

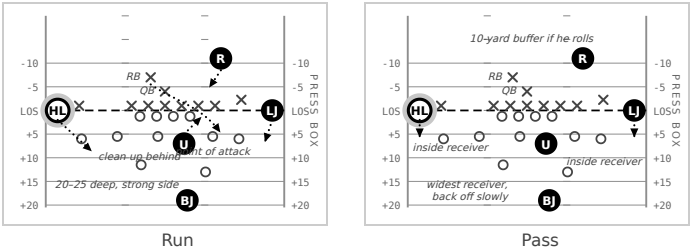
Head Line Judge Position Card

Your spot, your keys and your reads, situation by situation — the Head Line Judge's card for a crew of five. You work the sideline opposite the press box. You are the white marker on every diagram.

Associations amend these — check Vermont's guidance before teaching it.

RUN AND PASS

Snap between the -10 and the +10.



WHAT YOU DO

- Straddling the line of scrimmage, **on the sideline** — the manual strongly encourages working the sideline. Come off it once the play develops, but no further in than the numbers.
- Know the line to gain before the snap. Count the players on the line on your side of centre and signal the Line Judge.
- Show A where the line is with your backfield foot, then set your feet parallel and stand up straight.
- Motion on your side of centre is yours, and so is getting substitutes off on your sideline.

YOUR KEYS

- Run — snap · line play · blocks downfield · the runner.
- Pass — snap · player(s) · QB · zone · ball. Strong side: the inside receiver is yours. Weak side: the end nearest you. Never the Back Judge's key.
- Read the guard and tackle first: do they stand up? Then read the quarterback's eyes.
- The sideline is yours, goal line to goal line.

THE THREE PASS READS, IN ORDER

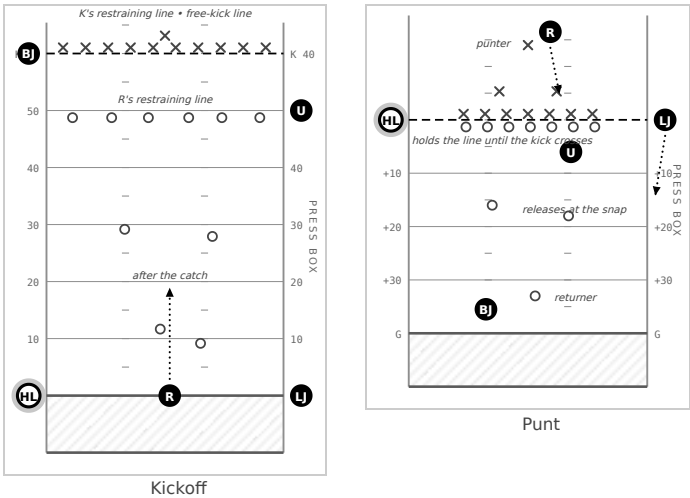
- Flat / bubble** — Stay home. Be ready to open the door if the runner comes at you. Don't move until this read is done.
- Short / medium** — Move downfield five, shoulders parallel, then stop. Over 75% of passes go 15 yards or less.
- Long** — Turn and burn. Read the receiver running hard or the stop-and-go.

ON A RUN

Point of attack	Line play there, and receivers ahead of it.
Crossing over	Runner to the far side zone: come in to the near hash at 45° and clean up behind the Umpire.
Progress	Downfield foot in front, square off, no angling in.
Never	Hug the sideline all night. Get off it without running through players.

KICKS

Free kick and scrimmage kick.



WHAT YOU DO

- Kickoff: R's goal line extended on your sideline — the same yard line as the Line Judge. Move up together if that team's first kick fell short, and stay deeper than the deepest receiver.
- Stay on the sideline until the kick ends, and watch for a fair catch signal.
- Trail the runner by at least five yards and watch the blocks. Do not hurry to the dead-ball spot.
- Punt: **hold the line until the kick crosses the neutral zone** — you rule whether it crossed, and you have the fake. Your sideline is yours end line to end line.

YOUR KEYS

- Kickoff — R touching the kick · wind · K out of bounds · blocks immediately ahead of the returner.
- Punt — snap · the kicker's catch · line play · the wide out.
- Wind the clock only if the kick is caught or touched in your side zone.
- Snap over the punter's head: move into the backfield and help the Referee.

YOUR SPOT

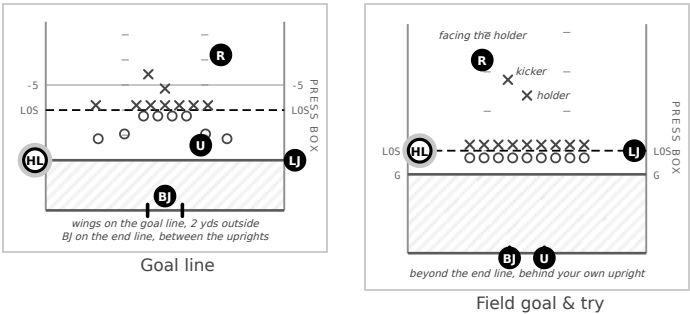
Kickoff	R's goal line extended, your sideline — same yard line as the Line Judge.
Onside	R's free-kick line (the 50), your sideline. Bag in hand, line as a plane.
Punt	Your sideline at the line — hold it until the kick crosses the neutral zone . You rule whether it crossed.
Short kick	Starting at the 10 and it goes toward the goal line? Hustle back outside the pylon.

AFTER THE PUNT

30 yards or less	Jog downfield 10, then stop and watch.
More than 30	Jog downfield 15 to 20, watching both teams.
Out of bounds	Jog beyond the spot, turn with your arm up, walk slowly back, wait for the Referee to chop.
Never	Overrun the play. Blocks ahead of the returner matter more.

GOAL LINE AND PLACE KICKS

Snap on or inside the +10 · tee on the field.



WHAT YOU DO

- Goal line: two yards outside the sideline, on the goal line extended. You must be standing on the goal line before the ball gets there.
- From the +10 to the +5, start moving at the snap. From the +5 in, hustle straight there, two yards outside the pylon.
- Runner dives at the pylon: back out so you can see the whole play. Never mirror a touchdown signal.
- Field goal and try: straddle the line of scrimmage. You rule whether the kick crossed the neutral zone.

YOUR KEYS

- Place kick — snap · fake · the near tight end or wingback block.
- Know it's a touchdown, run in on the goal line. Not sure, run in short of it and find the ball first.
- Make eye contact before signalling. If anyone has an incomplete pass, that comes out immediately.
- Fake on a try short of the goal line: mark forward progress only.

YOUR SPOT

Goal line	2 yds outside the sideline, on the goal line.
FG / try	Straddling the line of scrimmage.
Fake	Move immediately to the goal line, 2 yds outside the pylon.

SELLING IT

Be patient	Find the ball first. Better late and right.
Signal	Stop at the goal line, signal, pivot 90° and follow the runner.
Long FG	Move downfield when it's kicked. Short and made: hustle in toward the linemen.
Backside	Runner goes to the far pylon — pinch in.

BETWEEN DOWNS, CLOCK AND FOULS

Every down, all night.

WHAT YOU DO

- Do not look over your shoulder on a close first down. Hold your spot and let the Line Judge rule it.
- Never spot the ball in the side zone. Mark it with your downfield foot and hold it for the Umpire.
- Runner out of bounds: stop the clock twice immediately, then turn and watch. Swivel and watch them come back in.
- You work with the chain crew. The Umpire walks off the penalty; you walk it on the sideline with him while the Line Judge holds the enforcement spot.

YOUR KEYS

- Wind twice when the spot is inbounds between the numbers and the sideline, first down or not. No stop signal after the wind unless local custom asks for it.
- Close to a first: sprint in until you meet resistance. Whoever can see leather yells for the ball.
- Cross-field help: move into the field toward the hash so your partner can actually see you.
- Hat, not flag, when an A or K player goes out of bounds on his own.

FOULS

Walk-off	The Umpire walks it; you mirror on the sideline. Tell the head coach the down and distance both ways.
Chain	Five-yard walk-off near a first down: check the tape.

Sidelines	Yours in a fight. Keep non-players off the field.
Spot foul	Cover it.
HOUSEKEEPING	
Out of timeouts	Tell the head coach.
Substitutes	Off the field on your sideline before the snap.
Line to gain	Point it out to the Line Judge on third and fourth down.
5 yards or less	Move to the line to gain at the snap, like goal line mechanics.

WHEN YOU WORK A CREW OF 4

What changes for you.

1. **Kickoff:** you're on K's free-kick line, moving toward the middle once the players are on. You hand the kicker the ball — not before K has 11 — and you have nobody but the kicker more than 5 yards off that line.
2. **Pass:** every receiver on your side is yours, and the middle of the field is dual coverage with the Line Judge. Talk across before the snap.
3. **Goal line:** step into the end zone to see a catch near the end line. There is no Back Judge on it.
4. **Field goal and try:** you stay on the line, not closer than 9 yds outside the widest A player, and you have roughing the holder and kicker. The Line Judge rules the kick.
5. **Run:** you get downfield blocks on your half with nobody behind you. Stay wider and longer before coming in to clean up.

Reflects the 2026 NFHS rules year. Built from the 2026 and 2027 NFHS Football Game Officials Manual — §1.3 Flags and Penalties (pp. 20-22), §1.6 Line-to-Gain Crew (p. 25), §4.6 Measurements (pp. 130-135), §4.7 Positioning (pp. 136-141) and §4.8 Coverage (pp. 142-150). Last checked September 2, 2026. Confirm with the association before relying on this.