

ILLINOIS GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL

GFF Flag Football Crew Mechanics

3-Person & 4-Person Officiating Systems



IHSA SANCTIONED



NFHS RULES



Rules vs. Mechanics

WHERE CREW SIZE AND POSITION TITLES ACTUALLY COME FROM

1

NO MANDATED CREW SIZE

NFHS does not require one universal crew size. Rule 1-1-4 Note and Table 1-7 leave the number of game officials to each state association.

2

THE STATE DECIDES

IHSA and local adoption determine whether we work a 3-person or a 4-person crew. Our job is to know the mechanics for the crew we are assigned.

3

“THE REFEREE”

The one title NFHS does name — crew chief with final authority on rulings, the pregame coin toss, and coach conferences.

4

“GAME OFFICIALS”

The general term NFHS uses for the rest of the crew — deliberately broad so it fits any state-approved crew size.

5

WHAT NFHS DOES NOT DO

It does not define Side Judge, Back Judge, or Field Judge, and it does not assign keys, zones, or coverage responsibilities.

6

MECHANICS MANUAL

Positions, keys, zones, and coverage come from the mechanics manual — not the rulebook.



Quick Reference — Pre-Snap Alignment

3 & 4-PERSON AT A GLANCE

3-PERSON CREW

R

REFEREE

7 yds deep 7 yds wide Behind offense Opposite SJ **Play Clock**

SJ

SIDE JUDGE

Press box side On LOS **Down Box**

BJ

BACK JUDGE

On LOS Far sideline **Game Clock**

4-PERSON CREW

R

REFEREE

7x7 Same side as FJ **Play Clock** **QB Coverage**

SJ

SIDE JUDGE

Press box side On LOS **Down Box**

FJ

FIELD JUDGE

On LOS Far sideline Mirrors SJ **Line to Gain**

BJ

BACK JUDGE

Behind the Defense Middle of Field **Game Clock**

BOX IN
ALWAYS

2+
ANGLES MIN



3-Person Crew — Field Positions

MIRRORED WINGS · PRE-SNAP ALIGNMENT · COVERAGE ZONES



Referee

MIDDLE OF FIELD

- **7 yds deep · 7 yds wide** behind the offense
- **45° angle** — side opposite SJ
- QB coverage · Snap · Rush · Pass · Contact

 OWNS PLAY CLOCK



Side Judge

DOWN BOX SIDE

- **Visitor Sideline**
- **On LOS** — at the neutral zone
- False starts · Offsides · Forward progress · Illegal forward pass

 OWNS DOWN BOX



Back Judge

HOME SIDELINE

- **Home Sideline**
- **On LOS** — starts at the LOS, then moves back at start of play
- Goal line · Line to gain · Sideline

 OWNS GAME CLOCK

TOP-DOWN FIELD VIEW

END.ZONE



Referee (R) — 3-Person Crew

7 YDS DEEP · 7 YDS WIDE · 45° ANGLE · SIDE OPPOSITE SJ



FIELD ALIGNMENT

R

7 yds deep × 7 yds wide · Behind offense

SJ

Visitor Sideline · On LOS · Opposite R

BJ

Home Sideline · On LOS

▲ MIRRORED WINGS



THE SNAP

Snap & Ball Control

Watch for snap infractions, false starts, offsides, and encroachment at the snap



PLAY CLOCK

25-Second Clock Owner

Responsible for the 25-second play clock — declares the ball *Ready For Play* to start each countdown



QB COVERAGE

Rush & Contact Monitor

Observe the rush on the QB — monitor illegal contact by both blockers and rushers throughout the play



BEHIND LOS

Runner & Passer Follow

Shadow the runner or passer downfield — watch flag guarding, illegal contact



Side Judge (SJ) — 3-Person Crew

Initial position: On the Visitors sideline at the neutral zone, opposite the Referee



FIELD ALIGNMENT

R 7 yds deep x 7 yds wide · Behind offense

SJ Visitor Sideline · On LOS · Opposite R

BJ Home Sideline · On LOS

▲ MIRRORED WINGS



THE LINE

Illegal Snap & Ball Control

Watch for illegal snap and snap hitting the ground, primary focus before the play begins



BOX OPERATOR

Spot Owner

Supervise the down box operator, signal the current down to players and crew



LINE TO GAIN

Forward Progress & Boundary Line

Covers the sideline end line to end line; marks forward progress and works with the BJ to mark forward progress



PLAY READ

Movement Depends on Type of Play

Briefly shift focus from deep receivers back to QB to read pass or run



Back Judge (BJ) — 3-Person Crew

Initial position: On the Home sideline at the neutral zone, moves at start of play



FIELD ALIGNMENT

R

7 yds deep x 7 yds wide · Behind offense

SJ

Visitor Sideline · On LOS · Opposite R

BJ

Home Sideline · On LOS

▲ MIRRORED WINGS



THE END LINES

Line to Gain & Goal Line Owner

Responsible for the goal line and line to gain — works the sideline to end line and marks forward progress



OFFICIATES THE DEFENSE

Downfield Coverage

After initial alignment at the LOS, moves back to watch for receivers, illegal contact and flag pulls



LINE TO GAIN

Forward Progress & Boundary Line

Covers the sideline end line to end line; marks forward progress and works with the SJ to mark forward progress



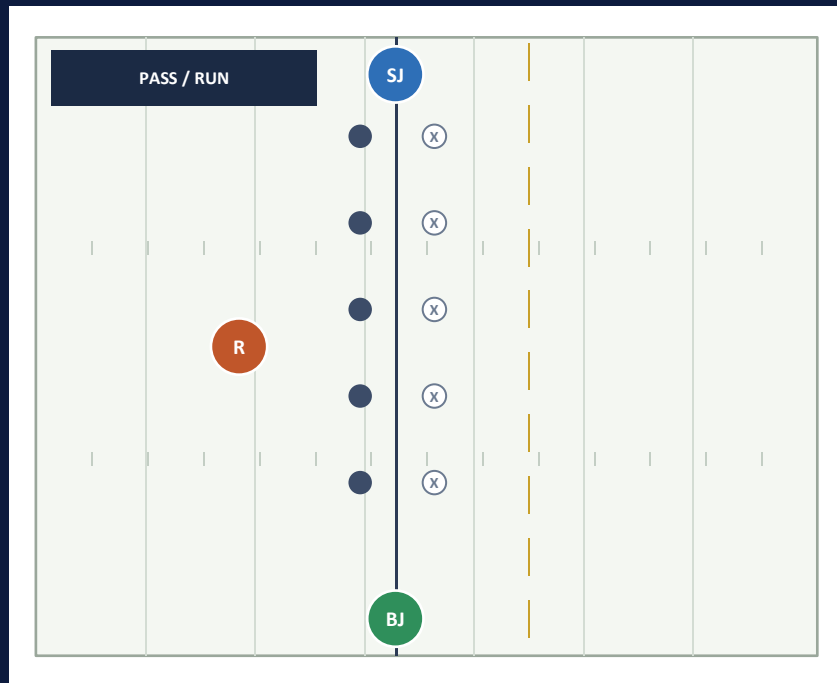
GAME CLOCK

Accurate Clock Management

Manages the **official game clock**. Ensures clock is started and stopped accurately



3-Person Diagram — Pass & Run Plays



R

Opposite Side Judge, behind the QB — watch the pocket, the passer, the contact and the possible pull

SJ

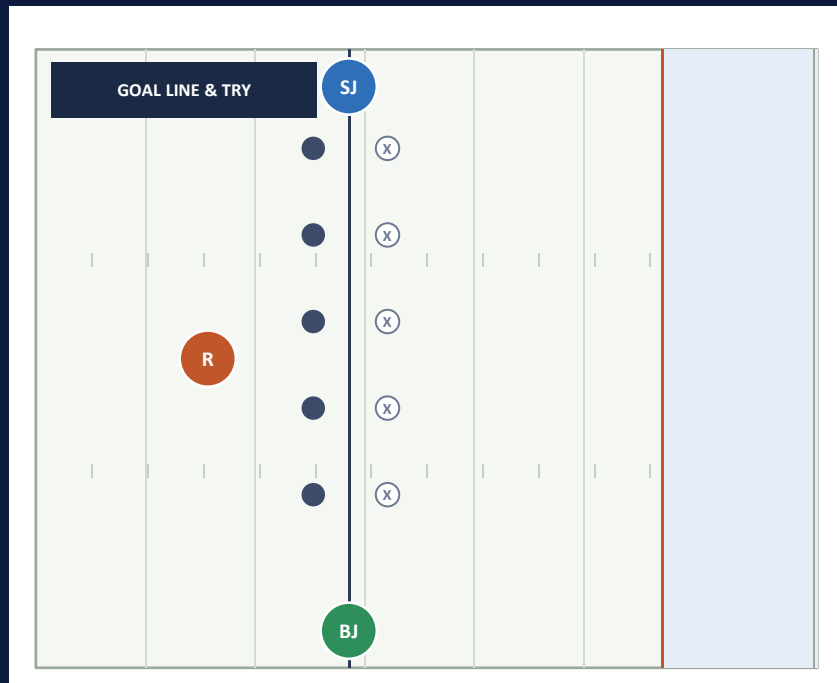
On the line, straddling the line to gain — keys the near flat and the sideline

BJ

On the line, opposite the SJ — adjusts downfield at snap, keys near flat and sideline, plus Line-to-Gain, Goal Line, End Line

3-PERSON MECHANICS

3-Person Diagram — Goal Line & Try



R

Behind the offense — snap, backfield action, and the initial pull

SJ

Line of scrimmage, near side — works the plane on the goal line extended

BJ

Line of scrimmage, opposite side — rules the plane, the pylon, end line and the flags



Punt Mechanics — 3-Person Crew

3-PERSON MECHANICS

CREW COORDINATION ON PUNTING PLAYS

R

REFEREE

IN THE BACKFIELD

- Set up in the backfield behind the punter. Watch the **snap** and **the kick**
- Ensure there is **no movement** by any other player until ball is kicked
- If punt goes **OOB in flight**, line up the BJ by **chopping arm** as the BJ reaches the out-of-bounds spot.



SNAP



KICK



OOB SIGNAL

SJ

SIDE JUDGE

SHORT RETURN COVERAGE

- **Ensure defense is given time** to substitute when punt is declared
- **Hold position near LOS** until both teams are set
- Move **downfield 10 yards** to assist with punt return coverage
- Rule on **first touching** and forward progress



HOLD



KICK CLEARS



FIRST TOUCHING

BJ

BACK JUDGE

DEEP RETURN COVERAGE

- Return Coverage **Primary**
- Move deep to cover the return. Stay **parallel to the deepest receiver(s)**, at least **8 yards wide** of the nearest receiver
- Observe the **catch** and rule on forward progress



8 YDS WIDE



CATCH

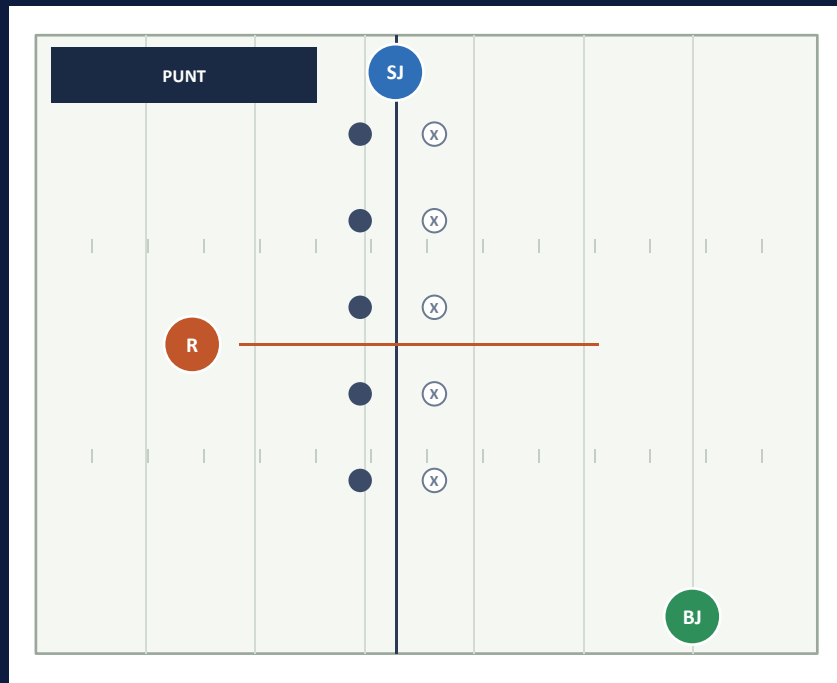


RUNNER



3-PERSON MECHANICS

3-Person Diagram — Punt



R

In the backfield behind the punter — rules the snap, the kick, and any contact

SJ

10-yards from LOS — short kicks, first touching, forward progress

BJ

Deep with the returner — catch, muff, and out of bounds

4-Person Crew — Field Positions

ALIGNMENT · COVERAGE ZONES · RESPONSIBILITIES



Referee

PRIMARY OFFICIAL · QB COVERAGE



- 7x7 from snap receiver — 7 yds deep, 7 yds wide
- Same side as Field Judge · inside-out view of QB
- Sets Ball Signals Ready For Play
- QB coverage — flag guarding, rush lane, illegal contact



Side Judge

DOWN BOX SIDE · LINE OF SCRIMMAGE



- Visiting Team Communication
- False starts, offsides, encroachment, neutral zone
- Sideline coverage · forward progress
- Down box — manages chain crew and down box operator



Field Judge

HOME SIDELINE · LINE OF SCRIMMAGE



- Home Team Communication
- False starts, offsides, encroachment, neutral zone
- Sideline Coverage · Forward progress · Line-to-gain
- Goal line



Back Judge

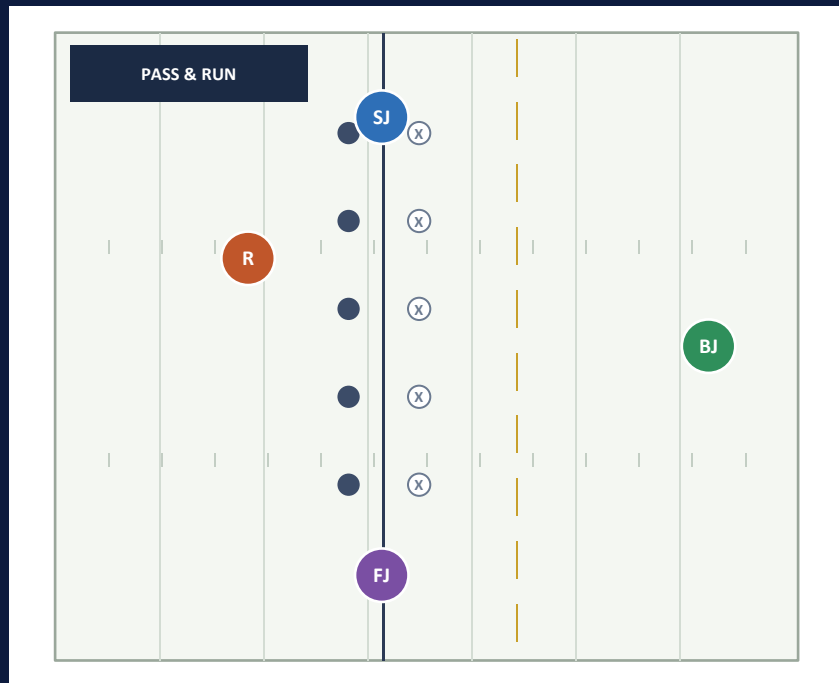
MIDDLE · ADJUST TO FORMATION · WIDE VIEW



- Behind deepest defensive backs · deep coverage anchor
- End Line and Goal Coverage (Long Plays)
- 25 Second Play Clock · Counts down for QB
- Game clock · Communicates time to crew & coaches (if needed)



4-Person Diagram — Pass & Run Plays



R

Behind and to the throwing side of the QB — pocket, pass, and pull

SJ

Line of scrimmage, press box side — down box and the near flat

FJ

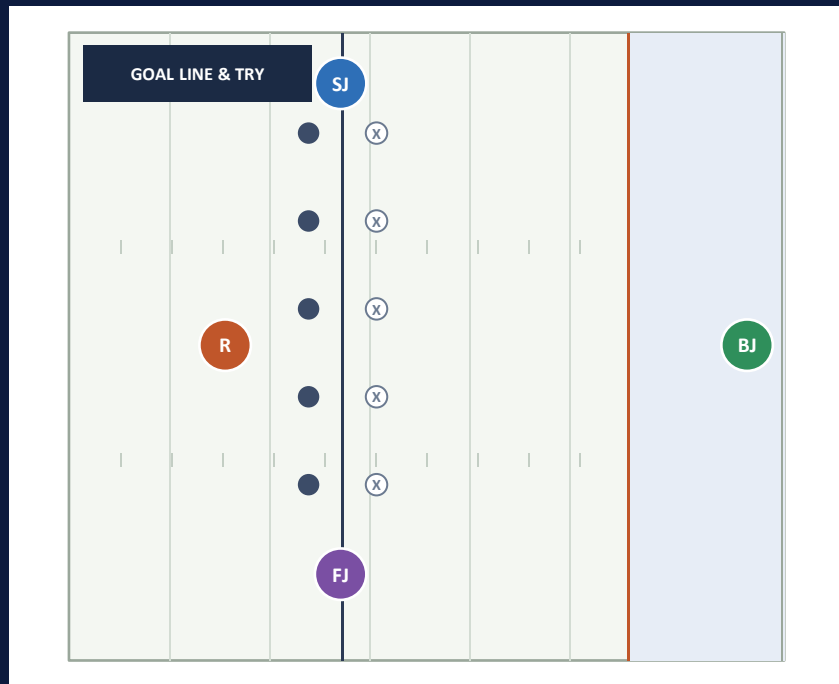
Line of scrimmage, far sideline — mirrors the SJ

BJ

20 yds deep on the SJ's side — rules the deep third

Both wings start on the line — SJ press box side, FJ mirroring on the far sideline.

4-Person Diagram — Goal Line, Try & Short Yardage



R

Behind the offense — snap and backfield action

SJ

Line of scrimmage, press box side — works the plane on the goal line extended

FJ

Line of scrimmage, far side — mirrors the SJ on the plane

BJ

End line — rules the plane, the pylon, and the flag pull

Both wings start on the line of scrimmage — SJ press box side, FJ mirroring opposite.

Punt Mechanics — 4-Person Crew

CREW COORDINATION ON PUNTING PLAYS

R REFEREE

IN THE BACKFIELD

- Set up in the backfield behind the punter. Watch the **snap** and **the kick**
- Ensure there is **no movement** by any other player until ball is kicked
- If punt goes **OOB in flight**, line up the BJ by **chopping arm** as the BJ reaches the out-of-bounds spot.

 SNAP

 KICK

 OOB SIGNAL

SJ SIDE JUDGE

HOLDS THE LINE

- Ensure defense is given time to substitute when punt is declared
- Hold position near LOS until both teams are set
- Move **downfield 10 yards AT PUNT** to assist with punt return coverage
- Rule on **first touching** and forward progress

 HOLD

 KICK CLEARS

 FIRST TOUCHING

FJ FIELD JUDGE

SHALLOW RETURN COVERAGE

- Return Coverage **Secondary**
- Start 35-yards from LOS to cover the return (move up if needed)
- Observe **Kick Coverage** to rule on interference
- Observe the **catch** and rule on forward progress

 35 Yards

 Kick Coverage

 CATCH

BJ BACK JUDGE

DEEP RETURN COVERAGE

- Return Coverage **Primary**
- Move deep to cover the return. Stay **parallel to the deepest receiver(s)**, at least **8 yards wide** of the nearest receiver
- Observe the **catch** and rule on forward progress

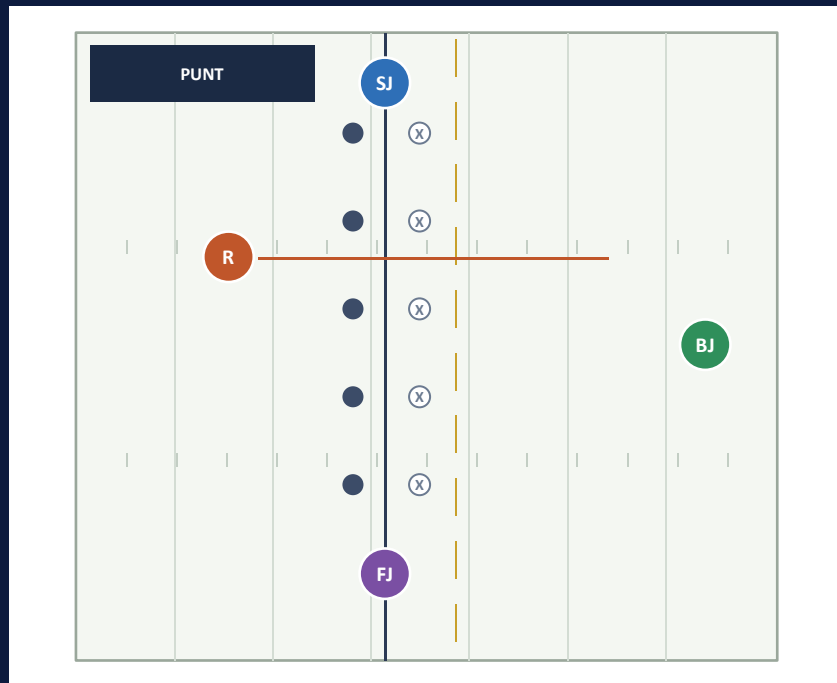
 8 YDS WIDE

 CATCH

 RUNNER


4-PERSON MECHANICS

4-Person Diagram — Punt



R

On the punter's kicking side — rules the kick and any contact

SJ

Line of scrimmage, short kicks and first touching

FJ

Line of scrimmage, short kicks, first touching, forward progress

BJ

Deep with the returner — catch, muff, forward progress and out of bounds

Both wings start on the line — SJ press box side, FJ mirroring on the far sideline.

Down Box Operator — Instructions

FIELD REFERENCE



Mark the Exact Spot

Stand at the ball's front tip



Stay Two Yards Back

Stay 2 feet back, allow room for the Side Judge to move freely



Wait for the Signal

Never move until the Side Judge signals



Set, Then Move

Set 1, 2, 3, or 4, then move



On a Penalty, Freeze

Hold the previous spot as reference



Move When Directed

Side Judge sends you to the enforced spot



Drop It and Get Out

If play comes at you, drop the box



Neutral, Eyes on the Ball

No cheering. Watch to the whistle

 **Quarter breaks: the Side Judge records the spot at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters — carry the box to the matching spot on the opposite side of the field.**

