had traveled 10 yards, it will be team K's ball at the spot of recovery.

Blocking

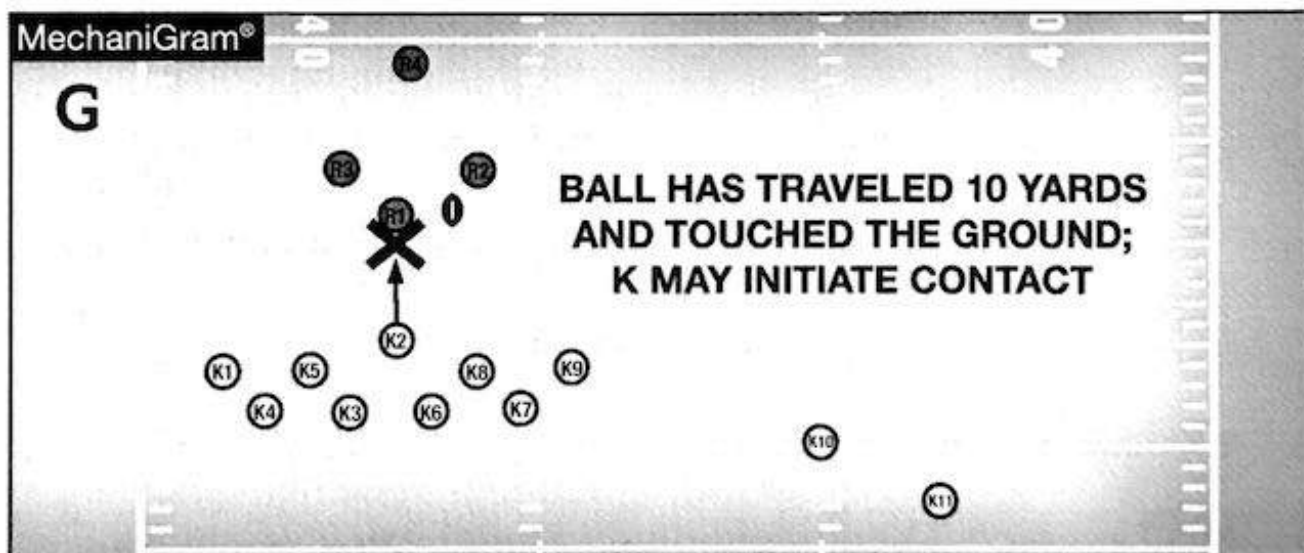
Kickoffs in general and onside kicks in particular can be hazardous to players. There are a lot of people moving — some at high speeds — in a confined area.

The rulemakers acknowledged that in 2012 by limiting who may contact opponents and when they may be contacted.

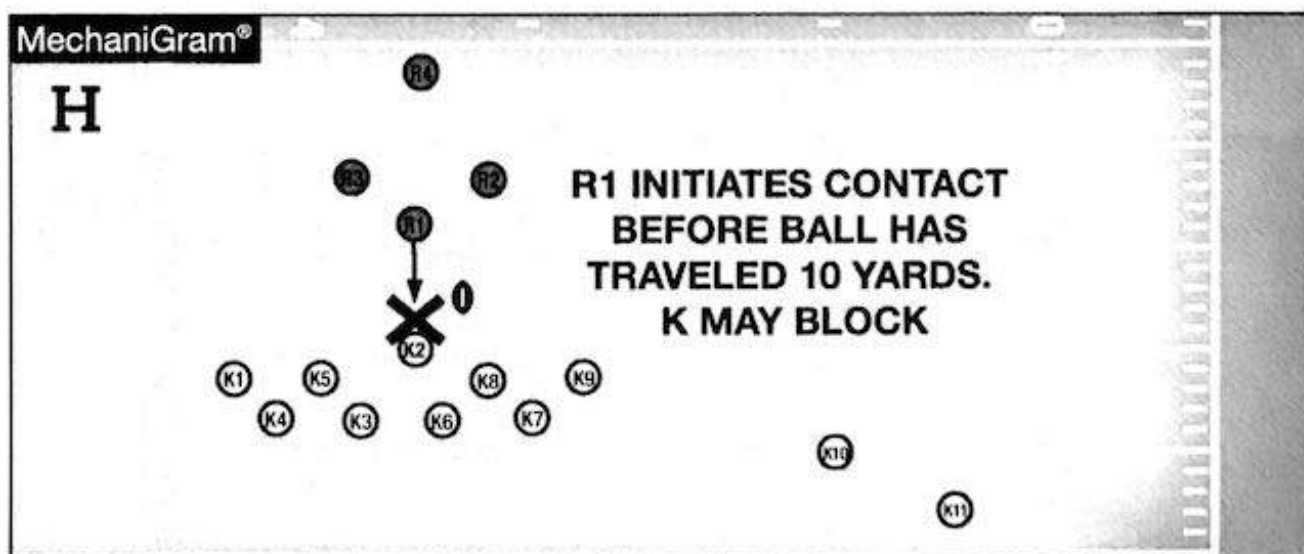
No team K player may initiate contact with an opponent until a legal free kick has traveled 10 yards or team K is eligible to recover the



Team K may not initiate contact with team R until it is eligible to touch the ball. The situation in the MechaniGram results in a foul on team K. Note that K6 is the kicker and team K met formation requirements.



Once the kick travels 10 yards and touches the ground (in either order), team K may initiate blocks. Note that K6 is the kicker and team K met formation requirements.



If team R initiates contact, team K may block team R. However, the blocks must still be legal (above the waist, from the front). Note that K6 is the kicker and team K met formation requirements.

FREE KICKS

kick. If team K violates the blocking rule, a 10-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot. If team R initiates contact with a team K player, there is no foul. All of that assumes the blocks are otherwise legal (above the waist, from the front, etc.).

Play 9: As seen in MechaniGram F (p.75), team K kicks off from its own 40 yardline. K2 blocks R1 from the front and above the waist when an onside kick is grounded at team K's 48 yardline. **Ruling 9:** K2 has fouled. Team K players may not initiate contact (block) until the kick breaks the plane of team R's free-kick line and touches the ground, or a team R player touches the ball prior to the ball breaking the plane of team R's free-kick line, or a team R player initiates contact. If accepted, the 10-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot.

Play 10: As seen in MechaniGram G (p.75), team K kicks off from its own 40 yardline. K2 blocks R1 from the front and above the waist after K1's onside kick touches the ground at team R's 48 yardline. **Ruling 10:** The block is legal because team K is eligible to recover the free kick once it travels 10 yards and touches the ground (in either order).

Play 11: As seen in MechaniGram H (p.75), team K attempts an onside kick from its own 40 yardline. As K2 is rushing toward the grounded kick, R1 blocks K2 from the front and above the waist. **Ruling 11:** Legal play. Because R3 initiated contact, team K players may block opponents.

Play 12: K1 attempts an onside kick from his own 40 yardline. K2 and R3 run full speed into each other. The blocks are above the waist and from the front and do not qualify for any other foul. The blocks occur before the kick has either traveled 10 yards or contacted the ground. **Ruling 12:** By high school interpretation, when in doubt, team R initiated the contact. There is no foul.

Pop-up Kick

A pop-up kick, a free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately into the ground, the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee, is illegal. Such kicks result in a dead-ball foul with a five-yard penalty.

A pop-up kick is not to be confused with a pooch kick (a kick designed to hit the ground in the open area between the forward-most players on team R's free-kick line and those in the next group); a "kangaroo" kick (in which the kicker drives the ball into the ground to

create two or three low bounces then one high, arching bounce); and a drop kick, in which the ball is allowed to hit the ground and kicked as it is rising. The pooch, kangaroo and drop kicks are legal.

Kick Before the Ready

Team K may not kick the ball before the referee has given the ready-for-play signal. Should that occur, the officials should declare the ball dead and assess a five-yard penalty for delay of game.

Fair Catch

Although it is somewhat rare, a fair catch on a free kick is allowed assuming all requirements connected with fair catches (e.g. valid signal, ball in flight, etc.) are met. For more on fair catches, see Chapter 3, Fair Catches.

Free Kick After Fair Catch

One of team R's options following a fair catch or awarded fair catch is a free kick that, if successful, scores three points. See Chapter 9, Scoring Kicks, for details.

Fouls Against the Kicker or Holder

The kicker and holder receive protection from contact on free kicks. Neither may be blocked before he has advanced five yards beyond team K's free-kick line, or the kick has touched the ground or any other player. The 15-yard penalty for those fouls is enforced from the basic spot.

Game Clock

On a free kick, the game clock starts when the kick is touched, other than first touching by team K. The clock stops when it becomes dead by rule (e.g. the ball or the runner goes out of bounds, a touchback occurs, etc.)

Free Kick Out of Bounds

See Chapter 6, Penalty Enforcement, for information on free kicks out of bounds.

CHAPTER 8

PUNTS

- SCRIMMAGE KICK FORMATION
- NUMBERING EXCEPTION
- FOULS

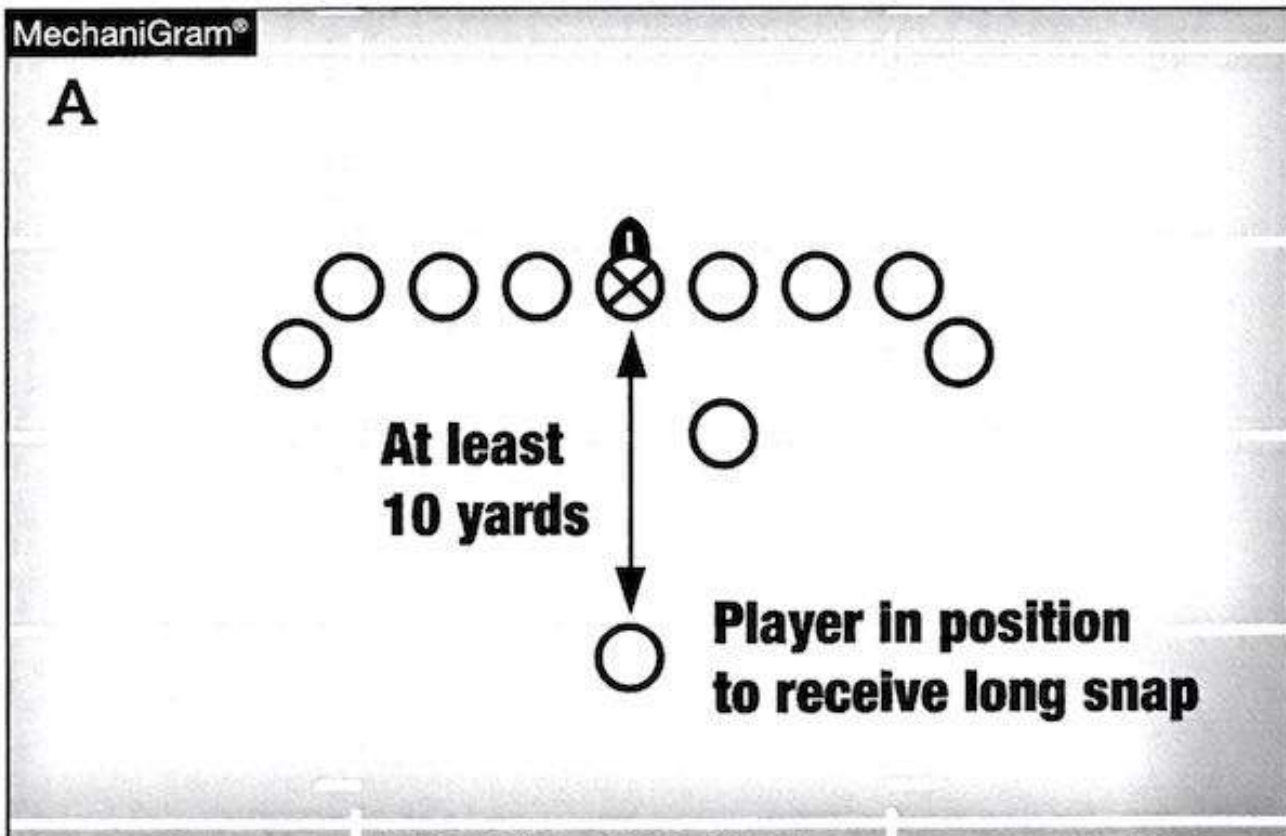
A PUNT IS A SCRIMMAGE KICK. It differs from a free kick in that the ball is snapped before it is kicked rather than kicked from the ground or off a tee. It differs from other scrimmage kicks in that a punt can't score. Scoring kicks are covered in Chapter 9.

A team may punt on any down. Most of the time, team K will punt on fourth down only. However, when pinned deep in its own end of the field, team K will sometimes choose to punt on another down. One strategy involves a team lining up as if to run a normal play, but then having a player punt the ball. That is known as a quick kick.

Scrimmage Kick Formation

In a scrimmage kick formation, team K may have no player in position to receive a direct (hand-to-hand) snap from between the snapper's legs (MechaniGram A).

If team K chooses to punt from scrimmage kick formation, one player must be positioned 10 yards or more behind the line of scrimmage and there may be no holder. One or more teammates (commonly referred to as "personal protectors") are often positioned in front of the punter but are not required.



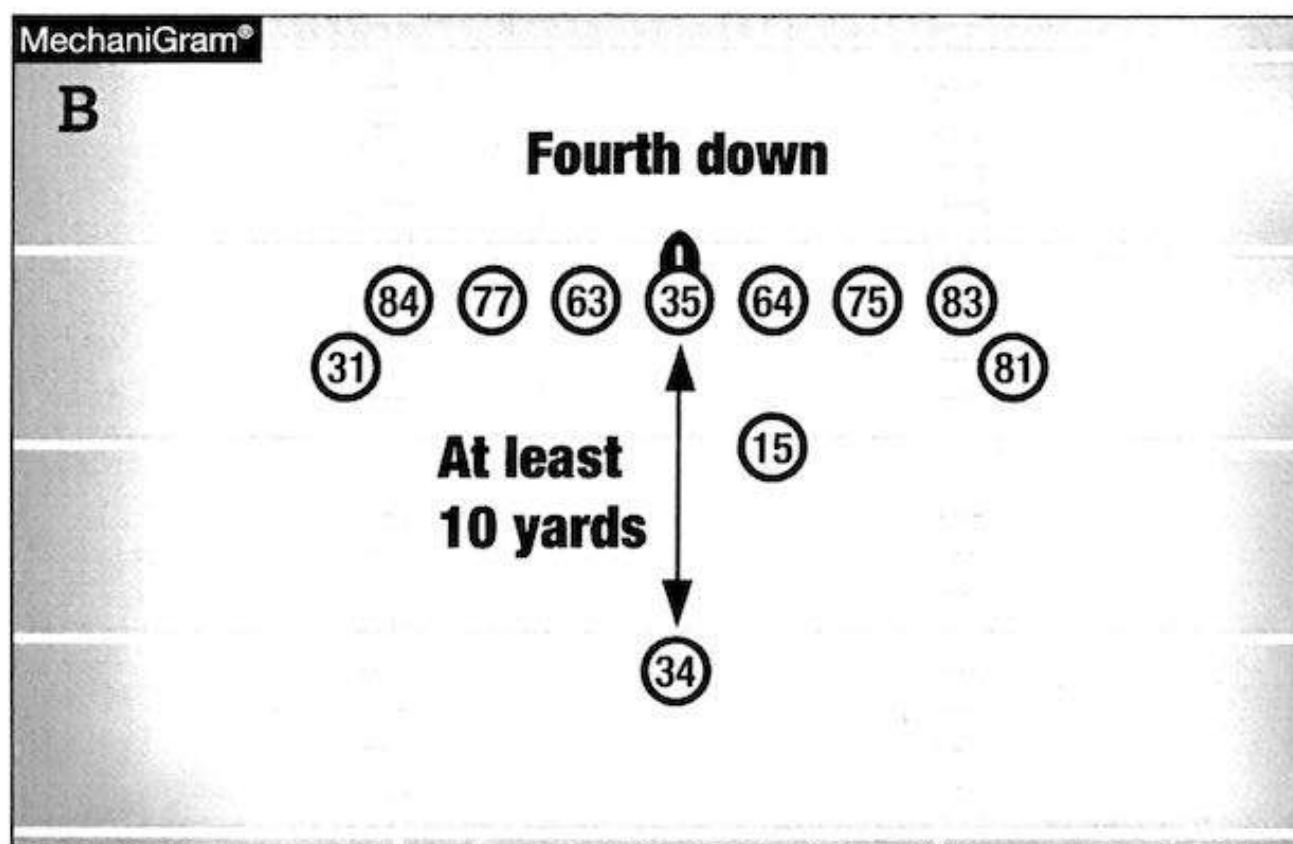
Legal formation for a team K punt.

PUNTS

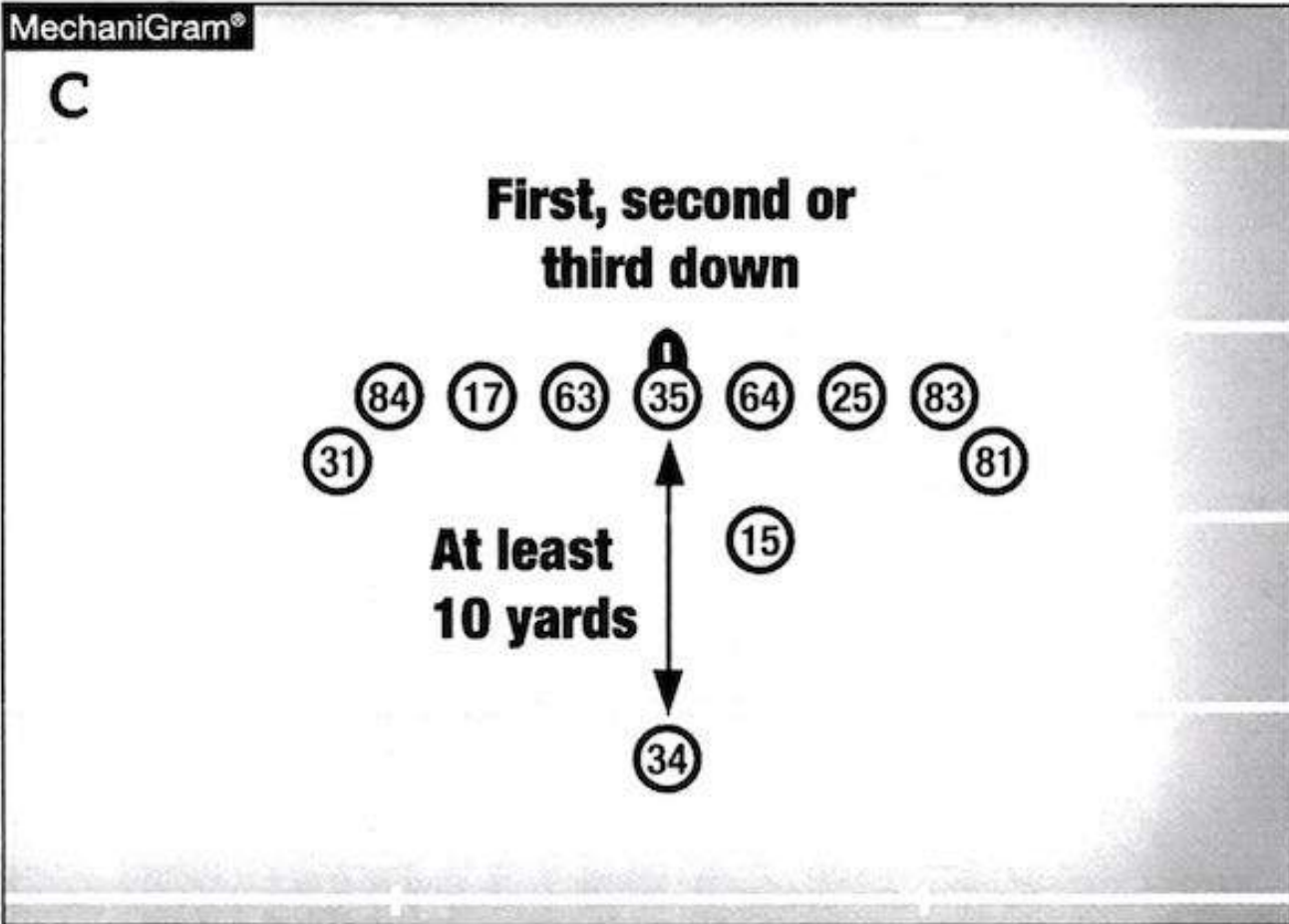
Numbering Exception

Team K does not have to be in scrimmage kick formation to punt. However, it may take advantage of the numbering exception only if it is in a legal scrimmage kick formation. Ordinarily, a team snapping the ball must have at least five players on its line of scrimmage at the snap numbered 50-79. But if team K sets or shifts into a scrimmage kick formation on fourth down, any team K player (not just the snapper) numbered 1-49 or 80-99 may take one of the positions normally manned by a player wearing 50-79. That is a strategy employed by coaches to get better coverage of kicks. In theory, at least, a back or end is faster and can get downfield more quickly than a lineman. Team K players availing themselves of the numbering exception must assume an initial position on team K's line between the ends and, as with the snapper described above, is an ineligible receiver at the snap. MechaniGram B illustrates proper use of the numbering exception for a punt on fourth down.

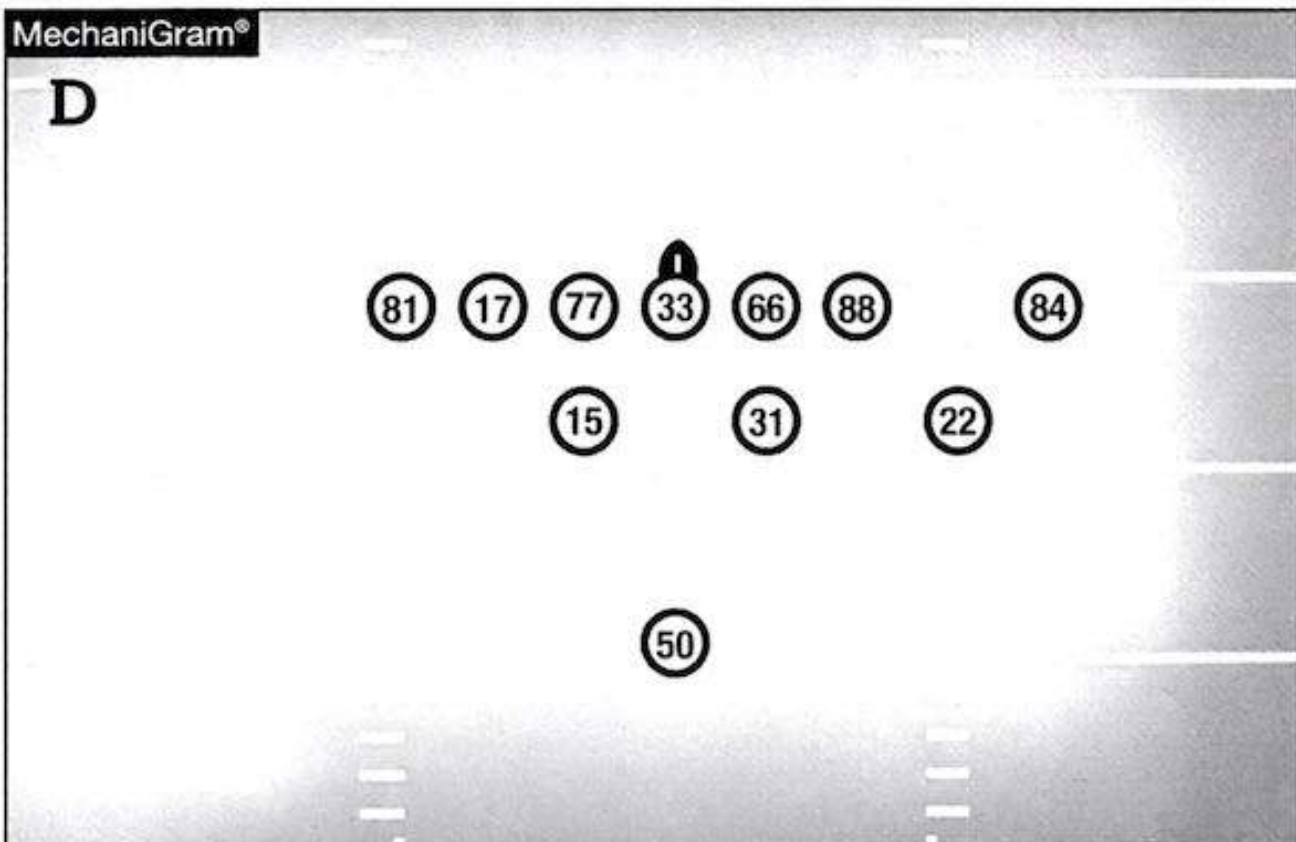
On first, second or third down, when team K sets or shifts into a scrimmage kick formation, the snapper may wear uniform number 1-49 or 80-99. The snapper does not have to be in the middle of the formation, but he must be positioned between the ends. He is ineligible to catch or touch a forward pass during the down unless the



The numbering exception allows team K to use swifter players to cover punts.



The numbering exception is not the same on first, second or third down as it is on fourth.



Numbers 81, 84, 15, 31 and 22 are eligible receivers.

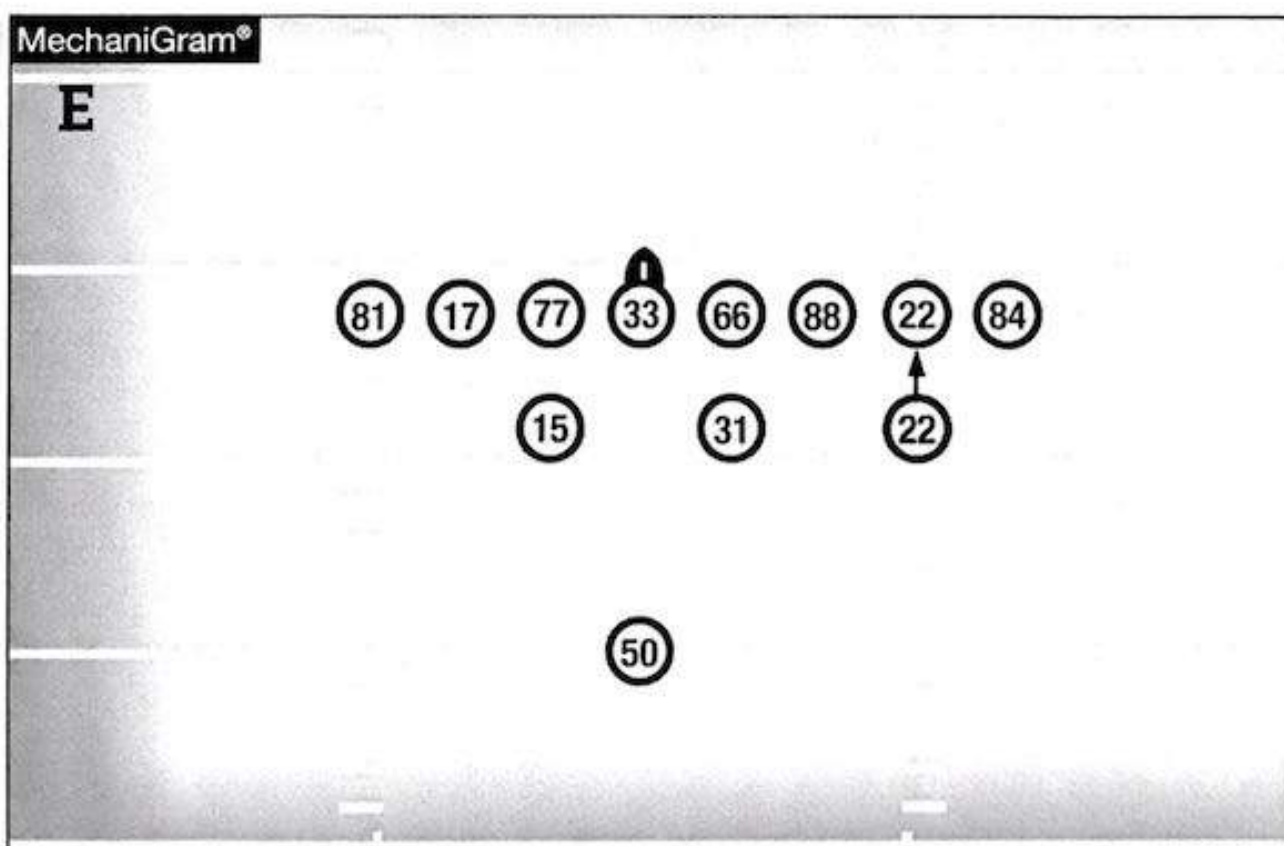
PUNTS

pass is touched by an opponent. If the snapper is taking advantage of the numbering exception, at least four players wearing numbers 50-79 must be on team K's line of scrimmage. The numbering in MechaniGram C (p.81) is illegal because there are not four players other than the snapper wearing proper numbers.

Any fouls regarding improper numbering result in a five-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot.

Team K may employ a shift that changes which players fall under the exception and which are eligible receivers.

Play 1: Fourth and 10 on team K's 20 yardline. As seen in MechaniGram D (p.81), team K's formation has players on its line of scrimmage numbered as follows (left end to right tackle): 81, 17, 77, 33, 66 and 88. Number 84 is the split end on the right side. The backfield includes players numbered 15, 31 and 22. A player wearing number 50 is 10 yards behind the line as if to punt. Snapper number 33 legally adjusts the ball for the snap. As number 50 is calling signals before the snap, number 22 moves up to the line between number 88 and number 84 (MechaniGram E). The ball is snapped after all team K players are motionless for at least one second. **Ruling 1:** When the ball is snapped, the following players are ineligible receivers – 17, 77, 33, 66, 88, and



After number 22 shifts into the line and is "covered" by number 84, he is no longer an eligible receiver.

22. Each of those players is between the ends and thus is ineligible. Additionally, punter number 50 is ineligible by number. The only eligible receivers are numbers 81, 84, 15 and 31.

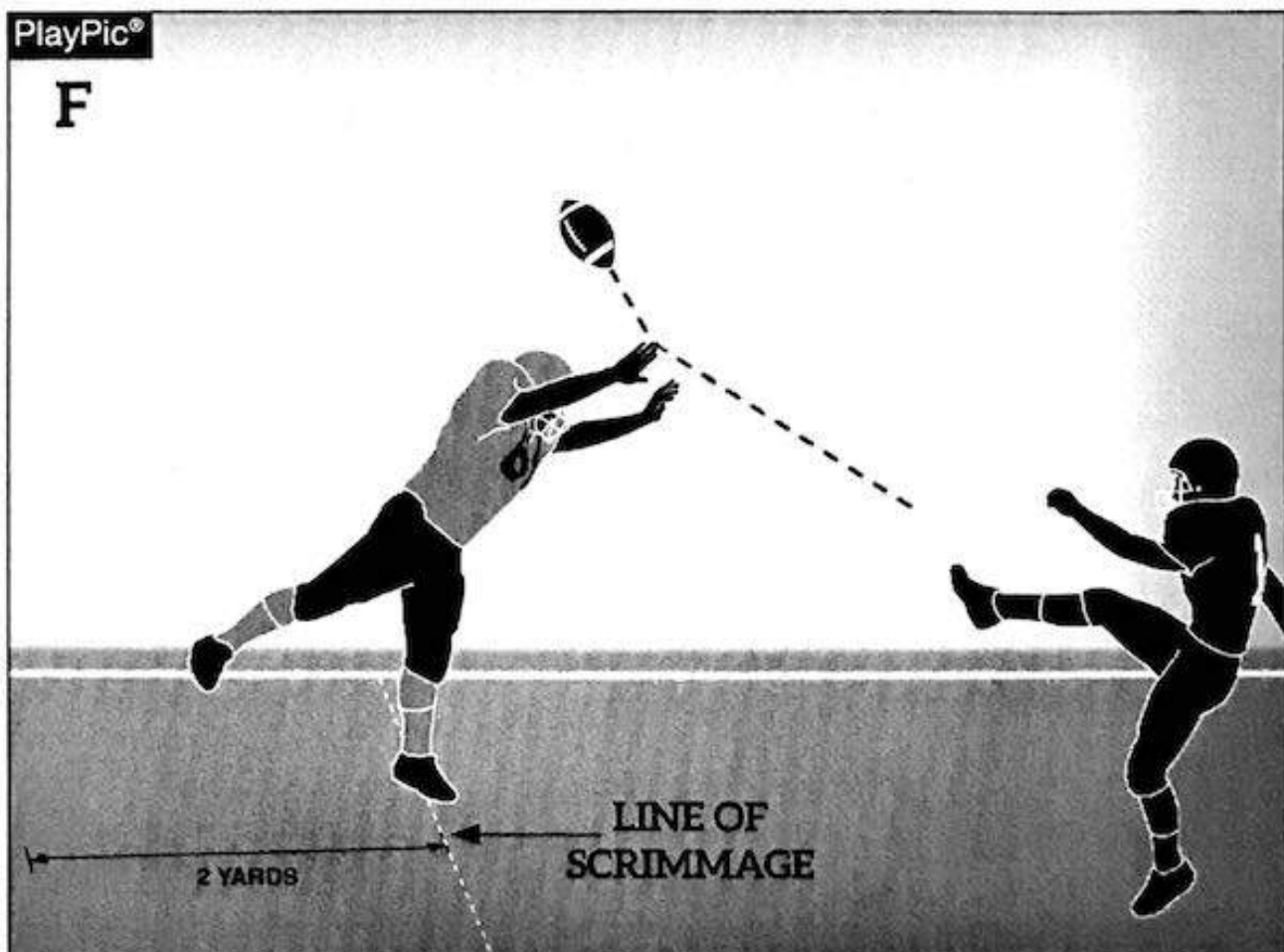
Line of Scrimmage and Neutral Zone

There are two lines of scrimmage – one for each team. It's a vertical plane that extends from sideline to sideline using the end of the ball closest to each team's goalline.

The neutral zone is the football-length space between the two scrimmage lines during a scrimmage down. It is established when the referee signals the ball ready for play.

After the snap, the neutral zone may be expanded – by as many as two yards – on team R's side of the zone. However, the neutral zone cannot expand into an end zone.

The reason for that expansion is to allow for good play. If team R touches a low punt in or behind the expanded neutral zone (PlayPic F), the touching by team R is ignored.



Touching of a low scrimmage kick in or behind the expanded neutral zone by team R is ignored.

PUNTS

Catch or Recovery by Team K

As with a free kick, the ball becomes dead and the down is ended when a team K player catches or recovers a punt beyond the neutral zone.

However, if a team K player catches or recovers a punt while it is in or behind the neutral zone, the ball remains live and he may advance.

Unlike a free kick, it is not kick-catching interference if team K touches, muffs or bats a punt that is in flight beyond the neutral zone if there is no team R player in position to catch the ball.

Play 2: K1's fourth-down punt is high and short. It lands five yards beyond the line and caroms behind the line, where K2 recovers the ball and advances beyond the line to gain. While the kick was beyond the line it (a) was touched by R1, or (b) was not touched by any player. **Ruling 2:** K2's advances are legal in (a) and (b). In (a), it would have been a first down for team K even if K2 did not advance beyond the line to gain.

The ball is dead when team K downs a punt. Downing means a kicking team player possesses it or touches it beyond the neutral zone after it has come to rest before any touching by team R, as seen in PlayPics G and H. Note that if the ball were still rolling when a team K player only touched it, it would be first touching but not downing. Therefore the advance by the team K player in PlayPic I (p.85) would be legal.

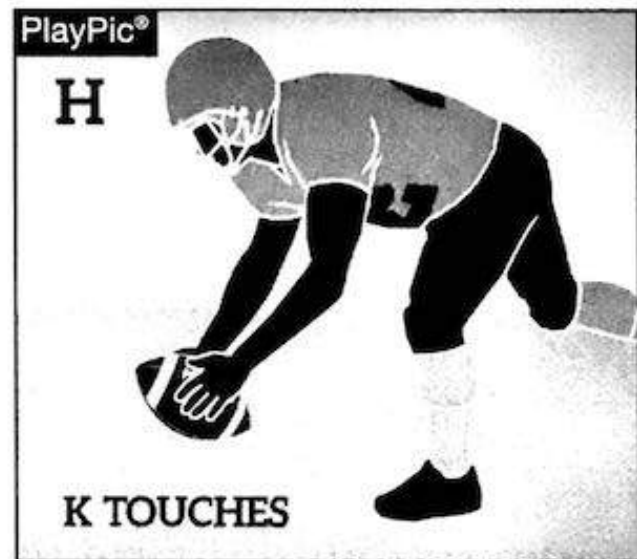
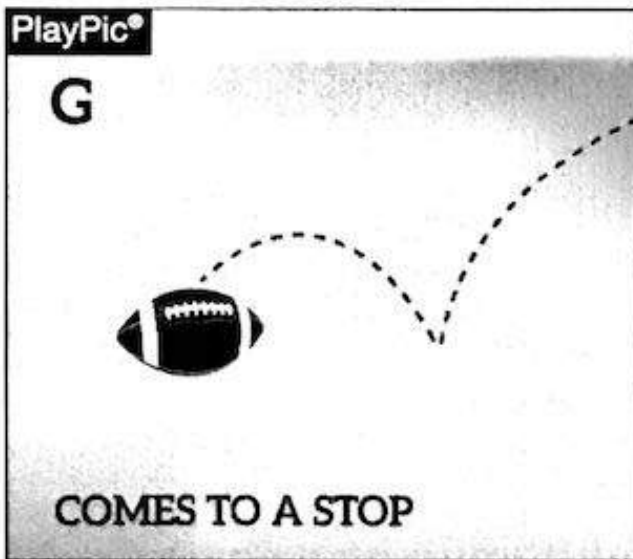
If a punt is grounded and is beyond the neutral zone, or if it's in flight and there is no team R player in position to catch the ball, a team K player may bat the ball toward his own goalline.

Downing a kick and batting a kick to prevent a touchback are two methods team K may use to pin team R deep in its own territory. In either case, it is the position of the ball, not the player's feet, that determines if the ball has broken the plane of team R's end zone.

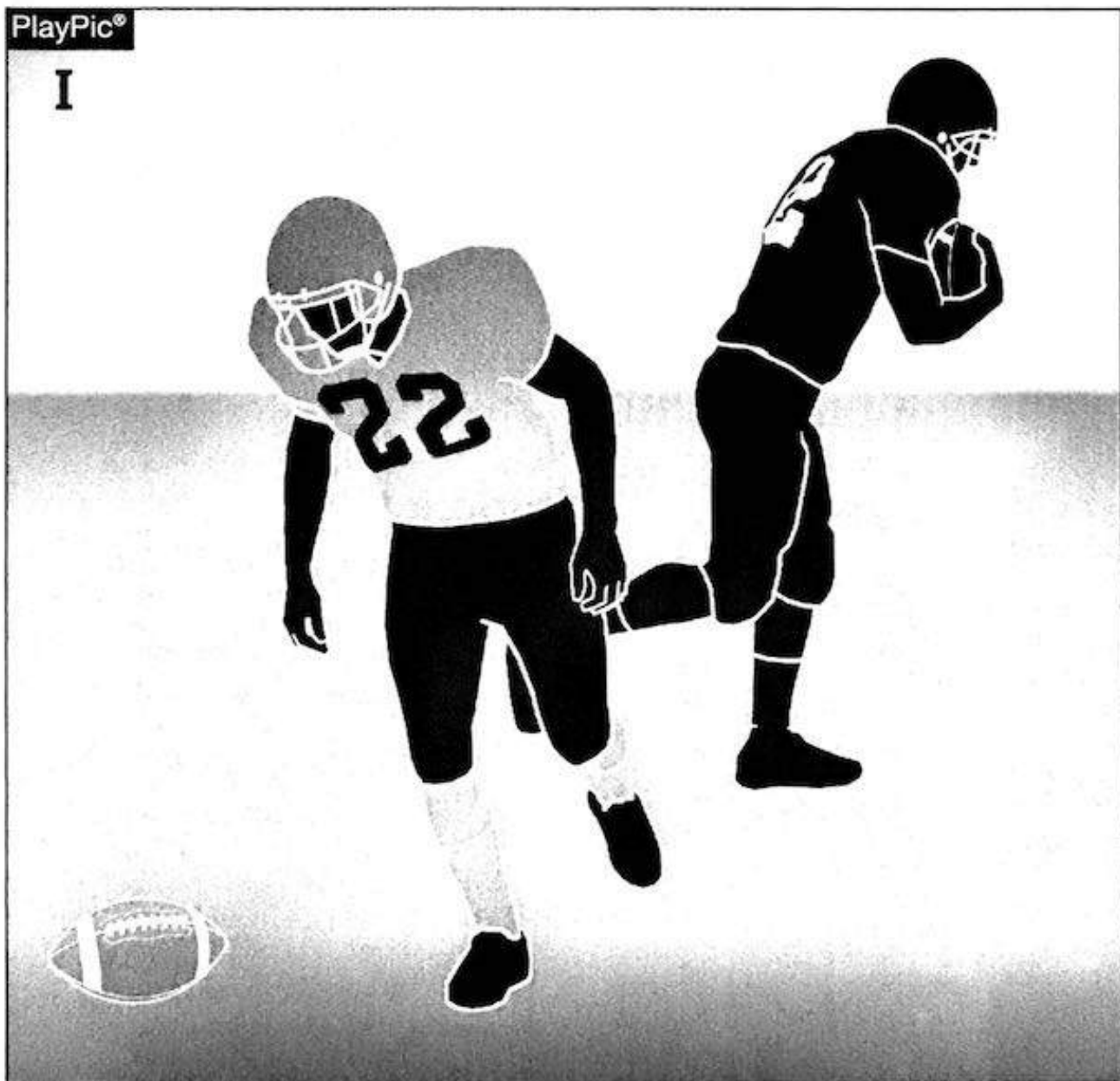
Touching by Team R

If a team R player is the first to touch a punt while it is beyond the neutral zone, team K may recover it and begin a new series even if the ball does not return to team K's side of the neutral zone. When team R touches a kick beyond the expanded neutral zone, whichever team is in legal possession when the down ends begins a new series.

Play 3: K1's punt on fourth and 10 on team K's 20 yardline is high and short. R2 muffs the ball at team K's 27 yardline. K3 recovers at team



If team K touches a kick that is motionless on the ground, the ball is dead. That is called downing the kick.



If the ball is still moving when team K touches it, it is first touching but it has not been downed. Team R may recover and advance.

PUNTS

K's (a) 18, or (b) 33 yardline. **Ruling 3:** Since R1 touched the kick beyond the neutral zone, it will be first down for team K in (a) and (b). Note that in (b), team K can recover but not advance because the ball is recovered beyond the neutral zone.

Play 4: K1's punt on fourth and 10 on team K's 20 yardline is high and short. R2 muffs the ball at team K's 27 yardline. The ball then bounds back behind the line of scrimmage and is recovered by K3 at team K's 18 yardline. K3 (a) throws an incomplete pass to an eligible teammate; (b) punts again, with the ball rolling out of bounds at team K's 47 yardline; or (c) punts again, with R4 catching the kick and advancing for a touchdown. **Ruling 4:** In (a), the pass is legal since it was thrown from behind the neutral zone and there was no change of possession during the down (remember that a muff does not constitute possession). The ball was touched by team R beyond the expanded neutral zone and team K is in possession at the end of the down. It is first and 10 for team K from its own 20 yardline. In (b), the second punt was legal. Team R was in legal possession after the down, therefore it will be first and 10 for team R from team K's 47 yardline. In (c), the touchdown counts. R4 gained legal possession when he caught the second punt.

On the other hand, a team R muff followed by a team K recovery behind its own side of the neutral zone could have somewhat dire consequences if the ball winds up in team K's end zone.

Play 5: Fourth and 10 from team K's three yardline. K1 is in his own end zone when he punts. The kick is muffed by R2 at team K's eight yardline and rebounds into team K's end zone, where it is (a) recovered by prone K3, or (b) rolls out of bounds. **Ruling 5:** It is a safety in (a) and (b). The force that put the ball into the end zone was the kick and the ball became dead in team K's end zone. Team R scores two points and team K free kicks from its own 20 yardline.

Fouls Against the Snapper or Punter

The snapper and punter are afforded special protection from contact when team K is in scrimmage-kick formation. Those players are largely defenseless and vulnerable while in the act of doing their jobs. Common sense demands they be given special protection. Roughing the kicker and roughing the snapper result in a 15-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot and an automatic first down.

Roughing the snapper occurs when a team R player charges directly into the snapper. That protection begins at the snap and ends when the

snapper has had a reasonable opportunity to regain his balance and protect himself, or until he blocks or moves to otherwise participate in the play.

It is roughing the kicker when a team R player blocks, tackles or charges into the punter. However, team R is excused from that contact when it is unavoidable because:

- It is not reasonably certain that a kick will be made.
- Team R touches the kick near the kicker and contact is unavoidable.
- The contact is slight and is partially caused by movement of the kicker.
- Contact is caused by the team R player being blocked into the kicker by a team K player.

The so-called rugby punt has become popular in recent years. That is when the punter takes the snap and runs laterally, giving the impression he might pass or tuck the ball under his arm and run. Failing that, he will stop abruptly and punt the ball. That is a situation in which the official is challenged to determine if it was "reasonably certain" a kick would be made. While other codes give the officials assistance by eliminating the kicker's protection if he leaves a designated imaginary zone, high school rules do not have similar coverage.

Note also that the team R player who contacts the kicker and the teammate who touches the kick need not be the same in order to be exempt from a foul. However, any team R player whose contact on the kicker is unnecessarily rough, or whose contact comes after renewing his charge, has fouled.

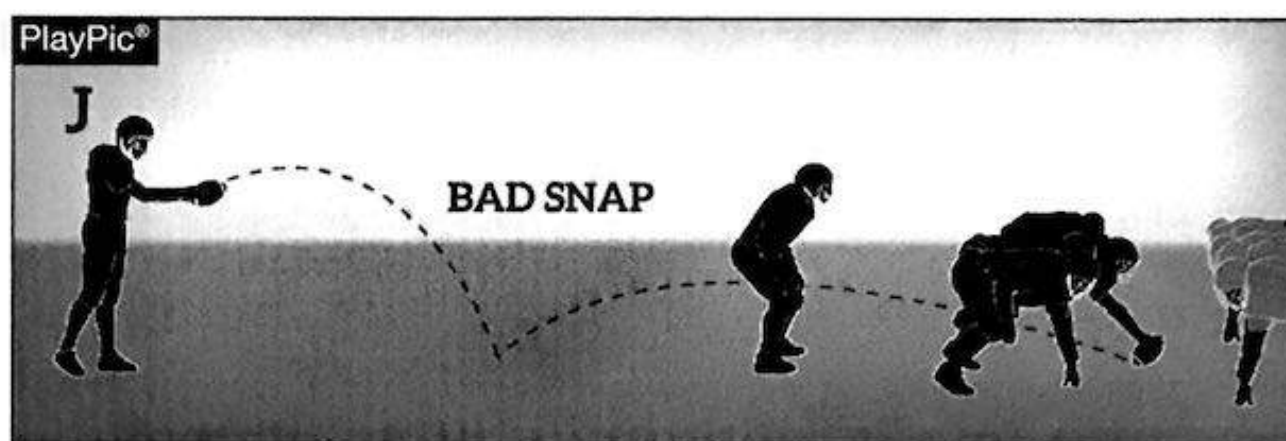
Play 6: R1 partially blocks K2's punt and R3 firmly contacts K2.

Ruling 6: By high school interpretation, if R3 was near the kicker at the time R1 touched the ball and R3 had already started his charge at the time the kick was touched, R3 has not fouled.

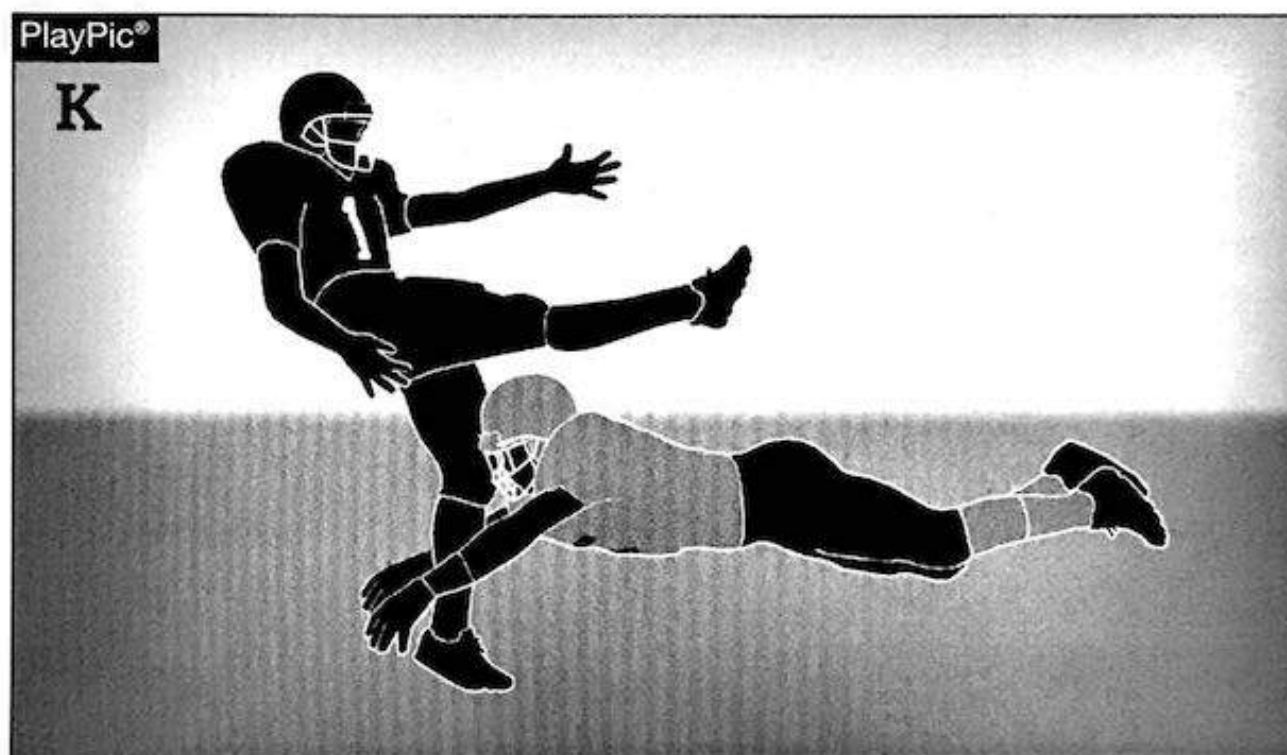
One misconception that won't seem to go away is that a bad snap or a muff by the kicker eliminates roughing the kicker protection. Neither is true. Each play is judged on its own merits.

Play 7: As seen in PlayPics J and K (p.88), the snap bounces to punter K1, who quickly recovers and kicks the ball. R2 contacts K1 and does not touch the kick. **Ruling 7:** If the covering official rules it was not reasonably certain K1 was going to punt the ball, there is no foul. If the official believes R2 could have avoided contact, it is a foul. A poor snap

PUNTS



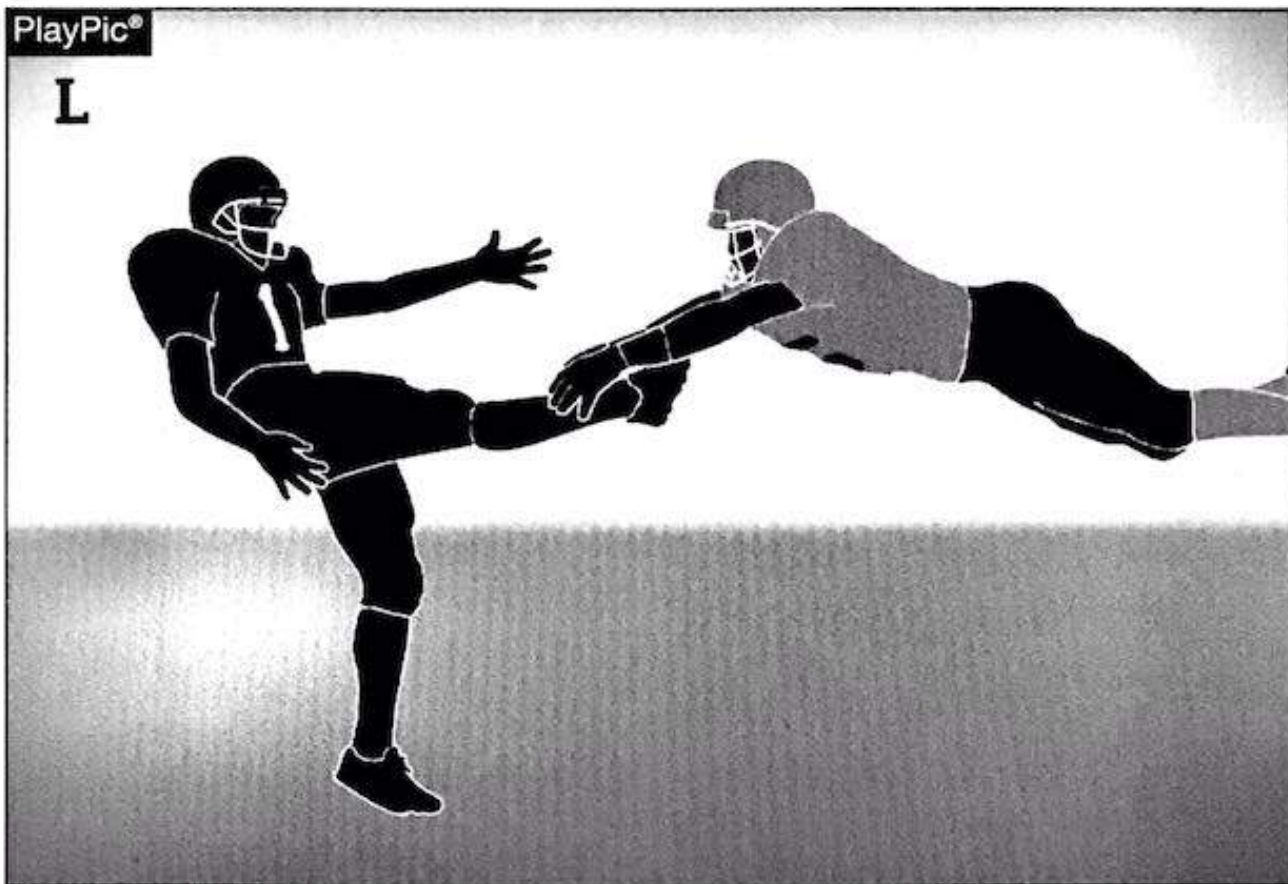
A bad snap does not automatically eliminate the kicker's protection.



If the covering official rules it was not reasonably certain K1 was going to punt the ball, there is no foul. If the official believes R2 could have avoided contact, it is a foul.

does not give team R license to contact the kicker. Note that the contact by R2 in PlayPic K could still be considered a personal foul.

Play 8: Fourth and three from team K's 17 yardline. Team K is in scrimmage-kick formation with K1 10 yards behind the line and in position to receive the snap. K2 is between his line and K1, serving as a "personal protector." The ball is snapped to K2, who advances to team K's 25 yardline before he is tackled. At the snap, R3 charges into snapper K4 before K4 can react. **Ruling 8:** That is roughing the snapper. The key is that team K was in scrimmage-kick formation. Team K is not required to kick from that formation in order for the snapper to have protection. Team K will likely accept the automatic first down and the 15-yard penalty, which is enforced from the previous spot.



Illegal contact on the kicker's kicking leg is more likely (but not automatically) running into the kicker.

Running Into the Kicker

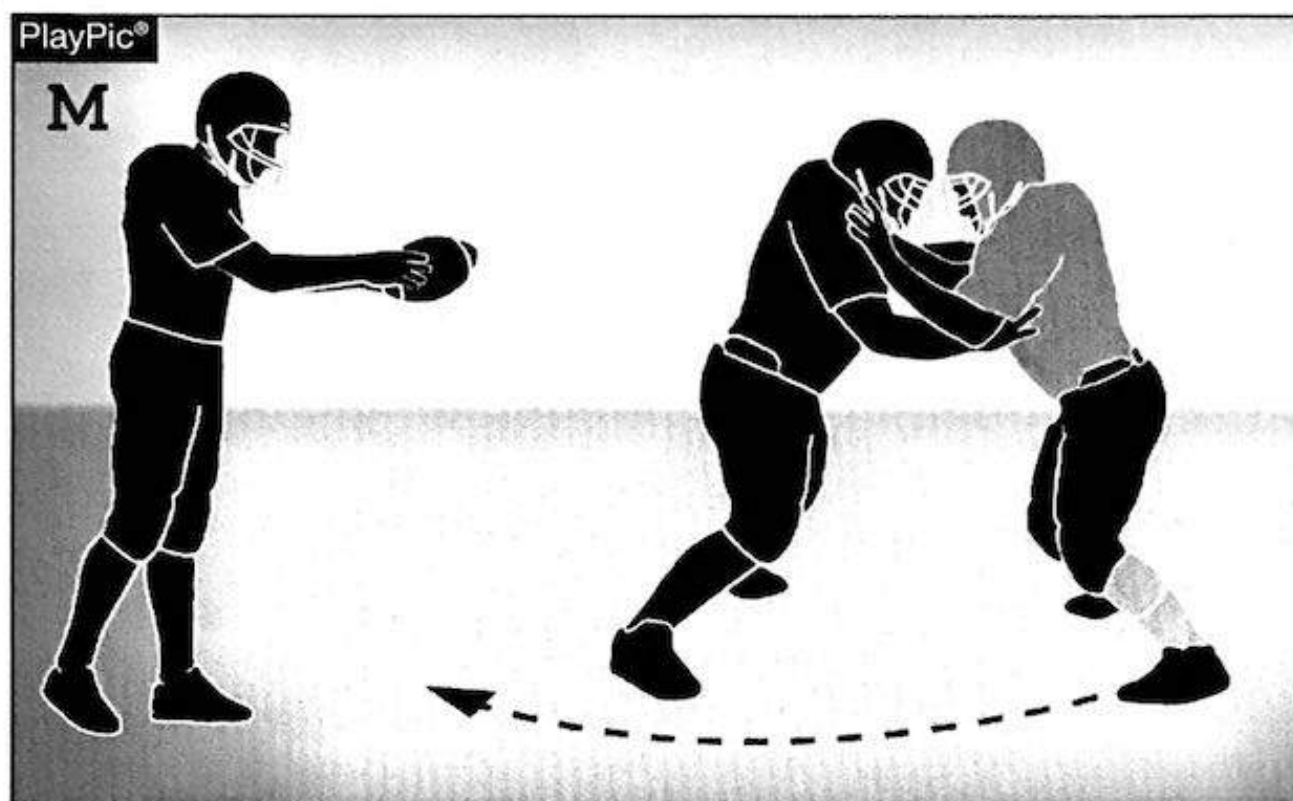
If there is contact on the kicker, but it isn't unnecessarily rough and not particularly firm, a lesser penalty is enforced. That is called running into the kicker. That foul is defined as contact that displaces the kicker. The penalty is five yards and there is no automatic first down.

One method officials use to distinguish running into from roughing is which leg is contacted. If the kicker's plant leg is hit, a strong case can be made for roughing. If the kicking leg is hit while it is still in the air (PlayPic L), running into is the more likely call.

There is no foul for roughing or running into the kicker if a team R player is blocked into kicker. If a punt is touched by team R and contact is unavoidable, there can be no roughing or running into the kicker.

Play 9: As seen in PlayPic M (p.90), K1 takes the snap and is preparing to punt. K2 blocks hard-charging R3, causing R3 to contact K1. K2's block is in R3's back (PlayPic N, p.91). **Ruling 9:** Since R3's contact was unavoidable and caused by K2's block, his contact on the kicker is excused. However, K2 should be flagged for an illegal block in the back.

PUNTS



A legal block by the teammate of the kicker causes the defender to contact the kicker.

Punt Out of Bounds

When a legal punt goes out of bounds, the ball belongs to team R.

Play 10: As seen in MechaniGram O, the ball is snapped on team K's 45 yardline. K1's punt is blocked behind the neutral zone and the ball rolls out of bounds at team K's 40 yardline. The play occurs on (a), first, second or third down, or (b) fourth down. **Ruling 10:** The ball belongs to team R in (a) and (b). In terms of a new series, the down, distance to the line-to-gain are not factors when a punt goes out of bounds.

Game Clock

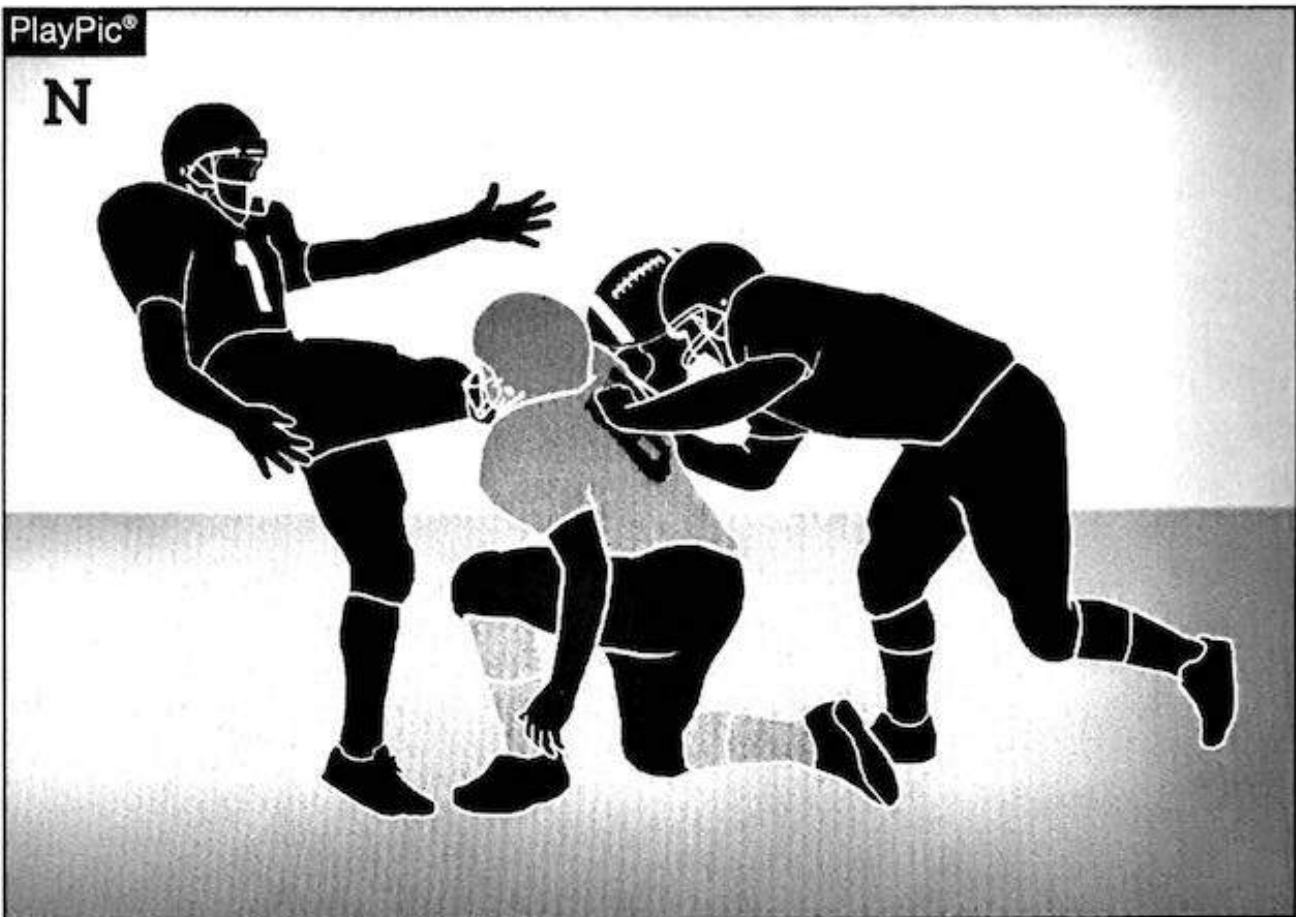
As with any other scrimmage play, if the game clock is not running, it starts when the ball is legally snapped. After a punt, the clock stops by rule (e.g. fair catch, ball or runner go out of bounds, etc.)

Resuming Play After a Punt

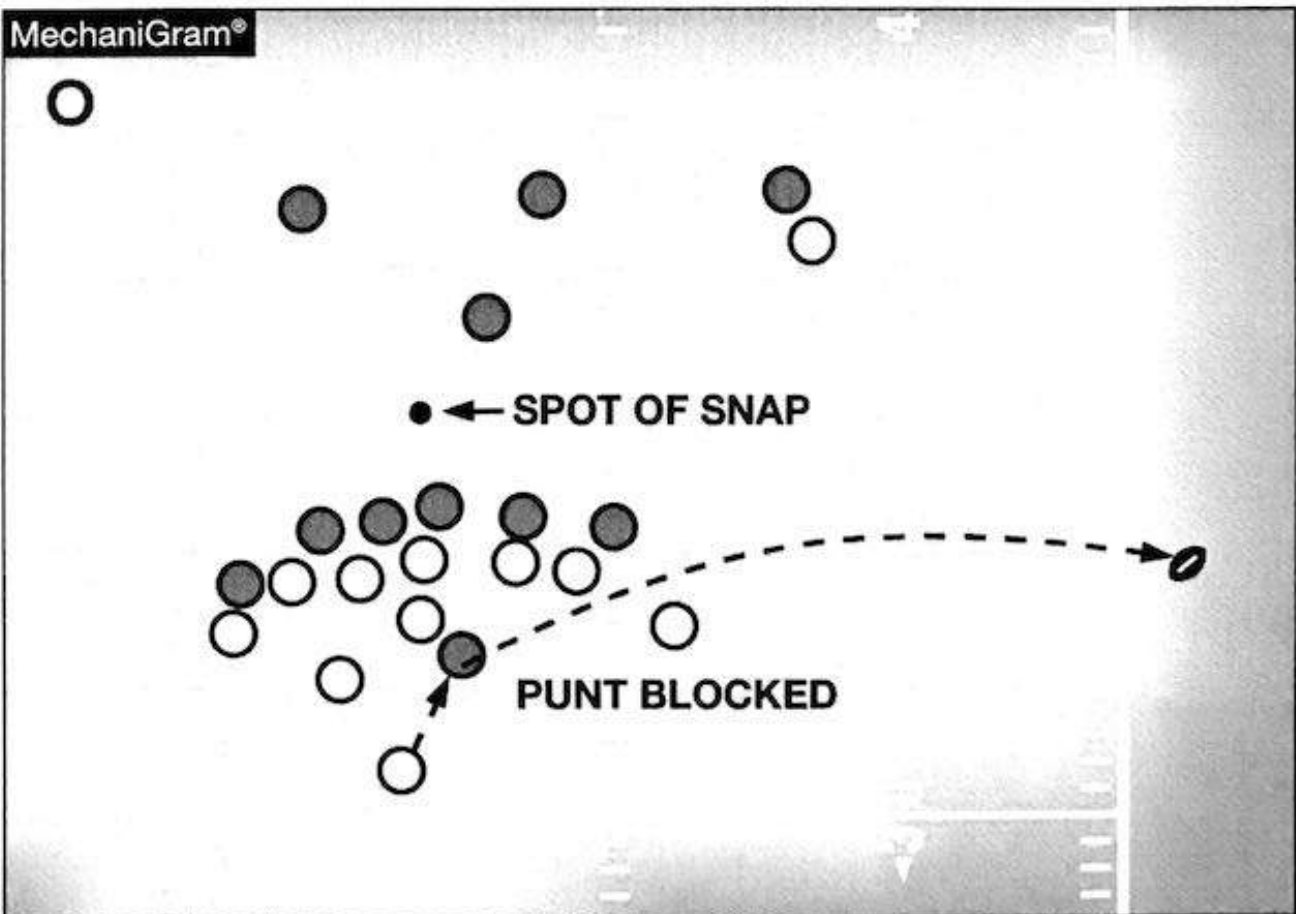
If a punt is downed, fair caught or goes out of bounds, team R puts the ball in play at the spot the kick was downed, fair caught or went out of bounds.

If team R catches or recovers the punt and the runner is downed or goes out of bounds, team R begins a new series at the dead-ball spot.

If first touching is involved, team R has the options detailed in Chapter 2.



The contact by the defender is excused due to the block. However, the blocker is guilty of an illegal block in the back.



When a legal punt goes out of bounds, team R will take over possession. That is true regardless of the down on which the ball is kicked.

CHAPTER 9

SCORING KICKS

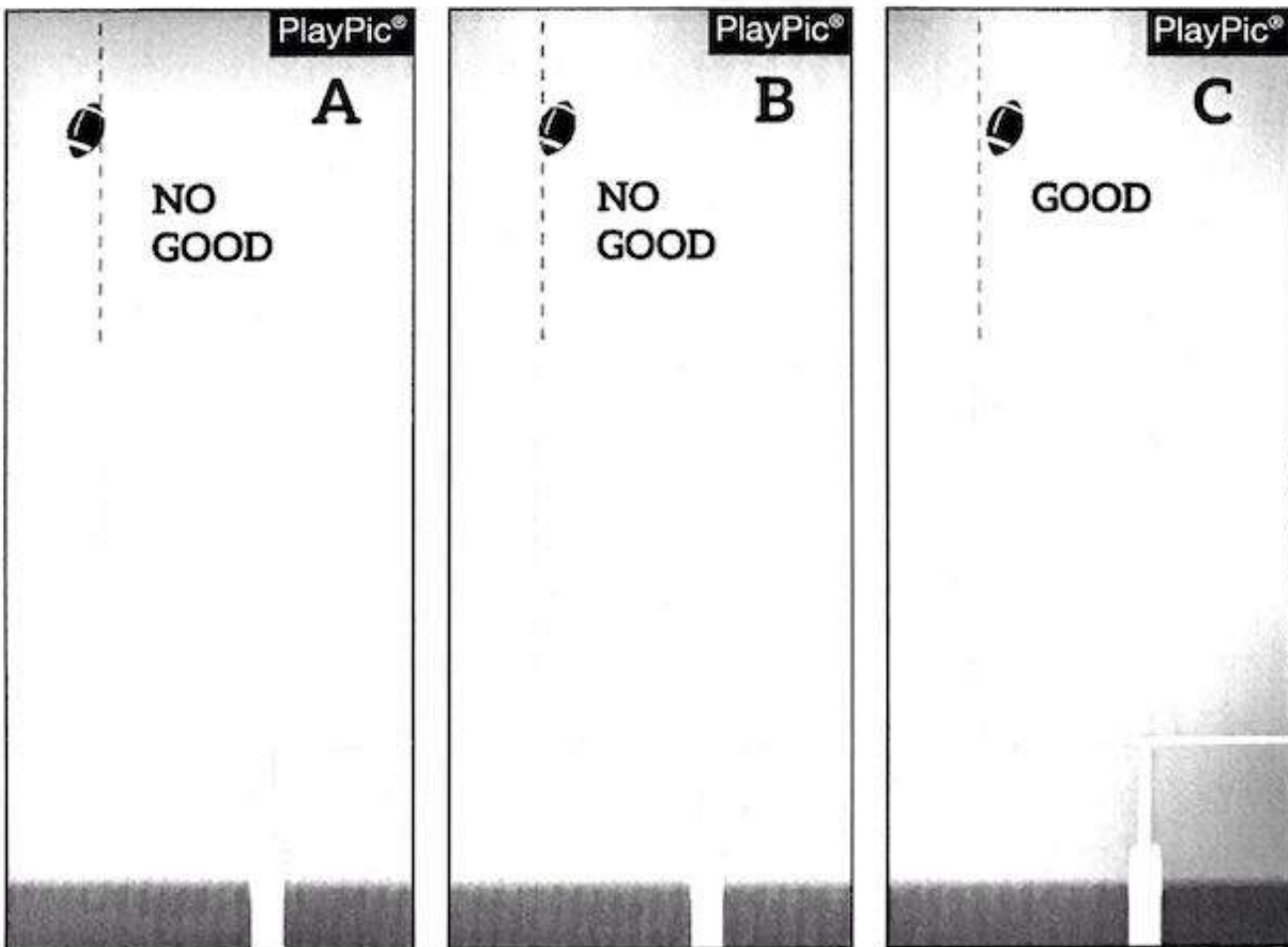
- FIELD GOAL
- TRY
- BALL LIVE OR DEAD

IT IS SOMEHOW IRONIC THAT IN A GAME CALLED FOOTBALL, the most sought-after score does not involve kicking the ball. But kicking for points has not totally disappeared from the game.

A field goal and a kick try fall into the category of scrimmage kicks. A field goal, which scores three points, can be attempted at any time during the game. A try – often referred to as a point after touchdown (PAT) or conversion – gives a team scoring a touchdown an opportunity for a “bonus point.” A try that results in what would be a touchdown during other parts of the game scores two points, but that type of try won’t be covered in this book.

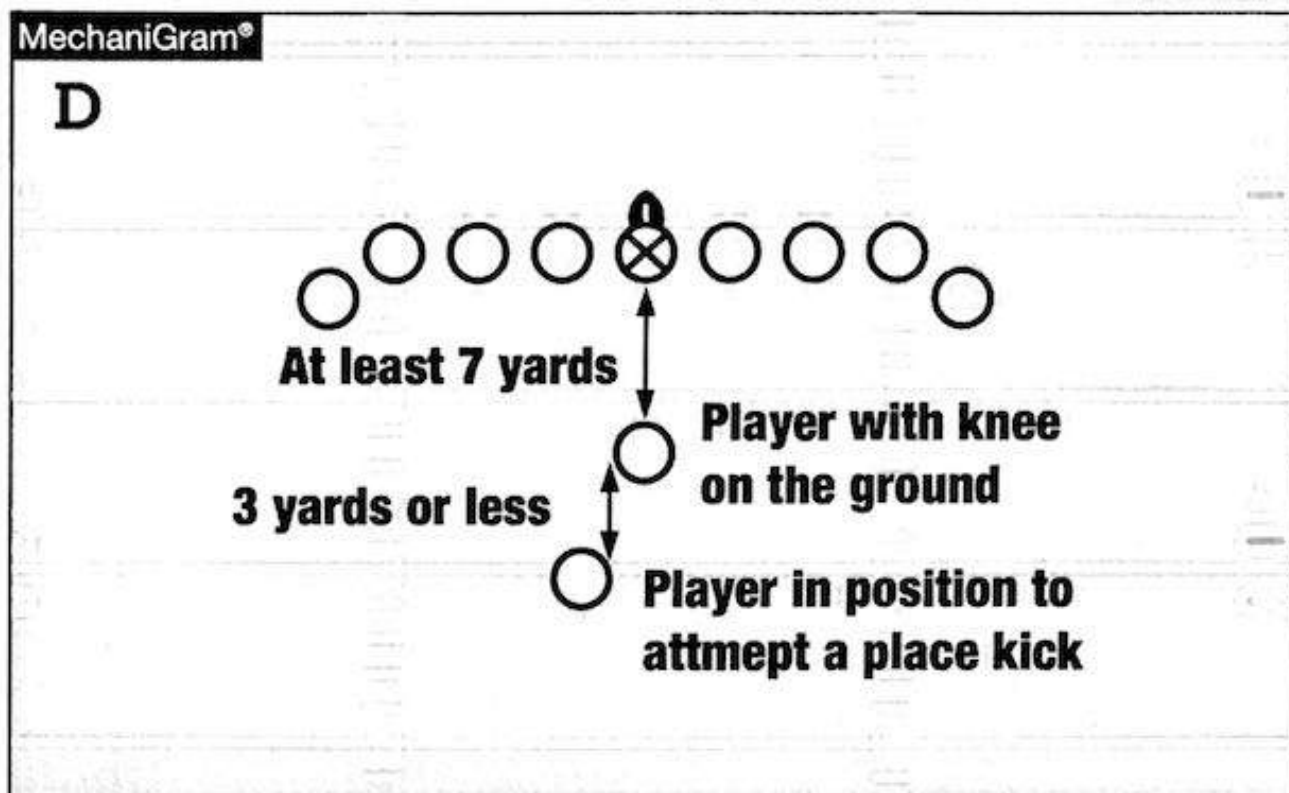
According to high school rules, in order for a field goal or try to score, the ball must not touch the ground or a team K player beyond the extended neutral zone and must pass “between the vertical uprights or the inside of the uprights extended and above the crossbar” of team R’s goal. The uprights must be at least 10 feet tall, but regardless of their length, the upright extends indefinitely.

The kicks in PlayPics A and B are no good because the ball does not pass between the inside edges of the uprights. The kick in PlayPic C is successful.



In order to score, a kick must pass over the crossbar and completely between the inside edges of the uprights.

SCORING KICKS



A legal scrimmage kick formation for a field goal or try.

Scrimmage Kick Formation

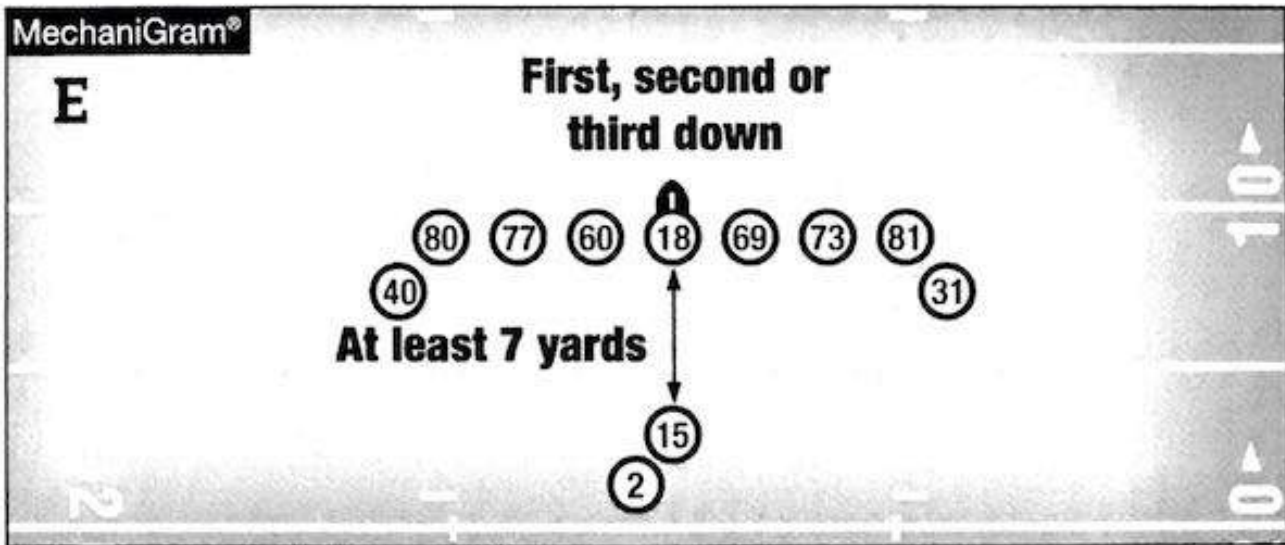
If team K chooses to attempt a field goal or try from a scrimmage-kick formation, team K may have no player in position to receive a direct (hand-to-hand) snap from between the snapper's legs. A player (the holder) must be at least seven yards behind the line and with a knee on the ground in position to receive the snap. Additionally, a different team K player (the kicker) must be positioned three yards or less behind the holder and in position to kick the ball. MechaniGram D illustrates a scrimmage kick formation.

Numbering Exception

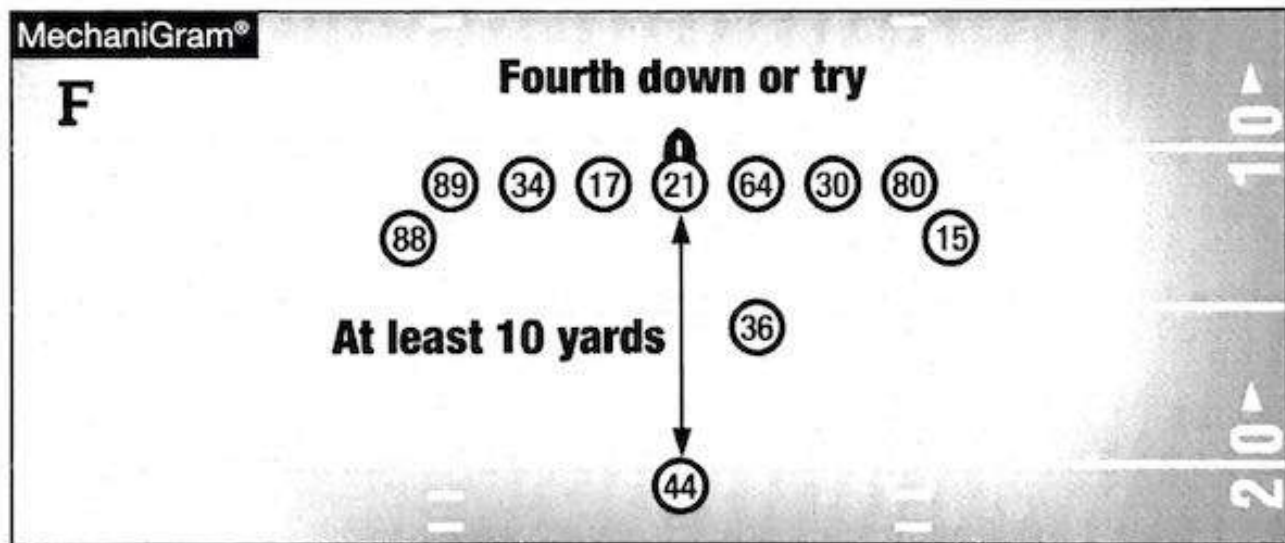
Team K does not have to be in scrimmage kick formation to attempt a field goal or try. However, it may take advantage of the numbering exception only if it is in a legal scrimmage kick formation.

Ordinarily, a team snapping the ball must have at least five players on its line of scrimmage at the snap numbered 50-79.

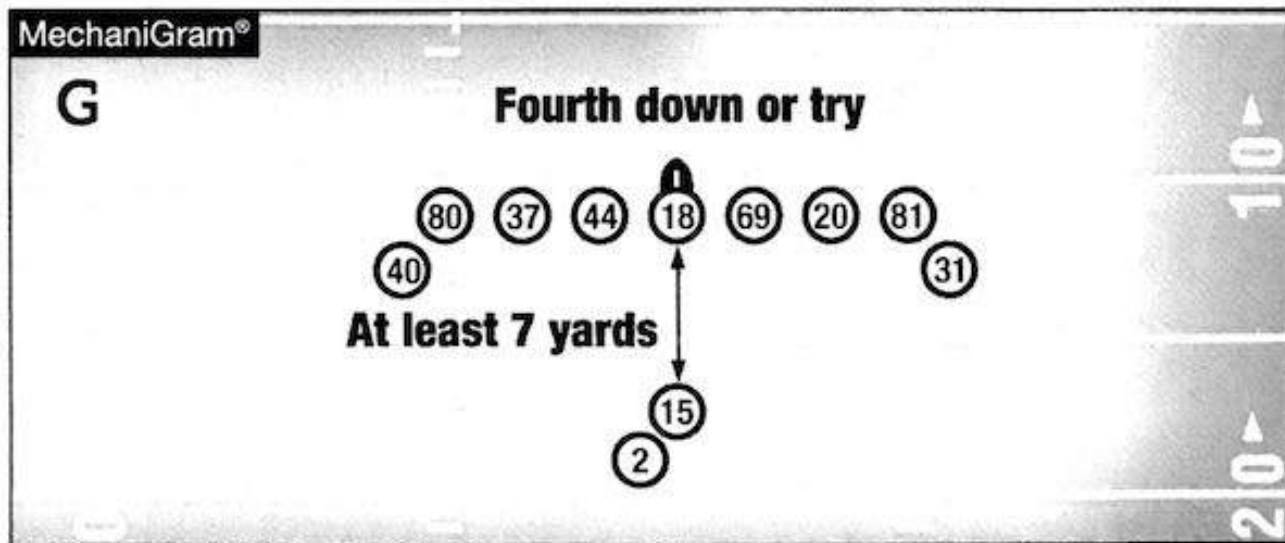
However, on first, second or third down, when team K sets or shifts into a scrimmage kick formation (as seen in MechaniGram E), the snapper may wear uniform number 1-49 or 80-99. The snapper does not have to be in the middle of the formation, but he must be positioned between the ends. He is ineligible to catch or touch a forward pass during the down unless the pass is touched by an opponent. If the



On first, second or third down, the snapper may wear uniform number 1-49 or 80-99. The snapper does not have to be in the middle of the formation, but he must be positioned between the ends.



On fourth down, any team K player numbered 1-49 or 80-99 may take one of the positions normally manned by a player wearing 50-79.



On a try, any team K player numbered 1-49 or 80-99 may take one of the positions normally manned by a player wearing 50-79.

SCORING KICKS

snapper is taking advantage of the number exception, at least four players wearing numbers 50-79 must be on team K's line of scrimmage.

If team K sets or shifts into a scrimmage kick formation on fourth down (MechaniGram F, p.95) or for a try (MechaniGram G, p.95), any team K player numbered 1-49 or 80-99 may take one of the positions normally manned by a player wearing 50-79. Team K players availing themselves of the numbering exception must assume an initial position on team K's line between the ends and, as with the snapper described above, is an ineligible receiver at the snap.

Any fouls regarding improper numbering result in a five-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot.

Swinging Gate

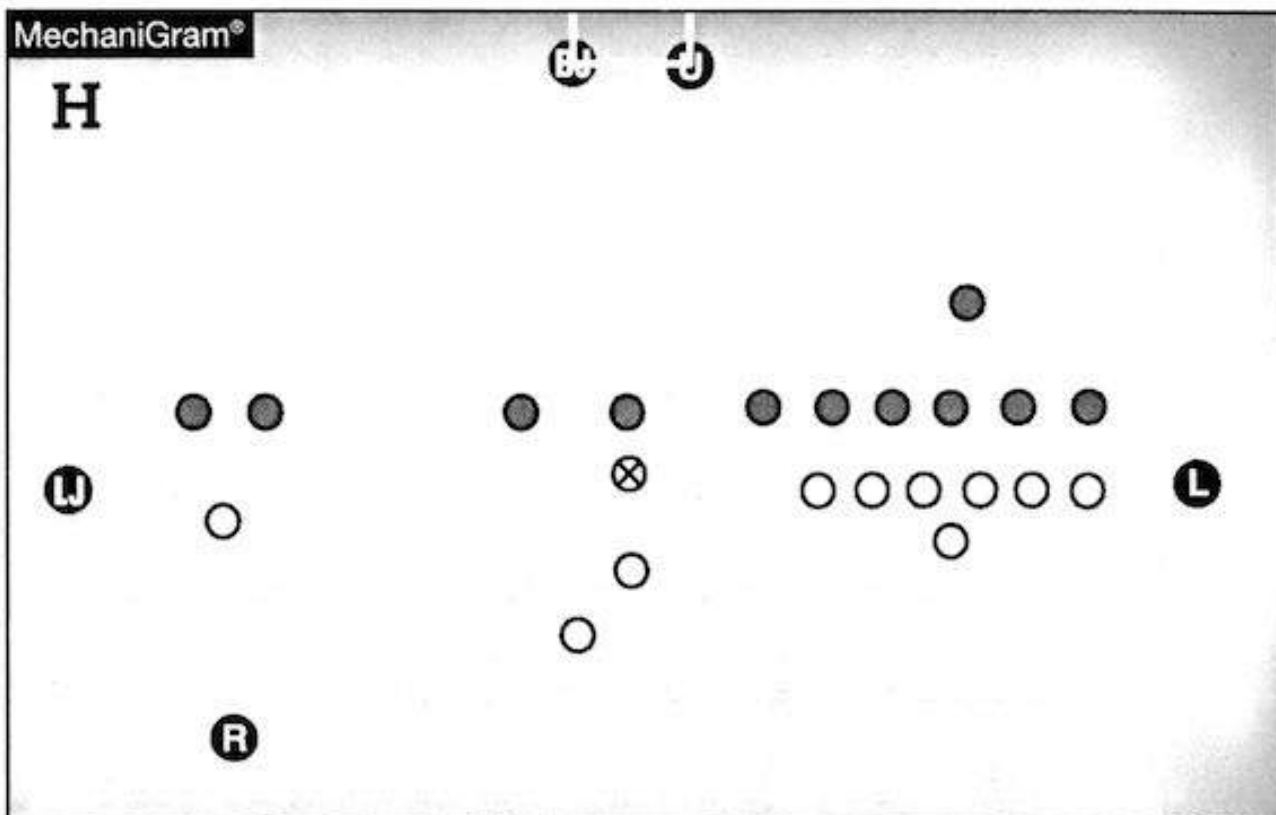
The swinging gate formation is occasionally used during a try. The swinging gate formation presents a unique challenge to officials because the players line up in unusual positions. Team A will typically line up in the formation at or prior to the ready-for-play with the snapper, holder and kicker between the hashmarks and the majority of the remaining players in the side zones. Many times team A will shift into a normal scoring kick formation if the defense recognizes and makes the proper adjustments to the formation. Because the swinging gate formation presents several options for scoring, officials must be in position to maximize coverage of the multiple plays that can be run from the formation.

Some plays that are typically run out of the swinging gate formation include:

- An angled long snap (not between the snapper's legs) to a running back behind the linemen with a subsequent rush to the goalline.
- The holder receiving the snap and passing to an eligible receiver, which could be the snapper.
- The holder pitching the ball to a teammate and becoming a blocker.

It is unusual but not unheard of for team K to kick out of the swinging gate formation. However, in those instances, team A will frequently quickly shift into a kick formation.

Since the normal mechanic for scoring kicks leaves the line of scrimmage and goalline exposed on one side, the use of an alternate mechanic – one that will provide coverage of a run or pass – is recommended. A suggested alignment is seen in MechaniGram H. NOTE: Alternate mechanics should only be used if approved by the



Suggested alternate positioning for swinging gate.

assigner, state association or other authority. Do not implement your own mechanics without consulting with those in control of your assignments.

The referee should make it part of his pregame conference with the coaches to ask the head coach if he has any trick plays, including the use of the swinging gate. If so, the crew should subsequently discuss coverage.

If the swinging gate is used on a try, the play is whistled dead if a change of possession occurs.

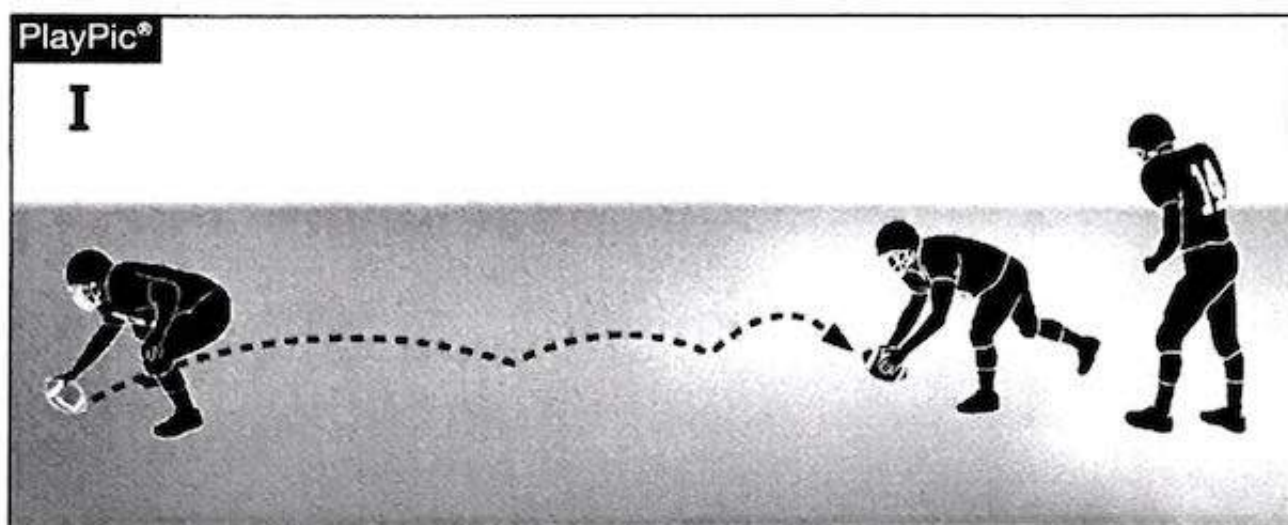
Officials under the upright should verbally identify the eligible receiver's numbers on their side of the formation. Remember that the snapper may be an eligible receiver if he has an eligible number and is on the end of the line.

Ball Declared Dead or Remains Live

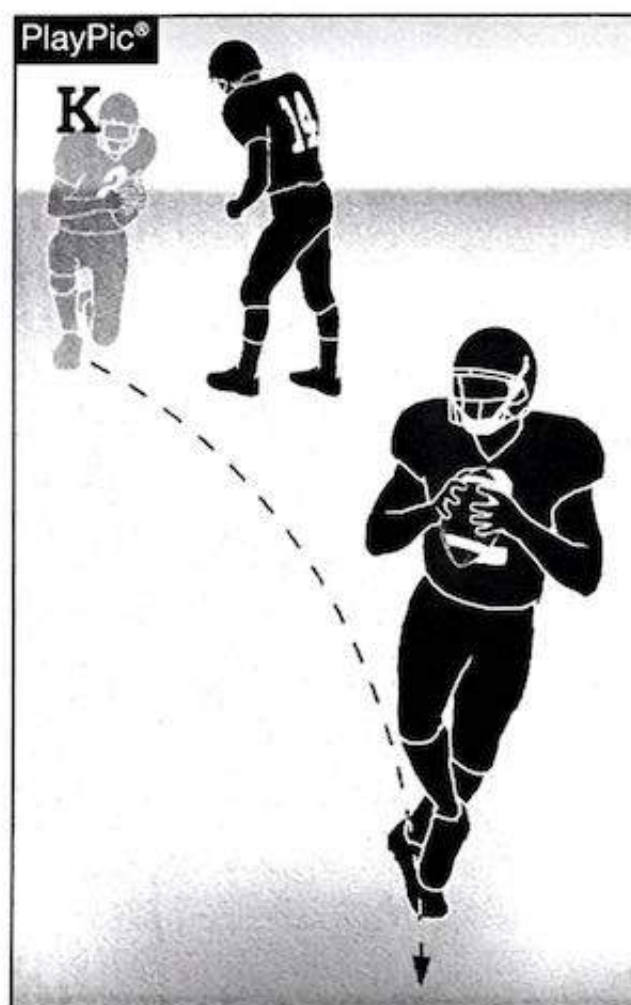
Regarding a try, the ball becomes dead and the down is ended when:

- A team K player catches or recovers the kick beyond the neutral zone (highly unlikely but not outside the realm of possibility).
- When a kick that has broken the plane of team R's goalline has apparently failed. (That one has an exception: If the kick touches an official, a team R player, an upright or the crossbar but still passes between the uprights and over the crossbar, the kick is successful.)
- Team R gains possession.

SCORING KICKS



The holder may rise off his knee to catch or recover an errant snap.



The holder must get off his knee before team K may run or pass.

- It is obvious the kick won't score.

Regarding a field goal, the ball becomes dead and the down is ended when:

- A team K player catches or recovers the kick beyond the neutral zone.
- When a kick that has broken the plane of team R's goalline has apparently failed. (Same exception as on a try: If the kick touches an

official, a team R player, an upright or the crossbar but still passes between the uprights and over the crossbar, the kick is successful.)

- It is obvious the kick won't score.

Play 1: Team K's scoring kick is blocked. K2 catches the deflected the ball behind the neutral zone and begins to advance. The kick is a (a) kick try, (b) field goal attempt. **Ruling 1:** In (a), the ball should be declared dead when the kick is blocked because it is obvious it won't score. In (b), the ball remains live. Remember that team K may advance a scrimmage kick other than a try that it catches or recovers behind its neutral zone.

There are occasions when team K will line up as if to kick a try or field goal but no kick is attempted. That may be because the play breaks down or because team K is running a fake. In either case, the holder is subject to rules regarding his knee being on the ground.

Ordinarily a runner is declared down if his knee touches the ground. A holder may rise to catch or recover an errant snap and immediately return to the ground to hold the ball for a kick (PlayPic I).

However, if the holder wants to run, pass or hand the ball, he must do so with his knees off the ground. PlayPic J shows the holder down, and PlayPic K shows him rising to make a play.

Resuming Play After a Scoring Kick

After a try or a successful field goal, team R designates which team will kick off. Rarely will team R choose to kick off. In fact, you may go your entire career without seeing that happen. But it remains an option.

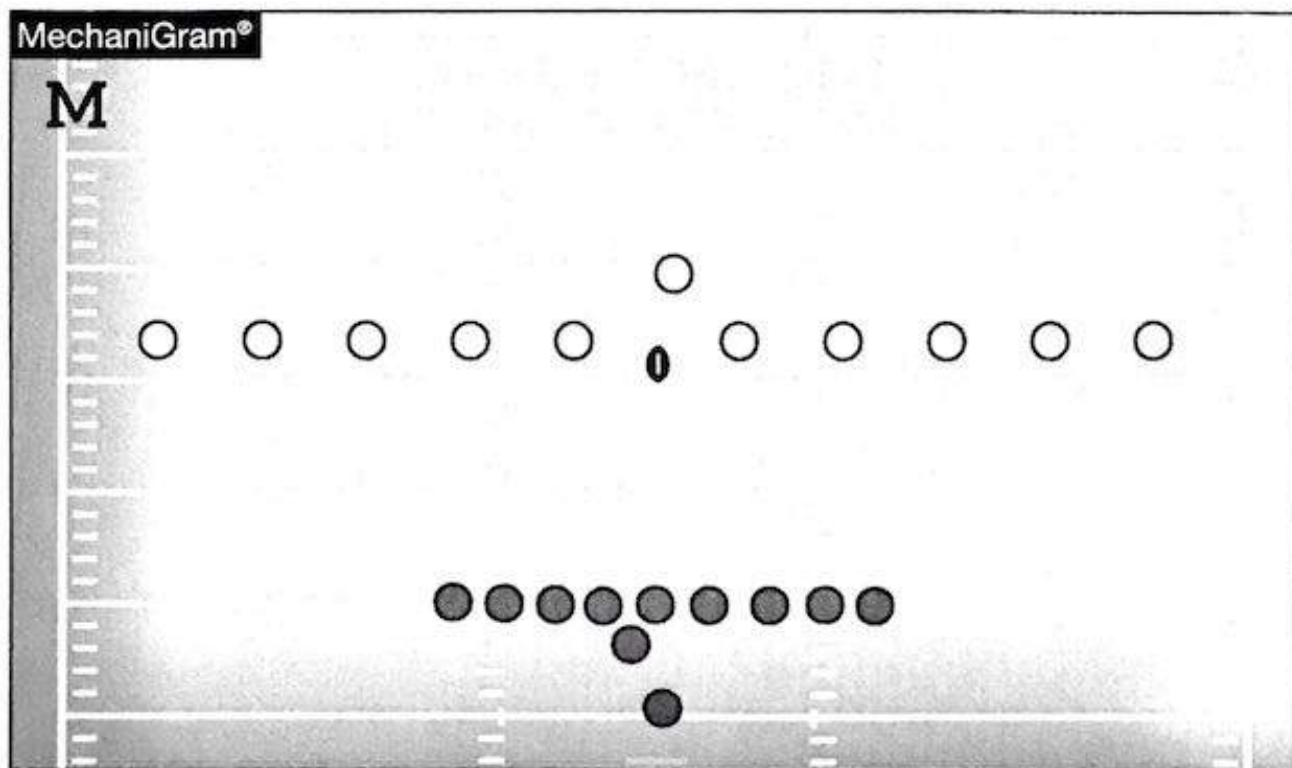
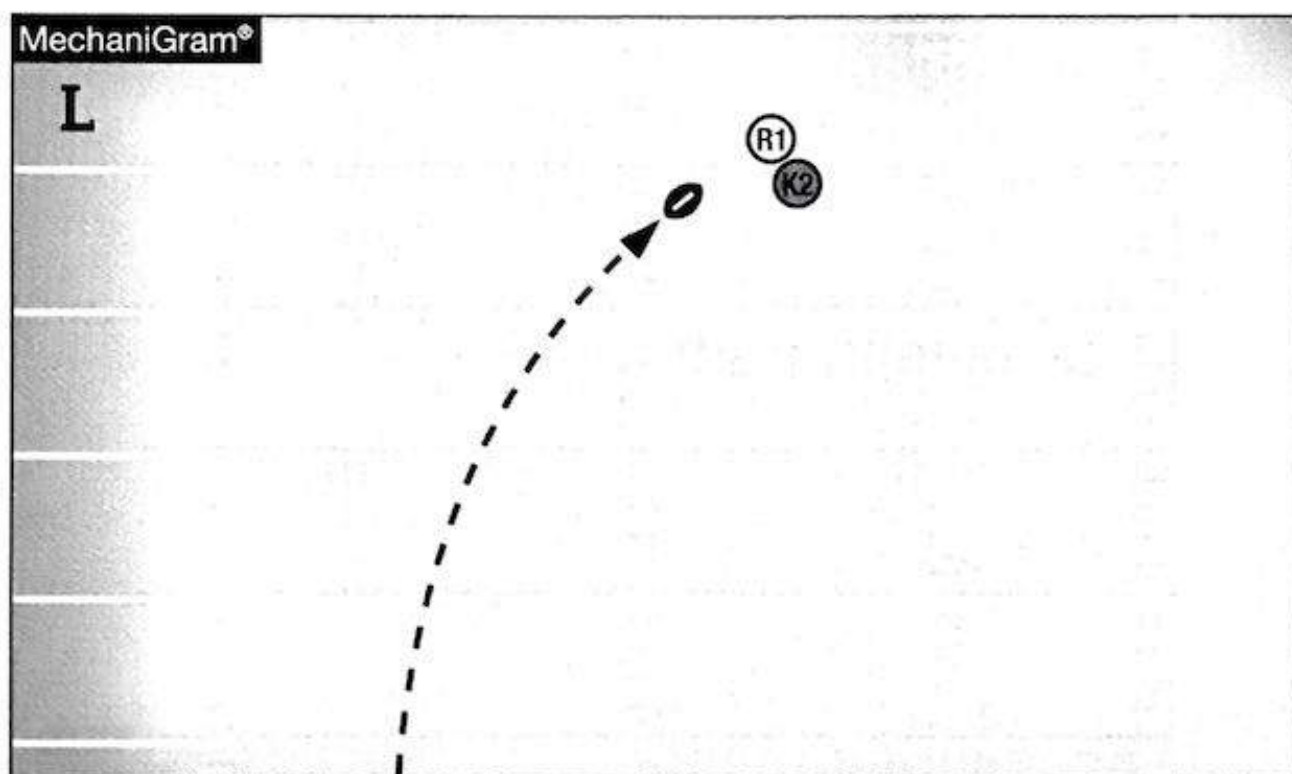
If a field goal is unsuccessful, play resumes based on where and how the ball became dead.

- If the ball broke the plane of team R's goalline, the result is a touchback. Team R is awarded a new series at its own 20 yardline.
- If the ball is untouched by team R and is declared dead between the goallines, team R is awarded a new series at the spot the ball became dead.
- If the ball is untouched by team R and it goes out of bounds between the goallines, team R is awarded a new series at the out-of-bounds spot.

If team R is first to touch an unsuccessful field goal attempt beyond the neutral zone, team K has the opportunity to recover the loose ball and earn a new series. Conversely, team K may be guilty of first touching in the same situation.

SCORING KICKS

Play 2: Team K's ball, fourth and 10 from team R's 30 yardline. K1's field goal attempt is short and hits the ground at team R's 18 yardline, where it is touched by (a) R2, or (b) K3. K4 recovers at team R's 16 yardline. **Ruling 2:** In (a), because team R touched the kick beyond the neutral zone, team K is eligible to recover. It will be team K's ball, first and 10 at team R's 16 yardline. In (b), K3's action is first touching. K4's recovery caused the ball to become dead. Team R will likely take the ball at the spot of first touching, team R's 18 yardline.



Team R may advance a failed field goal attempt caught or recovered in the field of play.

Play 3: Team K's ball, fourth and 10 from team R's 30 yardline. K1's field goal attempt is short and is caught or recovered by R2 at team R's 18 yardline. R2 advances to (a) team R's 33 yardline, where he is downed; or (b) team K's end zone. **Ruling 3:** The advance by R2 is legal in both cases. The play is treated the same as a punt. In (a), team R begins a new series at team R's 33 yardline. In (b), it is a touchdown for team R.

Kick Touched in Team R's End Zone

If a scoring kick is touched in flight after breaking the plane of the goalline, the ball is dead when touched unless it was touched by a team R player and still has a chance to score. If the kick does not score, the result of the play is a touchback.

Play 4: Fourth and 12 on team R's 39 yardline. K1 attempts a field goal from team R's 46 yardline. As the ball is about to go over the crossbar in flight, R2 leaps and (a) bats the ball to the ground in front of the crossbar; or (b) tries to catch the ball only to have it deflect to the ground; or (c) bats the ball to the ground in front of the crossbar and the ball is recovered by K3 in the end zone. **Ruling 4:** In (a), (b) and (c), the ball is dead when it's apparent the kick will not score. The result is a touchback.

Free Kick After Fair Catch

One of team R's options following a fair catch or awarded fair catch is a free kick that, if successful, scores three points.

Play 5: As seen in MechaniGram L, team K's punt is in flight at team K's 35 yardline when K2 interferes with R1's opportunity to make the catch. The team R captain tells the referee his team chooses an awarded fair catch and enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of interference. Team R then wishes to put the ball in play via free kick (MechaniGram M). **Ruling 5:** Legal option.

Fouls Against the Snapper, Kicker or Holder

The snapper, kicker and holder are afforded special protection from contact when team K is in scrimmage-kick formation. Those players are largely defenseless and vulnerable while in the act of doing their jobs.

SCORING KICKS

Common sense demands they be given special protection. Roughing the kicker, holder or roughing snapper result in a 15-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot and an automatic first down.

Roughing the snapper occurs when a team R player charges directly into the snapper. That protection begins at the snap and ends when the snapper has had a reasonable opportunity to regain his balance and protect himself, or until he blocks or moves to otherwise participate in the play.

It is roughing the kicker or holder when a team R player blocks, tackles or charges into the kicker or holder. However, team R is excused from that contact when it unavoidable because:

- It is not reasonably certain that a kick will be made.
- Team R touches the kick near the kicker and contact is unavoidable.
- The contact is slight and is partially caused by movement of the kicker.
- Contact is caused by the team R player being blocked into the holder or kicker by a team K player.

Note that the team R player who contacts the kicker and the teammate who touches the kick need not be the same in order to be exempt from a foul. However, any team R player whose contact on the kicker is unnecessarily rough, or one who contacts the kicker after renewing his charge, has fouled.

Running Into the Kicker or Holder

If there is contact on the kicker or holder, but it isn't unnecessarily rough and not particularly firm, a lesser penalty is enforced. That is called running into the kicker or holder. That foul is defined as contact that displaces the kicker or holder. The penalty is five yards and there is no automatic first down.

One method officials use to distinguish running into from roughing is which leg is contacted. If the kicker's plant leg is hit, a strong case can be made for roughing. If the kicking leg is hit while it is still in the air, running into is the more likely call.

CHAPTER 9

ILLEGAL KICKS AND ILLEGALLY KICKING THE BALL

- KICK BEYOND THE NEUTRAL ZONE
- KICKING A GROUNDED BALL
- ILLEGAL TEE

ILLEGAL KICKS AND ILLEGALLY KICKING THE BALL

ALTHOUGH BOTH ARE FOULS, there is a distinction between an illegal kick and illegally kicking the ball. An illegal kick is a kick made in a perfectly legal manner, but is not allowed because of when or where it is made. Illegally kicking the ball means kicking it in a manner not allowed by the rules – how the ball is kicked.

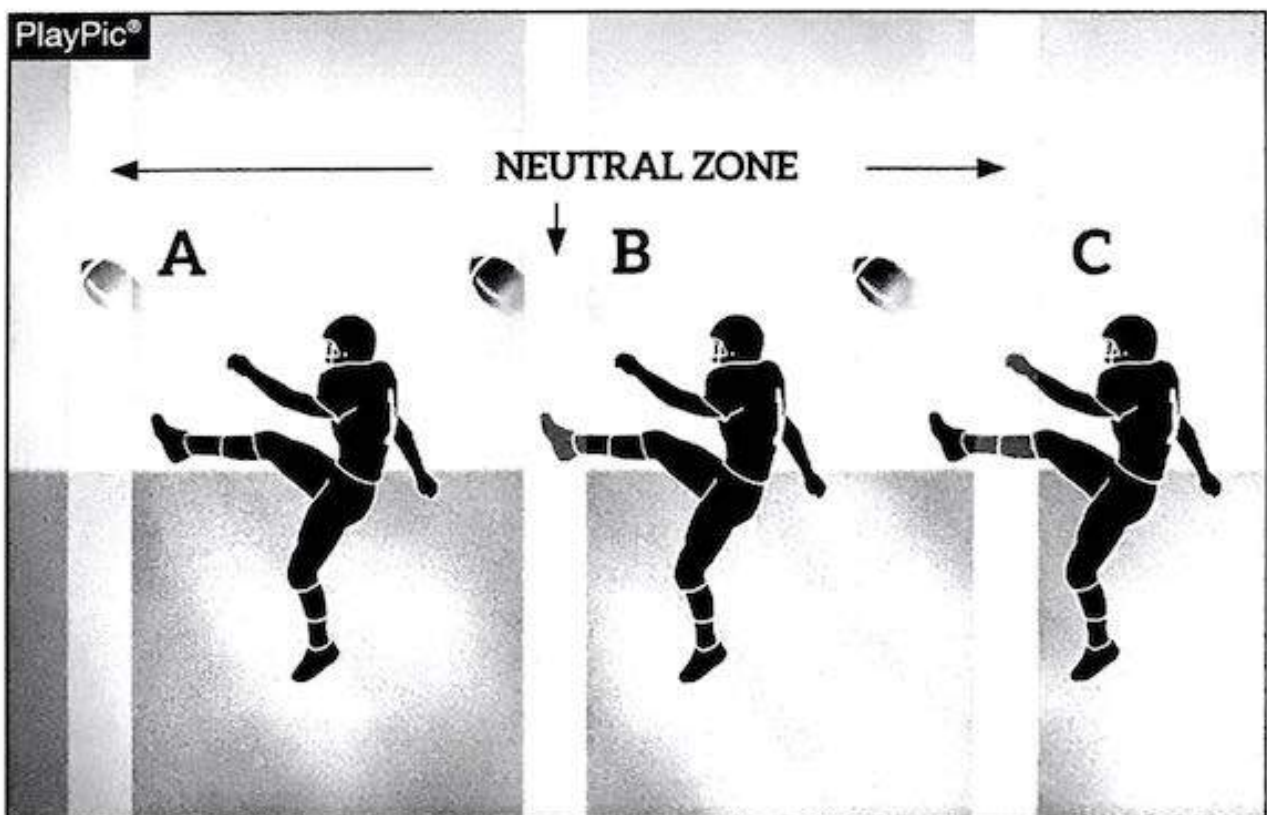
The ball remains live after an illegal kick. The penalty is 10 yards, enforced under the all-but-one principle. When an illegal kick occurs, the ball retains its status (e.g. fumble, muff, etc.).

Kick Beyond Neutral Zone

In order to execute a legal scrimmage kick, the kicker must be in or behind the neutral zone. In PlayPics A and B, the kick is legal because no part of the kicker is beyond the neutral zone (indicated by the shading). But in PlayPic C, the kicker has fouled because his foot is beyond the neutral zone.

When a kick is made from beyond the neutral zone, the kicker is given credit for the yardage he gained by the run that preceded the illegal kick. The penalty is enforced from the spot of the kick.

Play 1: Fourth and 10 on team K's 30 yardline. The snap goes to K1, who fakes a punt and starts to run. When K1 is at his 35 yardline, he



The kicks in (a) and (b) are legal because the kicker's foot is not clearly beyond the neutral zone.

ILLEGAL KICKS AND ILLEGALLY KICKING THE BALL

changes his mind and punts the ball, which travels well downfield.

Ruling 1: Although K1 made an illegal kick, the ball remains live and in play and is treated the same as a legal punt. If the penalty is accepted, it is enforced 10 yards from the spot of the kick and the down is repeated.

Play 2: K1 punts the ball from beyond the neutral zone. The kick is in flight well downfield and R2 gives a valid fair catch signal. **Ruling 2:** Team K is guilty of an illegal kick. Team R may choose enforcement of a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the kick or decline the penalty and take the result of the play.

Return Kick

Team R is prohibited from executing a punt, drop kick or place kick. That is known as a return kick.

Play 3: After catching a punt beyond the line, R2 punts the ball back. **Ruling 3:** That is an illegal kick. The ball remains live. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul.

Illegal Tee/Spot Enhancement

A kicking tee may be used for a field goal, a kickoff, a free kick following a safety, for a free kick following a fair catch or a free kick following an awarded fair catch.

When rules allow a kicking tee to be used, the tee shall be made of pliable material which elevates the lowest point of the ball no more than two inches above the ground.

Use of an illegal tee results in unsportsmanlike conduct, a 15-yard penalty enforced from the basic spot.

Nothing may be placed on the ground to enhance the kicker's footing.

Play 4: K1's attempted field goal is successful. However, the referee notices that the tee elevates the ball more than two inches above the ground. Earlier in the game, (a) team K's head coach, or (b) K1 was penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct. **Ruling 4:** Team K is penalized 15 yards from the spot of the kick. Neither (a) the head coach, nor (b) K1 is disqualified. Penalties for using an illegal tee do not count toward a player or coach's disqualification.

Play 5: On a kickoff, holder K1 (a) creates a tee with a mound of dirt or sod, or (b) holds the ball on his upraised toe. K2 free kicks off that

ILLEGAL KICKS AND ILLEGALLY KICKING THE BALL



The ball may be held for a free kick, but the ball must be on the ground or on a legal tee. An upraised toe is not considered a legal tee.

makeshift tee (PlayPic D). **Ruling 5:** In (a) and (b), it is an illegal kick, a live-ball foul. If the penalty is accepted, it is enforced 10 yards from the previous spot and the kickoff is repeated.

Kicking a Loose Ball

Kicking the ball while it is loose is an example of illegally kicking the ball. It is illegal for any player to intentionally kick the ball in other than a legal kick. The penalty is 10 yards. The ball remains live.

Play 6: Fourth and 10 for team K from its own 15 yardline. The snap is high and over punter K1's head. He chases the ball and kicks it over his own end line. When it is kicked, the ball is (a) at team K's four yardline, or (b) in team K's end zone. **Ruling 6:** K1 is guilty of illegally kicking the ball in both cases. In (a), team R may choose enforcement from the spot of the foul. The penalty would be half the distance, yielding fourth and 23 from team K's two yardline. Declining the penalty would result in a safety. In (b), because the spot of the foul is in team K's end zone, team R would score a safety regardless if the penalty is accepted or declined.

CHAPTER 10

HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE RULE DIFFERENCES

- FREE KICK INFRACTIONS
- FREE KICK OUT OF BOUNDS
- BALL LIVE OR DEAD

HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE RULE DIFFERENCES

BECAUSE OF THE COMPLEX NATURE OF RULES INVOLVING THE KICKING GAME, this book covers in detail only the high school rules. Here is a brief description of some of the major differences between high school and college rules.

Blocking

In high school rules, a player who gives a fair catch signal may not block until the kick has ended. In college, a player who gives a fair catch signal and does not touch the ball may not block or foul an opponent during that down.

Contact on the Kicker or Holder

A player attempting a scrimmage kick in high school is protected until he has had a reasonable opportunity to regain his balance. There is no foul for roughing or running into the kicker if a team R player is blocked into the kicker or holder. If a scrimmage kick is touched by team R and contact is unavoidable, there can be no roughing or running into the kicker or holder. In college, a player attempting a scrimmage kick who runs outside the tackle box is not protected. If a team R player is blocked into the kicker or holder, the contact is excused whether the block was legal or illegal. When a player other than the player who blocks a scrimmage kick contacts the kicker, it is roughing the kicker or holder.

Fair Catch on Free Kick

In high school, if a player makes a fair catch on a free kick, the ball belongs to the receiving team at the spot of the catch. In college, the receiving team may fair catch a kickoff inside its 25 yardline and have it result in a touchback.

Formation on Scoring Kick

On a scoring kick in college, team R may not line up with three players on their line of scrimmage aligned shoulder-to-shoulder and have those players move forward together after the snap with primary contact on a single team K player. High school has no such rule.

Free Kick Infractions

In high school, encroachment, illegal kickoffs, etc., are dead-ball fouls enforced from the previous spot. Offside and other kick-related fouls are live-ball fouls. Team R has the option of having penalties enforced from the previous spot or from end of the run.

Free Kick Out of Bounds

When the ball is free kicked out of bounds untouched by team R in a high school game, among team R's options are starting a new series 25 yards from the previous spot. Under college rules, it's 30 yards from the previous spot.

Illegal Batting

In college, a grounded kick may be batted backward except in the end zone. Under high school rules, team K can bat a grounded scrimmage kick back toward its own goalline. The ball is dead when it breaks the plane of team R's goalline.

Illegal Fair Catch Signal

If a runner gives a fair catch signal after a kick has been caught or recovered, it is a five-yard penalty in high school. In college when a fair catch signal follows the catch of a scrimmage kick that crossed the neutral zone, it is an invalid signal and the ball is dead when the signal is first given.

Illegal Kick

The penalty in high school is 10 yards. In college, it is five yards plus loss of down if by team A or team K.

Illegally Kicking the Ball

The penalty in high school is 10 yards. The college penalty is 10 yards plus loss of down.

Invalid Fair Catch Signal

In high school rules, an invalid fair catch signal is a foul. In college, it is not.

Kick-Catching Interference

On a free kick in high school, interference occurs if a free kick is touched in flight by team K, regardless if a team R player is in position to catch the kick. Interference is purely a judgment call for the officials; there is no real or invisible barrier that must be entered for interference to occur. In college, interference can occur only if a team R player is positioned to make a catch. Team R has the same kick-catching and fair catch protection whether the ball is kicked directly off the tee or is driven immediately into the ground. Also, team K players cannot enter the area defined by the width of the

HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE RULE DIFFERENCES

receiver's shoulders and extending one yard in front of the receiver before he touches the ball.

Kick Breaks the Plane of Team R's Goalline

In high school, a touchback occurs when a non-scoring kick breaks the plane of team R's goalline. In college, the ball remains live unless the ball first touches the ground in the end zone before it touches a team R player.

Leaping

Team R players in high school may leap to block a kick without restriction. In college it is a foul if a defensive player moves forward and tries to block a field goal or try by leaping into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent. It is a foul if a defensive player who is inside the tackle box tries to block a punt by leaping into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent.

Numbering Exception

In high school, the numbering exception applies only on fourth down or a try whenever team K is in scrimmage kick formation. On first, second or third down, only the snapper may wear a number other than 50-79 inclusive. In college, the exception applies whenever team K is in scrimmage kick formation.

Option After a Fair Catch

After making a fair catch, only high school rules allow team R to put the ball in play via a snap or free kick.

Placekick Holder Exception

The holder for a placekick in high school must rise before he may advance, hand, kick or pass the ball. The college holder need not rise.

Scrimmage Kick Formation

A scrimmage kick formation in high school is one with no player in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap from between the snapper's legs and either at least one player 10 yards or more behind the neutral zone in position to receive a long snap or a player in position with a knee on the ground at least seven yards behind the line in position to be the holder and receive a long snap with another player at least three yards farther back in position to attempt a placekick. In college, a scrimmage kick formation is one with at least one player seven yards or more behind the neutral zone

in position to receive a long snap and no player in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap from between the snapper's legs and it is obvious that a kick may be attempted. Also, if team K is in a scrimmage kick formation at the snap, any action by team K during the down is deemed to be from a scrimmage kick formation.

Spot of Kickoff

Unless moved by penalty, the ball is kicked off from team K's 40 yardline in high school, but team K's 35 yardline in college.

Tee

In high school, a legal tee may be used for place kicks or free kicks. The tee may not raise the lowest point of the ball more than two inches off the ground. Use of illegal tee is considered unsportsmanlike conduct. College rules limit use of the tee to free kicks only. A legal tee may not raise the lowest point of the ball more than one inch off the ground. Use of illegal tee is an illegal kick.

Touchback

In high school, a touchback results in the ball being placed at team R's 20 yardline regardless of the type of kick. In college, the ball is placed at team R's 25 yardline after a touchback resulting from a free kick, but team R's 20 yardline at other times.

Unsuccessful Field Goal

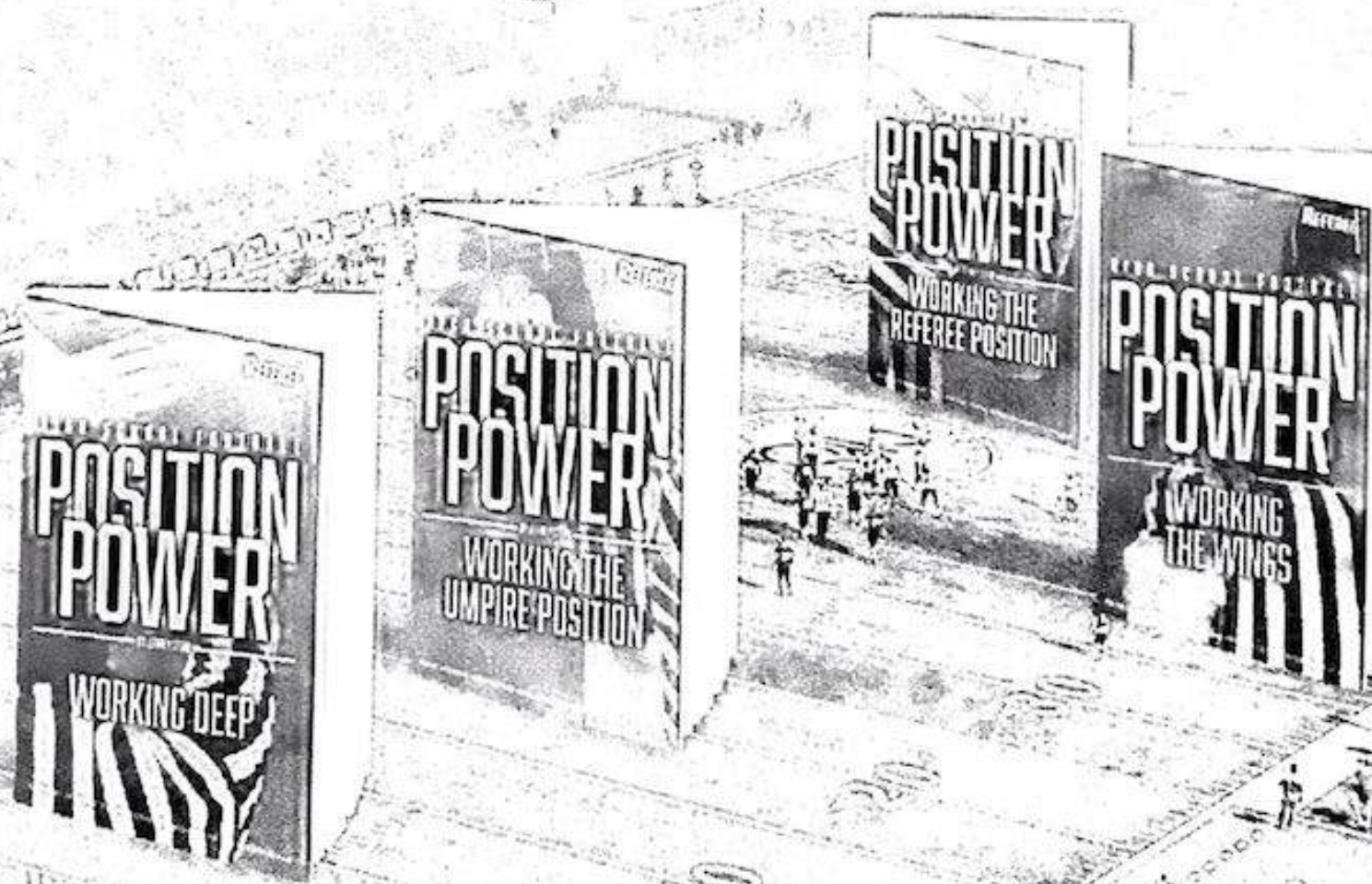
An unsuccessful field goal in high school is treated the same as a punt. In college, if the ball was snapped outside team R's 20 yardline and team R did not touch the kick beyond the line, the ball is returned to the previous spot. If the snap was on or inside team R's 20 yardline, the ball is put in play at team R's 20 yardline.

Wedge Formation

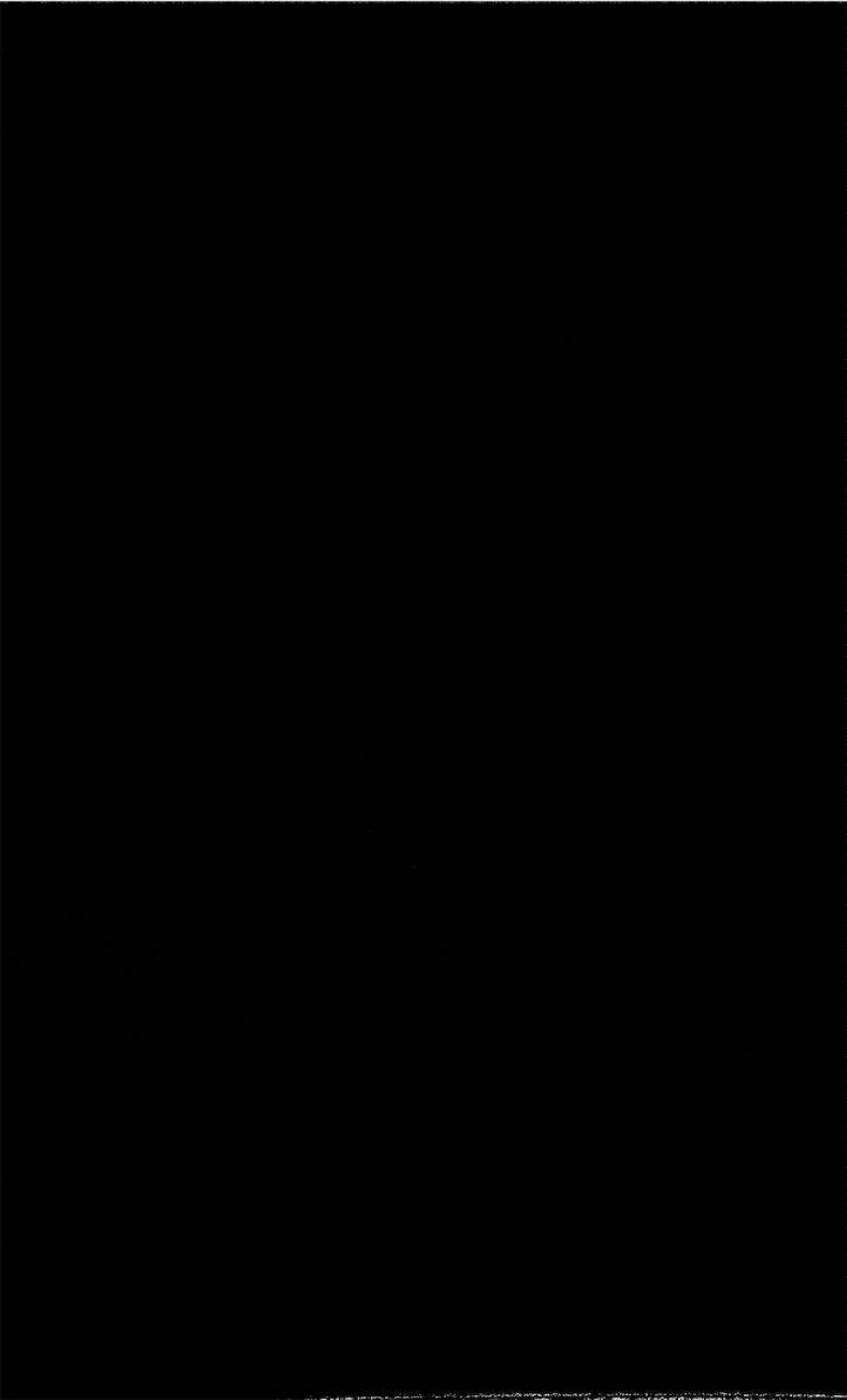
High school rules do not address a wedge formation on a free kick. In college, a wedge is two or more players aligned shoulder to shoulder within two yards of each other. It is illegal for two or more members of team R to intentionally form a wedge for the purpose of blocking after the ball has been kicked on a free kick, except when the kick is from an obvious onside kick formation.

ENHANCE YOUR POSITION

Everything you need to know to handle your position's unique challenges with success.

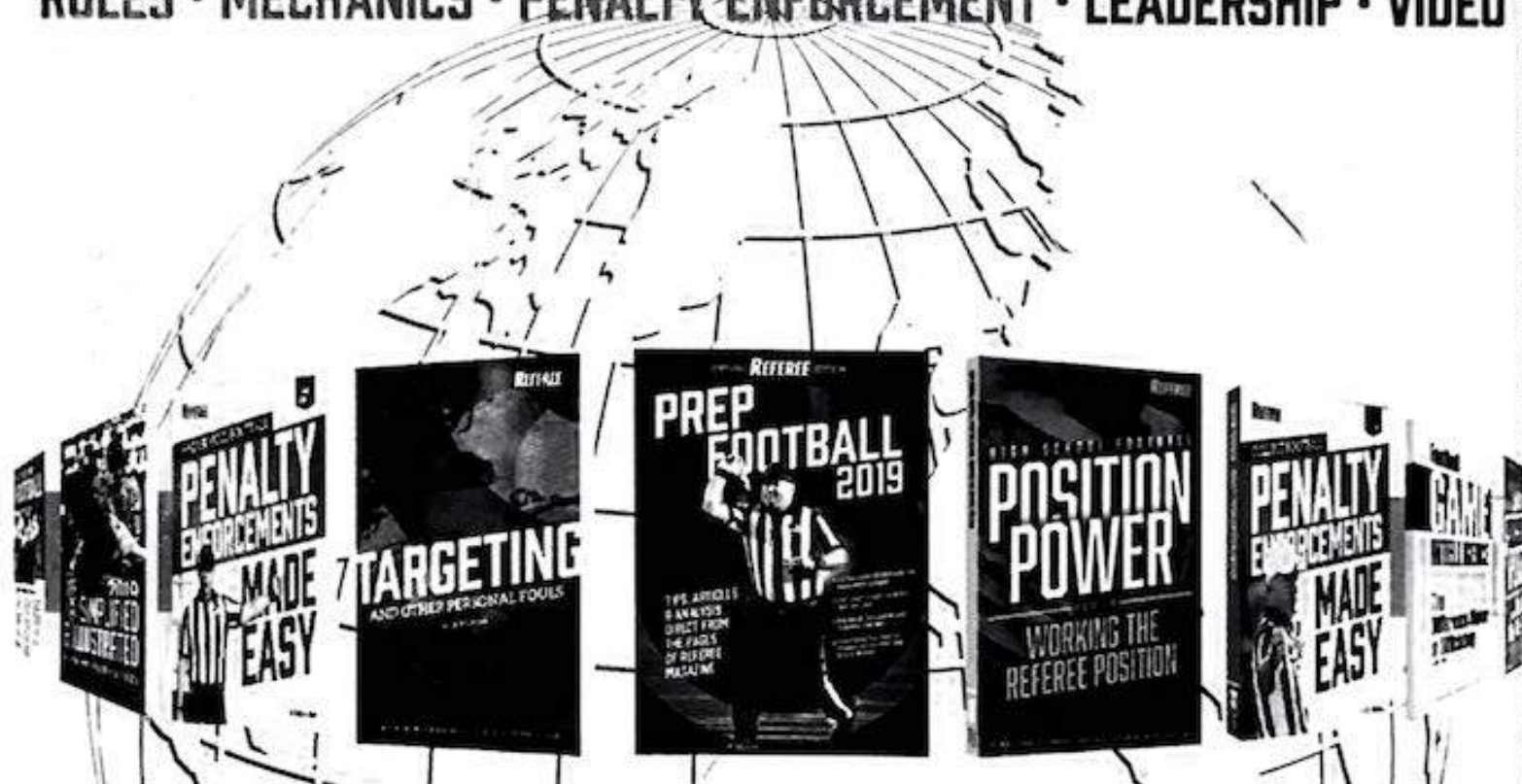


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