

# PIAA Football Officials

## Lancaster Chapter

### LINE JUDGE RESPONSIBILITIES

Arrive at the game site 1½ hours before game time . This allows you to relax and prepare mentally for the game. In addition, the referee and the rest of the crew can all relax and won't have to stress over the possibility of working a "four man" game.

During the pre-game conference, you will be asked/expected to discuss the responsibilities of a line judge . During this time discuss your "keys" with the Back Judge and anything the Referee wants done a certain way.

Upon leaving the dressing room, you are responsible for getting the home team on the field at least 5 minutes prior to kickoff time . (You are also responsible for getting the home team back on the field at half time.)

**Upon Entering the Field:** Introduce yourself to the Head Coach. Find the ball "person(s)" for your sideline (usually press box side) and prep on his or her responsibilities. This can help clear up any misunderstandings and reduce the likelihood of problems occurring once the game begins allowing you to focus on more important duties.

**Coin Toss :** The back judge (BJ) will join you on the press box side (usually home side of the field; i.e.-the side opposite the chains). While the captains move to the center of the field for the toss, your duty is to ensure that the remainder of the home team players remain in the team box. After the toss, proceed to the center of the field to meet briefly with the other officials before breaking to your kickoff position.

**Kick off:** Position yourself on the 50 yard line, outside the field of play, on the side of the field opposite the chains. Count "K" players and signal to the rest of the crew. Identify free-kick line to the receivers. Have your bean bag in your hand prior to the kick. When BJ leaves field, raise your arm to signal Referee you are ready. Drop arm after R acknowledges you. Be alert for short kick, first touching by K, or kick that does not cross R's free-kick line. Mark spot of first touching by K with bag. Watch initial blocks in your area.

Ball out of bounds - untouched by R, throw flag; last touched by R, mark with bag .

Runner to opposite side - clean up behind play. Observe blocks and action away from the ball. Try not to watch the ball carrier.

Kick to your side - Pick up runner around the 35 or 40 from the Umpire on a long return. Follow runner to the goal line. Runner out of bounds get the out-of-bounds spot and stop the clock. Watch for late hits out of bounds.

#### Scrimmage Kicks

**Punt:** From your position on the side line at the line of scrimmage (LOS), before the

snap: count R and signal BJ, check down number. Release on the snap covering your sideline. Stay outside the field. Watch blocking in front of the deep receiver(s). Watch for the direction of the punt and adjust your observation accordingly.

Continue to watch blocking and help with fair catch (if short kick) and illegal blocks on, around, and by the receivers. On kicks toward your sideline, create distance between you and the ball. Ball out of bounds in the air – go beyond (5 yards plus) and come back up the sideline, watching the Referee, until chopped in by the Referee. Grounded ball out of bounds – mark spot. Be prepared to rule or assist on muffs or fumbles.

Be prepared to assist Referee if punt is blocked. Watch for run-back by R. You have the entire sideline.

**Field Goals/ Kick Tries for Point:** Unless instructed otherwise by your referee, your responsibility will be dictated by the position of the referee.

If the referee has his back to you, your position is under the upright on your side of the field. With the BJ you will rule on the success or failure of the kick. You have this same responsibility on any field goal from the 15 yard line out.

If the referee is facing you, you will take your position on the LOS and assume responsibilities similar to those of any scrimmage play. There are two additional responsibilities than a normal scrimmage play. First, since the Head Linesman (HL), who is normally opposite you on the LOS, is under the goal post you have the entire LOS for false starts and encroachment. Second, you are expected to assist the referee watching action against the kicker and holder. Provide input only if the referee requests (such as, was the contact against the holder/kicker caused by a player who was blocked into the contact?).

**Scrimmage Plays:** Position yourself on the line of scrimmage on the side of the field opposite the chains. Focus on your key – the Tight End (TE) or, if no TE, the Tackle (T) on your side of the field. Count defense before every play and signal to Back Judge. Check down number and signal to rest of the crew.

**Running plays:** If the TE (or T) fires out to block the man head up, blocks down, or on the Linebacker it is usually a running play. Find the ball. Watch the blocking in front of the ball until the runner reaches the line of scrimmage – then pick up the runner if he is in the center or on your side of the field. Stay with the runner and be prepared to rule on action against the runner and provide the forward progress spot when the run ends.

If the ball goes away from you, watch the blocking/action behind the play. The further the ball goes away the larger the area you have to watch. Avoid watching the ball when it is not your responsibility. If the ball is still basically perpendicular to you, although to the far side of the field, provide a “soft” spot of forward progress in case it is needed by the HL or Umpire (U).

3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> and short or at goal line – on runs into the middle of line - pinch in toward the ball while establishing a progress spot. At goal line - signal TD only if you see the ball break the plane of the goal line.

**Pass plays:** If the TE starts down field at the snap or the T drops back, it is usually a pass. Once you have determined that it is a pass play, focus immediately on your receiver key which is usually the widest receiver to your side of the field (as determined by you and the back judge in the pre - game conference.) Watch this key for action by and against the receiver but, at the same time, glance to determine the status of the ball. Once the ball is in the air, you must be prepared to judge action between any receiver and defender in your zone (at least the 1/3 of the field on your side) if the ball is thrown into your area of coverage . Your responsibility continues if there is a catch and run . Watch action involving the ball if the run is in or comes into your zone. If the ball is outside or leaves your zone, watch action behind/away from the play.

**Measurements:** Locate the spot along the yard line where the clip is attached, perpendicular to the ball. This will allow the HL to quickly, easily, and accurately place the clip for measurement.

**Penalties:** On a dead ball foul, whistle the play dead immediately.

On a live ball foul, if you have thrown the flag, a double toot on the whistle only after the play is dead will call the attention of other crew members.

On any penalty where you have thrown the flag, report the penalty to the referee and, if he prefers, stay with him as he speaks to the captain regarding options. Be prepared to identify the offending player by his jersey number and color, or offense/defense. Also, know the status of the ball at the time of the penalty (i.e.- kick in the air, ball loose after fumble, before/after possession gained by defense.)

If another crew member has thrown the flag, help cover the flag and/or keep watch on other players moving them toward their side of the ball as needed. If there are multiple flags, meet with the other official(s) who threw a flag and determine if you have the same penalty, if you do, then one official report it to the Referee. If different penalties, all are reported. Make sure the crew agrees on the penalty enforcement.