



Running Game Advanced Positioning & Coverage for Referees

Fort Worth Football Officials


Option Play – Phase 1: Snap & Mesh Point



R
Watch QB
Mesh



Option Play – Phase 2: QB Reads End



R
QB Read
No Foul

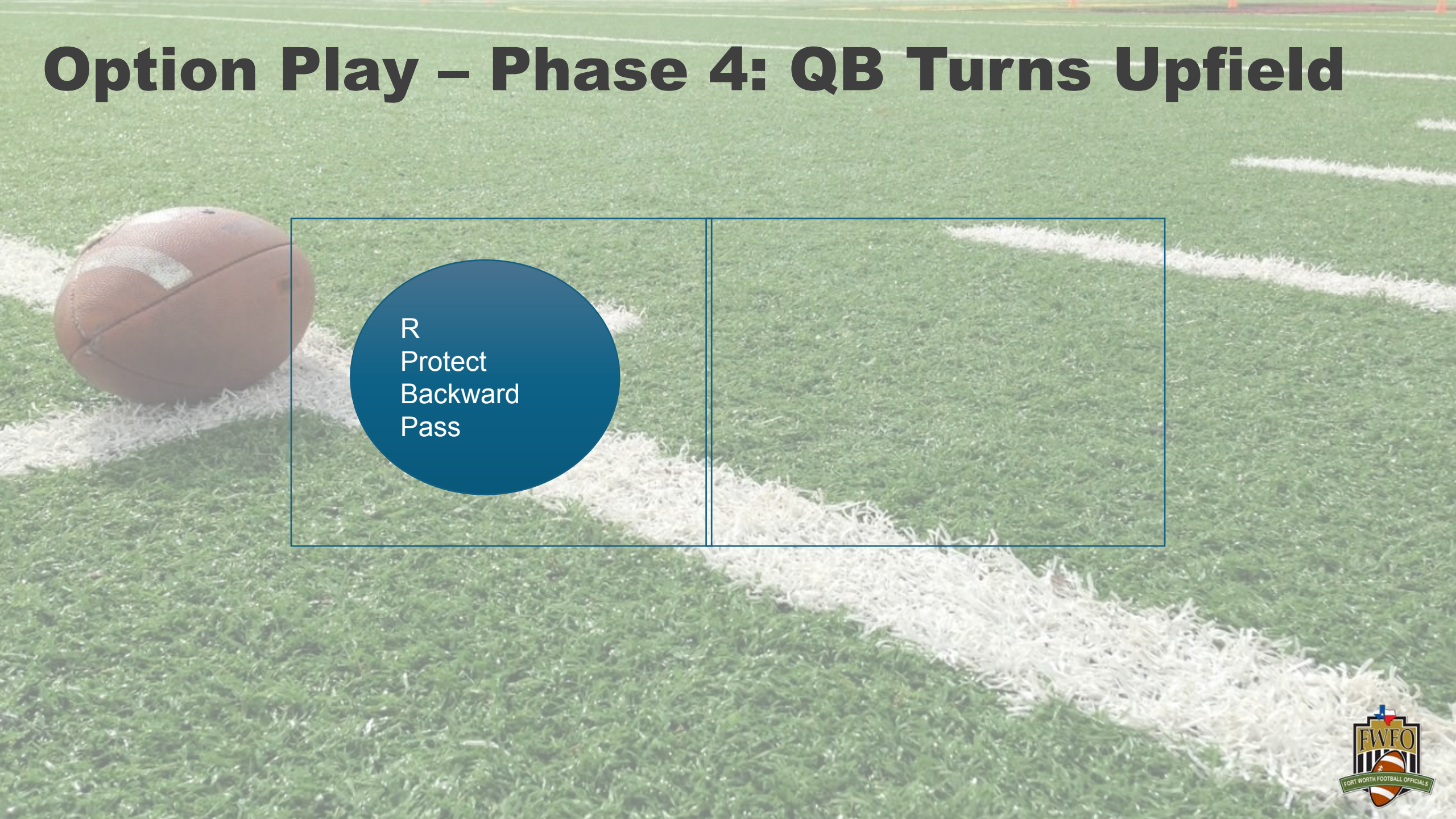
Option Play – Phase 3: Pitch Relationship



R
Trail
Cover
Behind

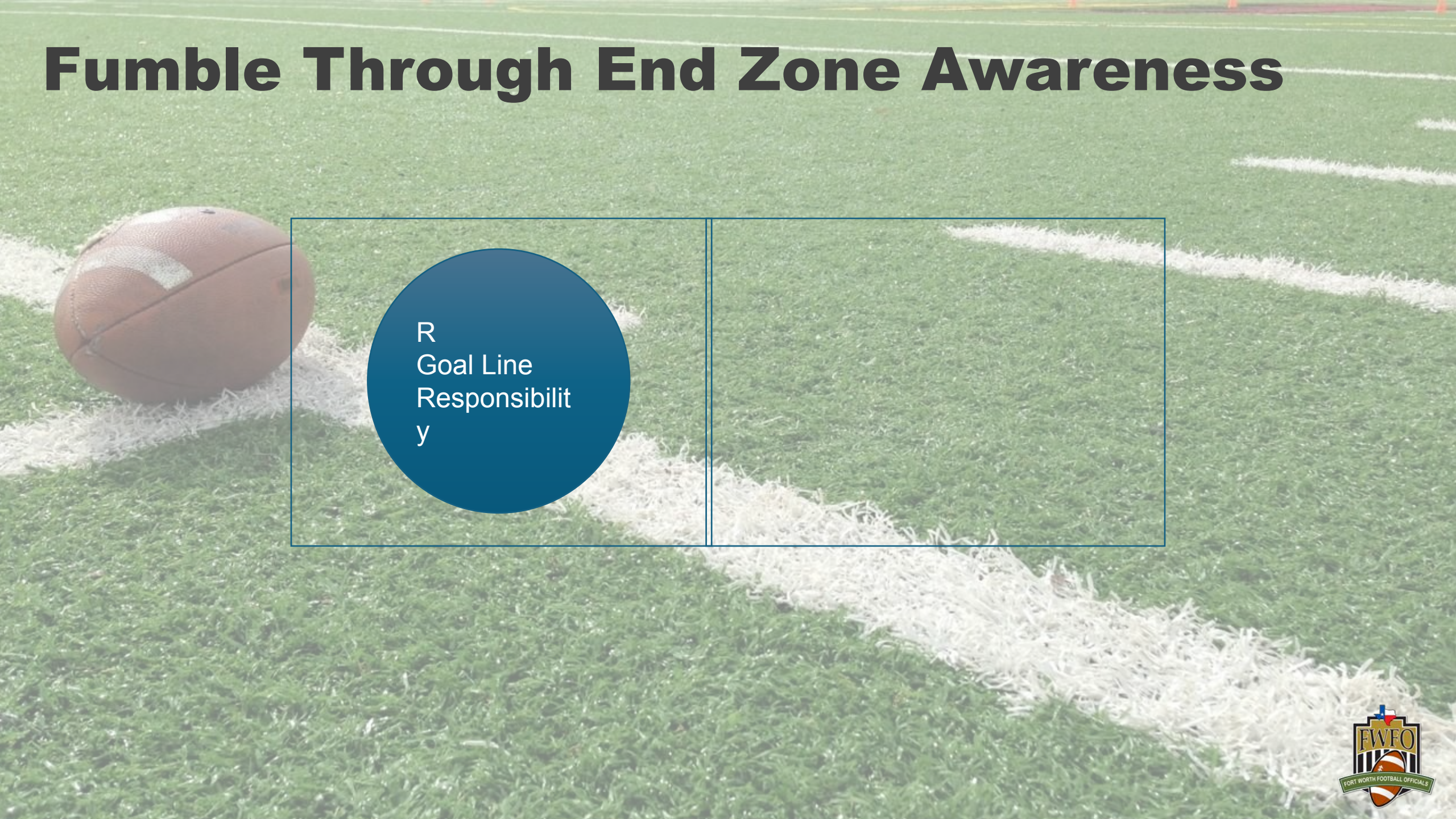


Option Play – Phase 4: QB Turns Upfield

A photograph of a football field with a football on the left. A blue circle with white text is overlaid on the field. The text reads: R, Protect, Backward, Pass.

R
Protect
Backward
Pass

Fumble Through End Zone Awareness



R
Goal Line
Responsibilit
y

5-Person Crew Mechanics (Running Game)

- Greater backside responsibility
 - ✓ Referee trails deeper into play
 - ✓ More communication with HL/LJ
 - ✓ Increased coverage on QB action

7-Person Crew Mechanics (Running Game)

- Side Judge / Field Judge assist deep coverage
 - ✓ Referee focuses tighter on QB & tackle box
 - ✓ Less sideline progression responsibility
 - ✓ Cleaner backside & goal line support



5 vs 7 Crew – Key Differences

- Depth of trail responsibility differs
 - ✓ Backside pressure awareness increases in 5-man
 - ✓ Goal line support stronger in 7-man
 - ✓ Communication more critical in 5-man crews

Pre-Snap - Lets work this play right

Location: Position 12-15 yards deep, roughly 10 yards to the right or left of the ball, typically on the wide side of the field.

Angle: Line up wider than the tight end or tackle to ensure a clear view of the entire backfield and to allow for retreating if the play moves deep.

Responsibility: Confirm the offensive count with the umpire.

Coverage Progression – Step 1

- Snap Read tackle on your side
 - ✓ Confirm Legal Block
 - ✓ Eyes immediately to QB mesh point



Coverage Progression – Step 2

- QB hands off → Shift to runner behind LOS
 - ✓ Watch for holding / illegal block
 - ✓ Maintain depth & wide cushion

Coverage Progression – Step 3

- Runner crosses NZ → Trail play
 - ✓ Protect against late hits
 - ✓ Observe backside action

Coverage Progression – Step 4 Dead Ball

- Forward progress established
 - ✓ Assist in pile if needed
 - ✓ Communicate spot with L & H
 - ✓ Signal next down / direction on recovery



A photograph of a green football field with white yard lines. A brown football is positioned on the left side of the frame, resting on a white yard line. The field extends into the background under bright lighting.

Running Game Mechanics Focus for Umpires

Pre-Snap

- **Cover the ball** to prevent a snap prior to the ball being ready for play.
- **Ensure Team B** has the opportunity to **adjust to a substitution** by the offense.
- **Count Team A**, signaling R with 11 or less.
- **Ensure five linemen numbered 50-79** are present and on the LOS,
 - (Exception: for Scrimmage Kick Formation).

Pre Snap-Continued

After ensuring five linemen numbered 50-79 are present and, on the LOS with or without Exception:

- **Identify formation and strengths**, lining up in a position to see the snap.
- **Take a position 5 to 10 yards from the ball**, clear of Team B players,
 - And in a **position to see the ball** at the snap.

Pre Snap, continued

- **When the offensive team is attempting to run a hurry-up play, after the ball is spotted,**
 - **U will inform both teams simultaneously that the ball may not be snapped until the whistle is sounded**
OR
 - **the U advises the offense that play can begin.**
- **U will stand over the ball until R has backed away from the neutral zone and then indicates for the U to back out of the way.**
- **As soon U is clear of the neutral zone and in position to officiate, R will declare the ball ready for play (or wind the clock) and**
- **R simultaneously sound his whistle OR the U will advise the offense play can begin.**

Pre Snap-Continued

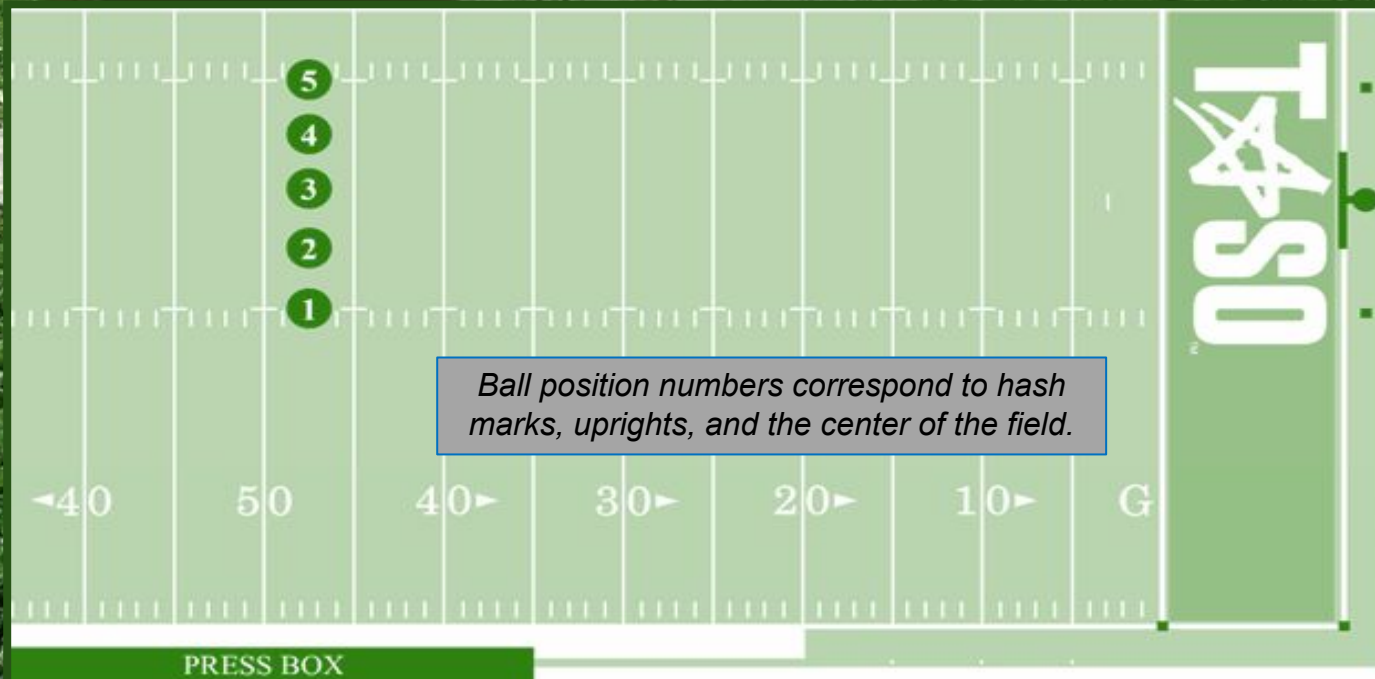
- **If R omits ready signal when needed to make the ball ready for play, U should remind him immediately.**
- **Keep R informed of the time remaining in each period.**
- **Either official or R will sound the whistle if time expires before the snap**

OR

- **Advise R at the end of the down if time expired while the ball was in play.**

Ball Placement

When communicating with crewmates, relaying ball position by number, 1 through 5, is easily understandable and consistent across all levels of games.



- 1) Hash closest to the press box.
- 2) Upright closest to the press box.
- 3) Center of the field.
- 4) Upright farthest from the press box.
- 5) Hash farthest from the press box.

Where to Stand

- **Vary positioning according to the formations of both teams**
 - **Avoiding positions that will interfere with linebackers.**
- **Adjust distance behind the defensive line according to the width of Team A's formation, and**
 - **(except on goal line or Try situations) be at least 5, but no more than 10 yards deep.**
- **Whenever possible, coordinate your position with the R for best coverage of the interior line play.**
 - **Usually this means the U will be on the opposite side of the formation from the R.**
- **Be aware of wingback's alignment on the side opposite referee.**

Where to Stand

(While being aware of wingback's alignment on the side opposite referee)

- **Signal wing official** if appropriate.
 - Read the offensive alignment and know **the five ineligible**
 - Make sure there are at **least five linemen numbered 50-79**
 - Ensure **you have a clear view of the snap.**
- **Count Team A** and give the appropriate **signal to the R.**
- **Rule on illegal movement** by restricted linemen prior to the snap.
Be certain that the defensive team does not use words or signals to disconcert opponents.



“Keys”

- **Read the point of attack** and the action on or by the interior linemen.
- **Key the snapper and two guards.**
- **Observe continuing action** on the *backside of the runner*.
- *On a sweep, open to the point of attack gaining depth as needed while watching the backside.*
- **Observe action** in the side zone, especially between inbounds lines and 9-yard marks.

“Keys”

The action has been observed:

- After the ball becomes dead (and there is not a threat of dead ball action), **hustle to the ball and assist in placing the ball** in accord with the forward progress designated by the sideline official.
- **Remember that inbounds lines are not walls; move into side zone as needed.**

Points to Live By

1. Stay focused
2. Don't watch the ball
3. You have cleaned up behind the play
4. Rotate with the action but watch cross traffic

**You're in the cross hairs most plays.
STAY ALERT !!**



A photograph of a football field with a brown football on the left side. The field is green with white yard lines. A dark, rounded rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text.

Running Game H & L Standard

Responsibilities

**Observe illegal shifts and motion by flanker.
Take action toward the ball with wingbacks that
are aligned just outside the tackle on your side.
Watch for offside by the defense and
encroachment or false start by the offense.**

Responsibilities, continued

Observe initial action on or by interior lineman nearest you and action on or by the offensive player who is your designated responsibility. Observe blocking in front of the runner behind the line of scrimmage or in the neutral zone. Mark forward progress on straight hand-offs and runs to your side.

Responsibilities, continued

Observe action on the player(s) in a position to receive a backward pass when the ball is behind the neutral zone. Take the player in position to receive a backward pass (trailing back), loose ball and the trailing back as they become the ball carrier on play action toward your side. Take the ball carrier in your side zone as far as possible, then release and cover action behind the runner all the way to the 2-yard line. F and S have forward progress from B's 2-yard line to the goal line.

Responsibilities, continued

Make certain you “square off” your spots. Mark forward progress and the out of bounds spot on your side when within your area of responsibility. When the flow of play is away from your position, move cautiously toward the flow and clean up action behind the R and U, giving special attention to late action on the QB after a backward pass is thrown. Always keep players boxed in.

A photograph of a green football field with white yard lines. A brown football is on the left side of the frame. A dark grey rounded rectangle is overlaid in the center, containing white text.

Running Game

Mechanics Focus for Deep Officials

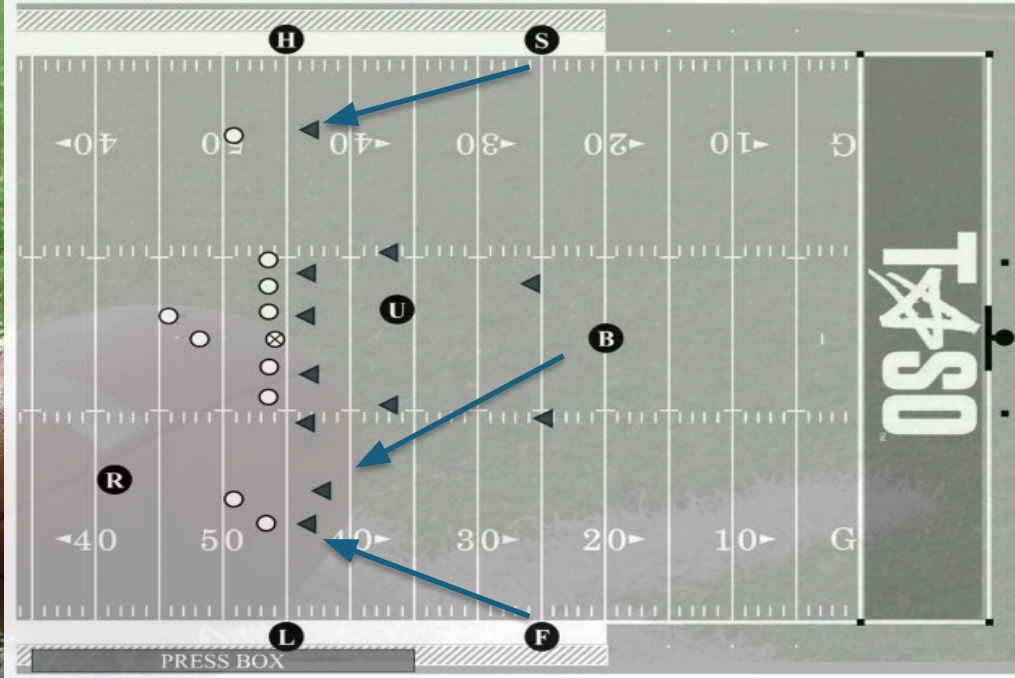
Side Judge – S • Field Judge – F • Back Judge – B



Pre-Snap Responsibilities

- Count players & signal (i.e. thumbs up)
- Identify strength of formation & eligible receivers
- Look for substitutions & appropriately signal (T + Fists)
- Watch for “hideout plays” (S&F)
- Down, distance, & clock status awareness
- Know goal line responsibility (inside 25 yard line)
- B – Identify which RB are in the tackle box for BBW Eligibility

SECTION 12. PLAYS FROM SCRIMMAGE



Initial “Keys” (Area of Responsibilities)

- Identify your key by position (S, F, B)
- Identify coverage - Press coverage or off the ball?
 - ✓ If DB is in press coverage, watch your key at the snap
 - ✓ If DB coverage is off the ball, look for pass/run indicators from tackle at the snap
 - ❖ Low hat = Run | High hat = Pass
 - ❖ Fires off = run | Stands Up / steps back = Pass
 - ❖ Understand potential for screen pass

Inside Run Mechanics

(Deep Officials: **S**, **F**, **B**)

Read through key before moving. B – wait till ball leaves tackle box

Maintain depth advantage

Officiate second-level blocks (holding, low blocks, crack-back)

Prepare for RB cutback

Protect the goal line on long breakaway runs

Outside Run Mechanics

(Deep Officials: S&F)

S & F: Here comes the ball - Toward You!

Officiate blocks ahead of runner (holding, BBW, crack-back blocks)

Maintain 15-20 yard separation from H & L

Assist when play ends out of bounds (Crash to the area)

Protect the goal line to rule on long breakaway runs

STOP the clock when appropriate. Give clear signal

S & F: Play is Away from You, but don't take the play off!

Trail and Observe backside action – Blindside and Late Hits. **Know status of Clock**



Outside Run Mechanics (Deep Officials: **B**)

Back Judge: Here comes the ball

Move laterally and observe action in front of the runner (BBW, Holding, Crack-Back)

Drift towards sideline if play develops outside

Keep runner bracketed between you and F & S

Guard the goal line! (Be the Deepest)

Assist with stopping the clock

Know status of clock when play is dead

Run Play – Goal Line

S / F: LOS is 25 – 7 yard line

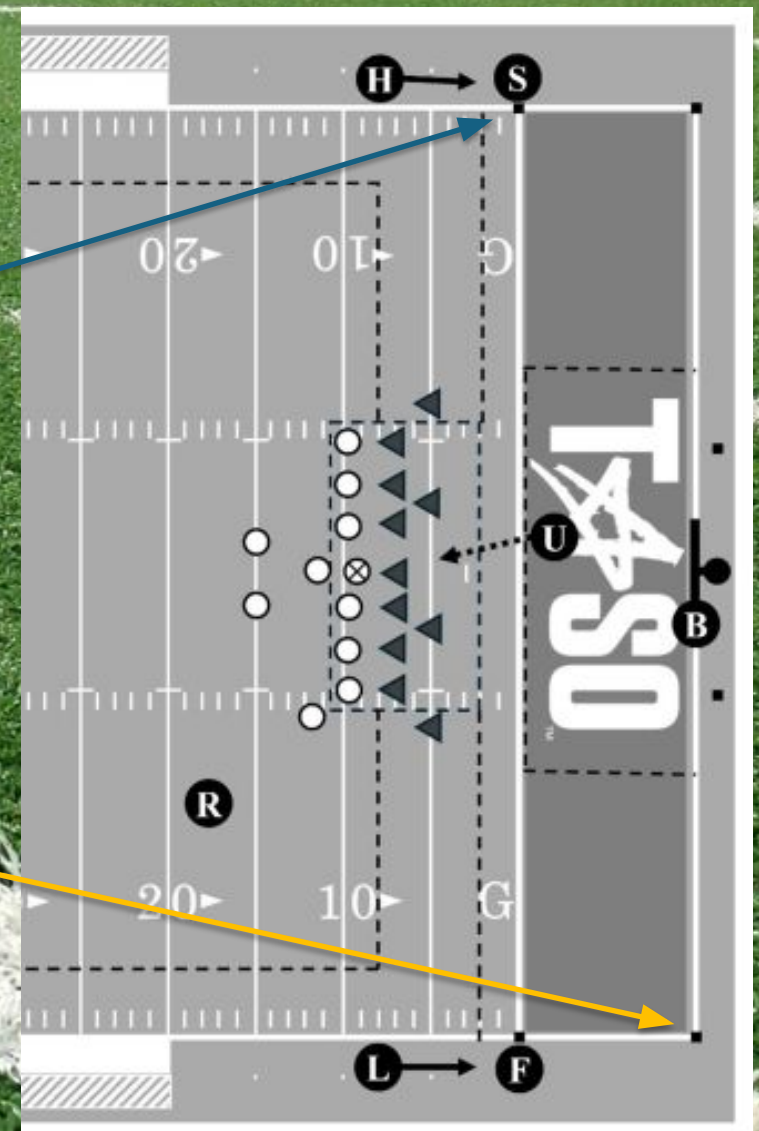
- **Goal Line Pylon**, a few steps off the sideline. 6 ft? 10 ft?

S / F: LOS inside the 7 yard line

- **End Line Pylon**

Back Judge Responsibility:

- Goal Line if LOS outside 20 yard line
- End Line if LOS inside 20 yard line



Run Play – Goal Line (ALL Deep Officials)

See the ball break the plane of goal line

Check with other officials before TD Signal
(One Signal!)

Follow player's actions after score

Signal TD – **AND** turn and to watch
continued action (i.e. taunting, late hits, etc.)



Run Play Mechanics

Fort Worth Football Officials

Crew Mechanics & Enforcement Training

One Crew. One Standard!

Deep Officials
Side Judge – S
Field Judge – F
Back Judge – B

Presenter:
Mike Browning





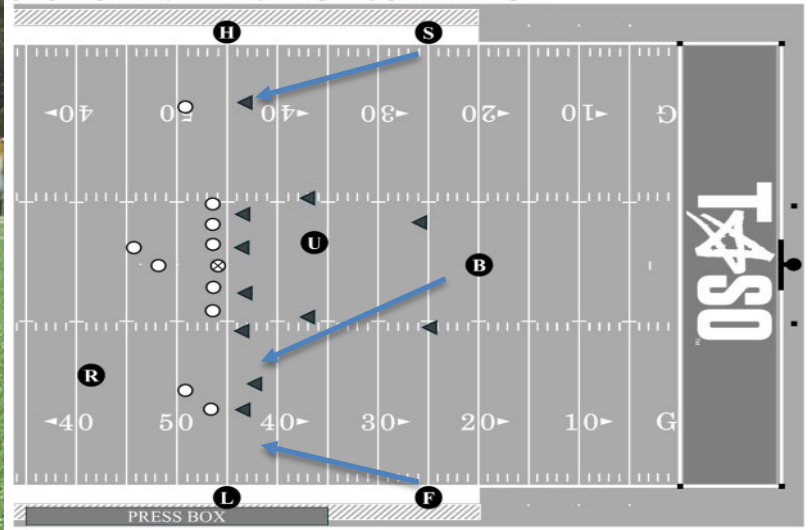
Run Play Pre-Snap Responsibilities

DEEP OFFICIALS

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Run Play
Initial 'Key'
(Area of Responsibility)

DEEP OFFICIALS

- Identify your key by position (S, F, B)
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- ❖ Understand potential for screen pass





DEEP OFFICIALS (S, F, B) Inside Run Mechanics

Read through key before moving. B – wait till ball leaves tackle box

Maintain depth advantage

Officiate second-level blocks (holding, low blocks, crack-back)

Prepare for RB cutback

Protect the goal line on long breakaway runs





DEEP OFFICIALS: S & F Outside Run Mechanics

S & F: Here comes the ball - Toward You!

Officiate blocks ahead of runner (holding, BBW, crack-back blocks)

Maintain 15-20 yard separation from H & L

Assist when play ends out of bounds (Crash to the area)

Protect the goal line to rule on long breakaway runs

STOP the clock when appropriate. Give clear signal

S & F: Play is Away from You, but don't take the play off!

Trail and Observe backside action – Blindside and Late Hits. **Know status of Clock**



DEEP OFFICIALS: Back Judge Run Mechanics

Back Judge: Here comes the ball

Move laterally and observe action in front of the runner (BBW, Holding, Crack-Back)

Drift towards sideline if play develops outside

Keep runner bracketed between you and F & S

Guard the goal line! (Be the Deepest)

Assist with stopping the clock

Know status of clock when play is dead



VIDEO – RUN PLAY MECHANICS



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PLAY# 9

Can I beat RB to goal line?

MUSD



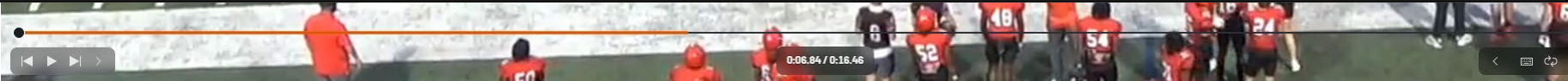
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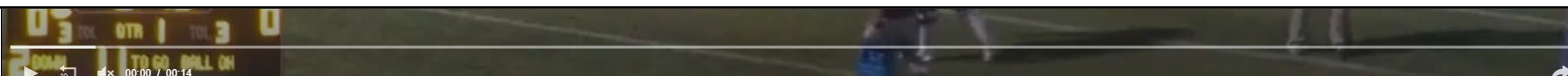


- Video of Sideline Mechanics for out of bounds running play





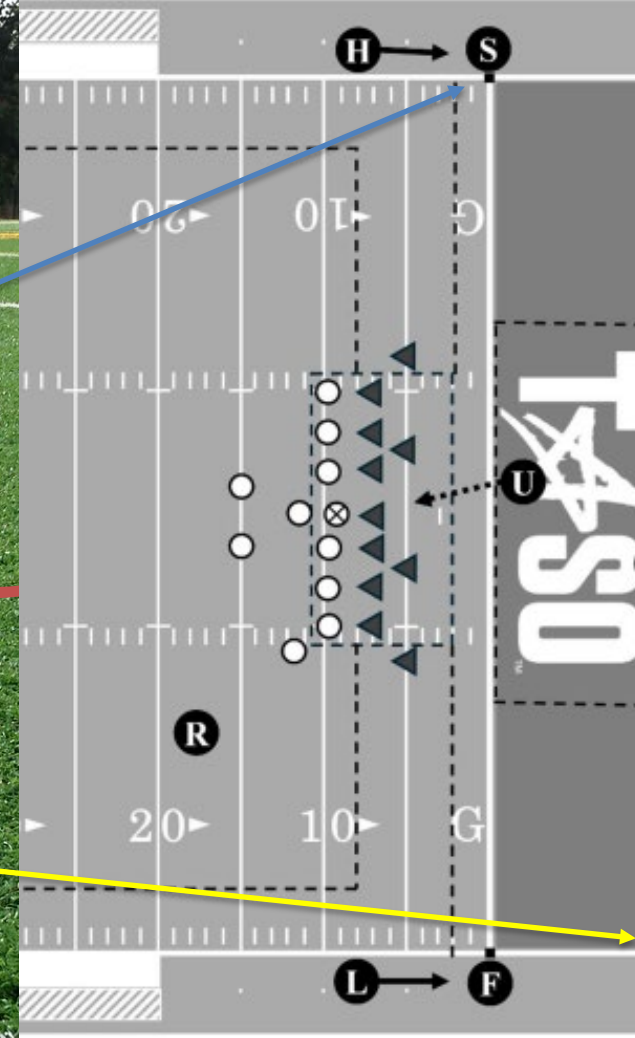
- Video of Backside Officiating Mechanics



Run Play GOAL LINE

DEEP OFFICIALS

- **S / F:** LOS is 25 – 7 Yard line
 - Goal Line Pylon, a few steps off the sideline. 6 Ft? 10 ft?
- **S / F:** LOS inside the 7 Yard line
 - End Line Pylon
- **Back Judge Responsibility:**
 - Goal Line if LOS outside 20 yard line
 - End Line if LOS inside 20 yard line



Run Play GOAL LINE

ALL DEEP OFFICIALS

See the ball break the plane of goal line

Check with other officials before TD Signal
(One Signal!)

Follow player's actions after score

Signal TD – **AND** turn and to watch continued
action (i.e. taunting, late hits, etc.)





- Video of Goal Line Mechanics – run play.
- Check with sideline official





Common DEEP Errors

✓ BALL WATCHING

✓ LOSING KEY TOO SOON

✓ TOO SHALLOW
TOO EARLY

✓ POOR SIDELINE
ANGLE

✓ FAILING TO
OFFICIATE BLOCKS

“Officiate space, not just the football.”