

Iowa Football Mechanics – Free and Scrimmage Kicks

Iowa will be using state specific mechanics on free and scrimmage kicks which are different from what you will find in the NFHS football game officials manual. Below are the mechanics we would like you to use. The rationale for the changes on free kicks is to have the HL and LJ, who are used to trailing the play, looking for blocks in front of the runner, and spotting the ball to do that on free kick plays, just like all other scrimmage plays. We will number the players of K's team 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 from the outside in and will be officiating blocks made by those players on the kickoff. The rationale for the change on scrimmage kicks is to put the back judge in better position to see the catch/muff of the return man and then be in better position to transition to watching blocks in front of the runner.

Free kicks - Since the play clock for a free kick does not start until the Referee's ready-for-play signal and whistle, a kick should never be permitted without the proper number of players on the field for both teams.

REFEREE: Pre-Snap Positioning and Responsibilities

- a. The Referee will take a position in the middle of the field on Team R's goal line and should adjust his position between the hash marks depending on the position of the deepest receiver(s).
- b. Once all crew members are in position and have signaled they are ready, the Referee will sound his whistle and signal ready-for-play.

Play Coverage

- a. The Referee will ensure that Team K has at least four players on either side of the kicker at the time of the kick – if not, he will flag the play and shut it down immediately.
- b. If the kick will threaten the goal line, he should hold his position to make decisions on whether a touchback has occurred or whether the momentum exception should be applied on a caught or recovered ball.
- c. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Referee will wind the game clock.
- d. If the receiver advances with the ball, the Referee will continue upfield while observing blocks in front of the ball carrier and in the middle of the field until the ball reaches the R-30. As the ball carrier reaches the R-30, the Referee should move his focus to players trailing the play and continue upfield behind the deepest combination of Team R and Team K players.

UMPIRE: Pre-Snap Positioning and Responsibilities

- a. The Umpire will take his position off the field on the sideline side of the press box, straddling the extended Team R restraining line (usually the 50-yard line).
- b. The Umpire will ensure that all players and coaching personnel are clear of the restricted area. Once the correct number of players have been counted, he will raise his hand to indicate to the Referee that he is ready.
- c. The Umpire has the responsibility of Team R's restraining line, including whether the ball has reached the line before it is touched by a Team K player. He has the shared responsibility to determine whether the kicker made a popup kick and must also be aware if players from either team block before the ball has reached Team R's restraining line.

Play Coverage

- a. After the kick occurs without foul, the Umpire will direct his attention on the initial blocks made by the inside 4-5 players on his side of the field.
- b. Once the Team K players pass his position, the umpire will diagonal into the field to the hash mark moving 10 yards downfield while doing so. He should end up on the R-40 yardline.
- c. As the ball is being returned, the Umpire will observe action from the middle of the field to his hash in front of the runner. He should be especially alert to Team R players moving back toward their own goal line for possible crack back blocks.
- d. The Umpire should remain at least 20 yards in advance of the ball carrier as the play advances. He has secondary responsibility for coverage at the goal line.
- e. When the play ends, the Umpire will move to the ball and replace it with the proper ball for the next series or try.

HEAD LINE JUDGE: Pre-Snap Positioning and Responsibilities

- a. The Head Line Judge's starting position is off the field on the sideline opposite the press box, at the goal line, but he can move to the 5 or 10 yard line if the kicker doesn't normally kick the ball very deep. He should be about 10 yards behind the player who is looking to return the kick.

b. The Head Line Judge will ensure that all players and coaching personnel are clear of the restricted area. Once the correct number of players have been counted, he will raise his hand to indicate to the Referee that he is ready.

Play Coverage

a. After the kick, the Head Line Judge will direct his attention on the initial blocks made by the inside 2-3 players on his side of the field.

b. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Head Linesman will wind the game clock.

c. For returns on his half of the field, the Head Linesman is responsible for the spot for kicks out of bounds, blocks at the point of attack and forward progress all the way to the goal line.

d. For returns on the opposite side of the field, the Head Linesman is responsible for blocks in the middle of the field away from the ball.

e. When the play ends, the Head Linesman will mark forward progress on his side of the field. He will mirror the progress spot and clean up around the runner if the ball is on the opposite side of the field.

LINE JUDGE: Pre-Snap Positioning and Responsibilities

a. The Line Judge's starting position is off the field on the sideline side of the press box, at the goal line, but he can move to the 5 or 10 yard line if the kicker doesn't normally kick the ball very deep. He should be about 10 yards behind the player who is looking to return the kick.

b. The Line Judge will ensure that all players and coaching personnel are clear of the restricted area. Once the correct number of players have been counted, he will raise his hand to indicate to the Referee that he is ready.

Play Coverage

a. After the kick, the Line Judge will direct his attention on the initial blocks made by the inside 2-3 players on his side of the field.

b. If the ball is touched by a Team R player in his primary coverage area, the Line Judge will wind the game clock.

c. For returns on his half of the field, the Line Judge is responsible for the spot for kicks out of bounds, blocks at the point of attack and forward progress all the way to the goal line.

d. For returns on the opposite side of the field, the Line Judge is responsible for blocks in the middle of the field away from the ball.

e. When the play ends, the Line Judge will mark forward progress on his side of the field. He will mirror the progress spot and clean up around the runner if the ball is on the opposite side of the field.

BACK JUDGE: Pre-Snap Positioning and Responsibilities

a. The Back Judge will start in the middle of the field with the kicker. He'll then hand the ball to the kicker and give him instructions to raise his hand when he's ready and look to the Referee for the ready-for-play whistle and signal.

b. From his position in the middle of the field, the Back Judge will count the Team K players and then move to his position off the field opposite the press box sideline straddling the extended Team K restraining line (usually the 40-yard line). After reaching his position, the Back Judge will raise his hand to indicate to the Referee that he is ready.

c. The Back Judge has the responsibility of Team K's restraining line, including whether any Team K player has encroached the line before the ball has been kicked. He has the shared responsibility to determine whether the kicker made a pop-up kick and must be aware if players from either team block before the ball has reached Team R's restraining line. He should also be alert as to whether the kicker is blocked before he advances five yards downfield.

Play Coverage

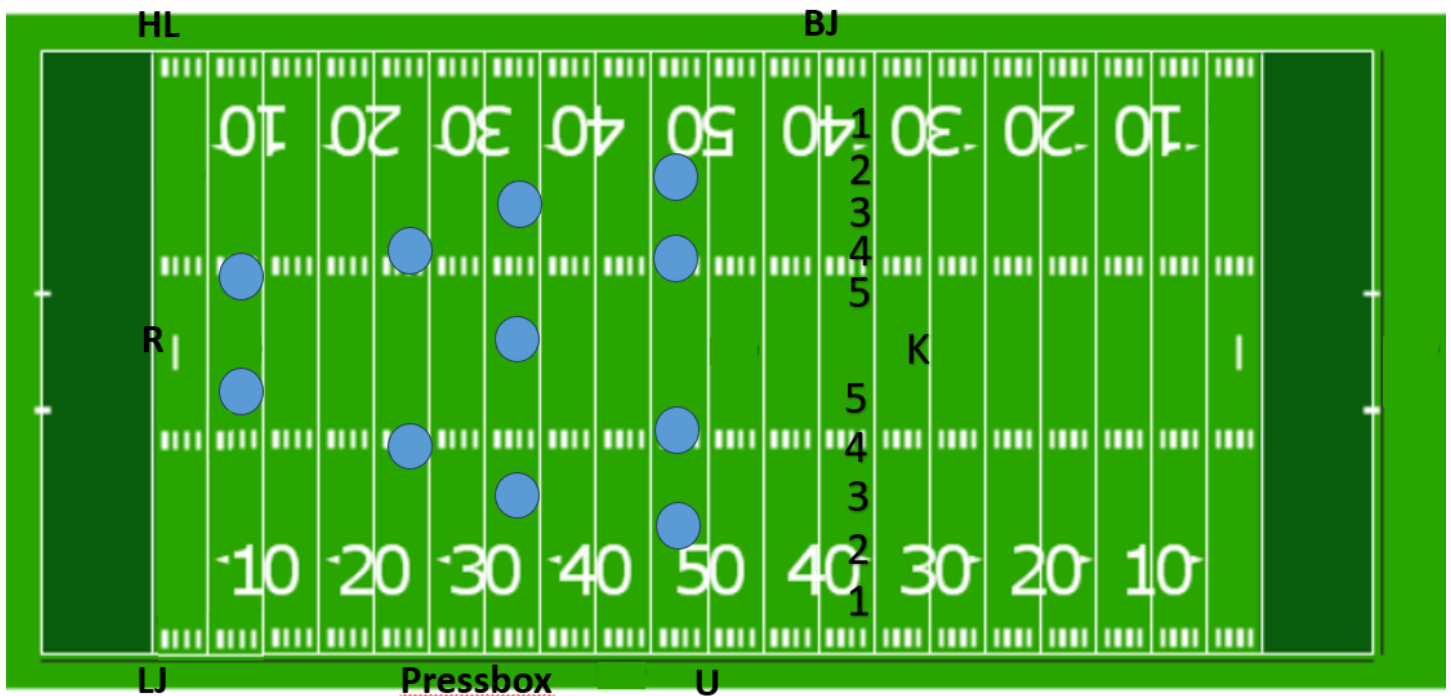
a. After the kick occurs without foul, the Back Judge will direct his attention on the initial blocks made by the inside 4-5 players on his side of the field.

b. Once it has been seen that a deep kick has been made, the Back Judge will diagonal into the field to the hash mark moving 10 yards downfield while doing so. He should end up on the 50 yardline.

c. As the ball is being returned, the Back Judge will observe action in the middle of the field in front of the runner. He should be especially alert to Team R players moving back toward their own goal line for potential blind side blocks. The Back Judge should remain at least 20 yards in advance of the ball carrier as the play advances. He has the primary responsibility for coverage at the goal line and should be straddling the goal line in advance of the runner crossing it.

d. If the play ends at the goal line, the Back Judge will rule on forward progress.

f. When the play ends prior to reaching the goal line, the Back Judge may assist with retrieving the proper ball to be put in play for the new series or try.



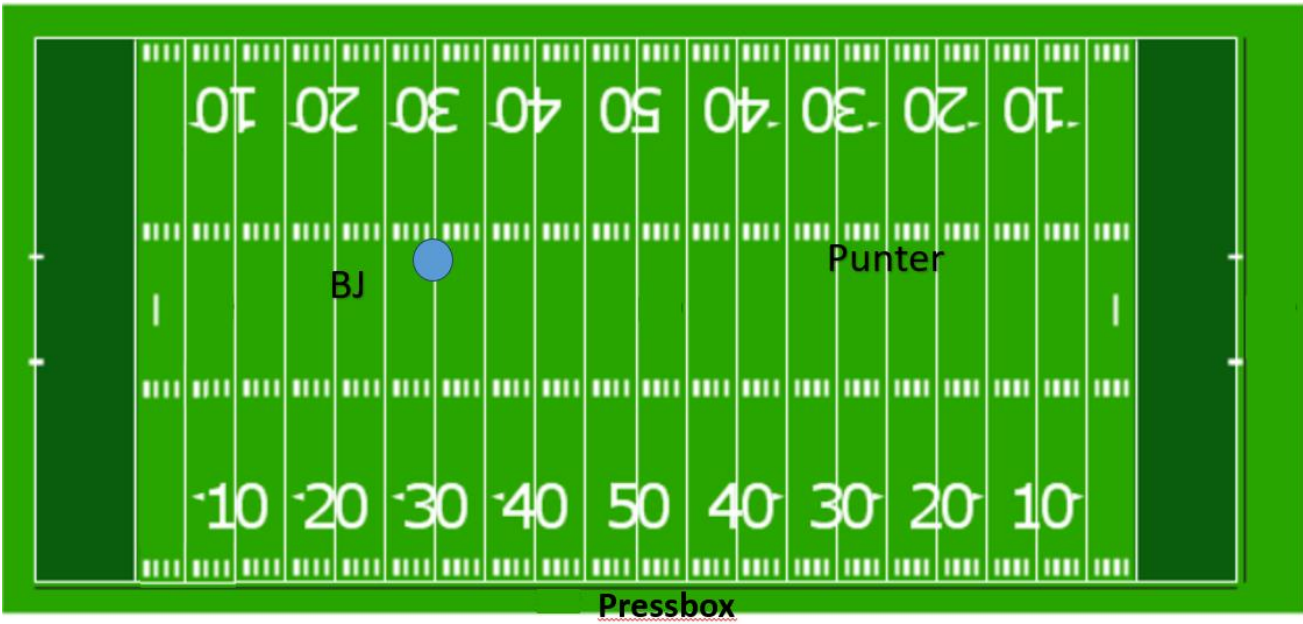
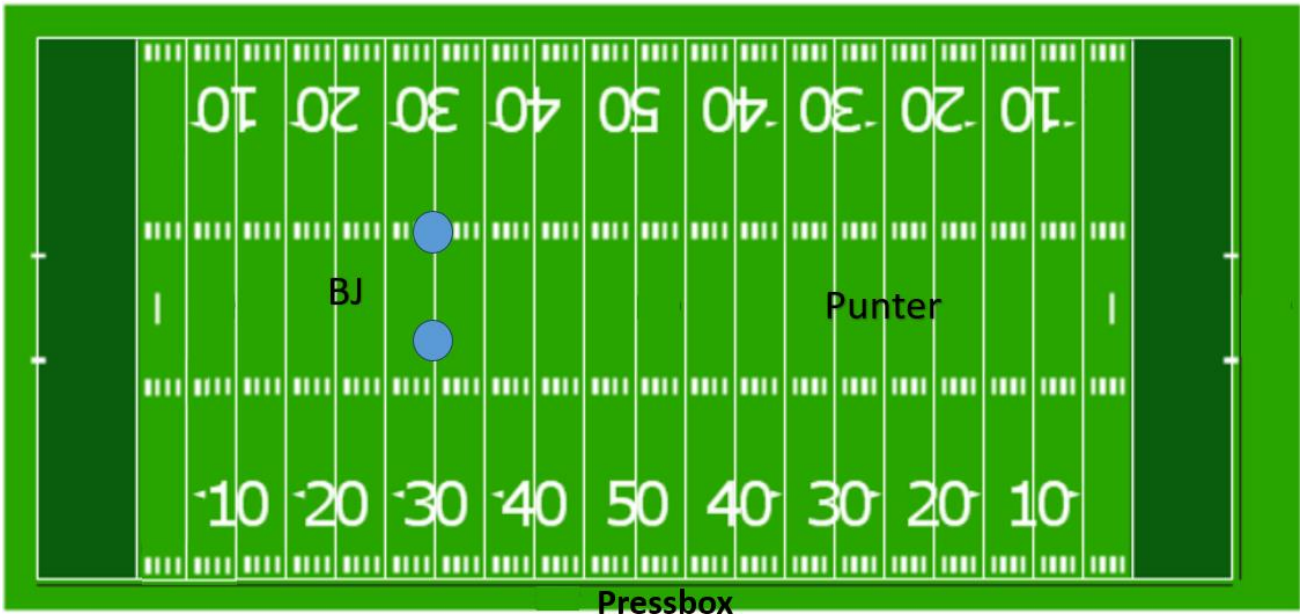
Scrimmage kicks:

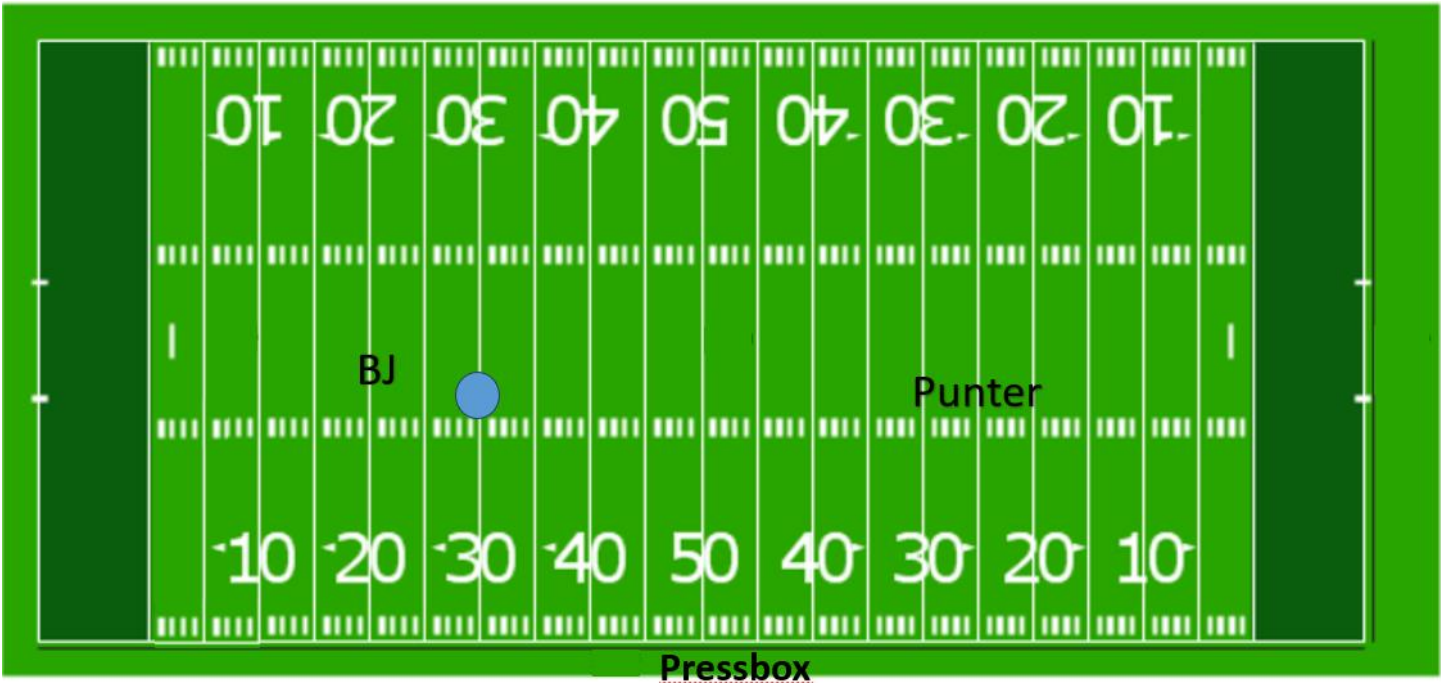
BACK JUDGE: Pre-Snap Positioning and Responsibilities

- If there is one return man, the Back Judge will start 7 yards behind the return man and just off his shoulder on the wide side of the field. He should never start outside the hash, even if the one return man is outside the hash.
- If there are two returners, the Back Judge will split the two returners and be 7 yards behind them.

Play Coverage

- Off the foot, the Back Judge will determine the depth and direction of the kick and then concentrate on the receiver(s). If the kick will threaten the goal line, the Back Judge shall retreat to the goal line and stay there to see if the ball breaks the plane, resulting in a touch back. He should be alert for a legal or illegal fair catch signal.
- As the return man moves to catch the kick, the Back Judge should move opposite the return man and try and be 7 yards behind and 7 yards to the side of the return man as he attempts to catch the ball. He must see if the return man touches the ball if he attempts to catch it.
- The Back Judge should use good timing before blowing the play dead on a fair catch. He should always anticipate the ball will be muffed, and must make sure the ball is caught before sounding his whistle.
- If the Back Judge recognizes that the kick will land behind the receiver, he will retreat backwards to keep the ball in front of him. He must be at the goal line if the kick threatens it.
- The Back Judge will mark the end of the kick with his bean bag.
- If the kick is returned, the Back Judge will follow behind the runner, being responsible for blocks in front of the runner.
- Following the conclusion of the play, the Back Judge will help clean up behind the end of the play, and will assist with getting a new ball spotted if a change of possession occurs.





Pressbox