

**ASSOCIATION**  
**OF**  
**NEW ENGLAND FOOTBALL OFFICIALS**

**TECHNIQUE DISCUSSION – LINEMAN’S POSITION**

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1. Before the Game (off the field....Pre-game Conference)
  2. Before the Game (on the Field – Locate Chains /Meet & Instruct Crew)
  3. Kickoff
  4. Scrimmage Plays (Runs)
  5. Pass Plays
  6. Scrimmage Kicks
  7. Goal Line Plays
  8. Measurements
  9. Timeouts
  10. Between Quarters (End of 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter)
  11. PATs and Field Goals
  12. Counting Players (Defensive Team)
  13. Summary – Sideline Demeanor
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## THE HEAD LINESMAN

Probably the most active official on the football field is the Head Linesman. With downs and distances involved in every play, there is never a chance for a moment's relaxation.

### Basic Responsibilities:

- A) The Linesman is responsible for the operation of the line-to-gain indicator and the down-indicator. He / she instructs the line-to-gain crew, consisting of a minimum of two assistants and a third person who operates the down indicator on the sideline opposite the press box. The down indicator marks the football's position.  
**Note:** Ideally, if a 4<sup>th</sup> person is available, he / she would work the "clip", which when attached to a link on the chain at a field yard mark, would signify the return location of the chains if they were moved.
- B) The Linesman has jurisdiction over the neutral zone and the infractions of the scrimmage formation.
- C) The Linesman indicates forward progress to the Referee or the Umpire and keeps count of the downs.
- D) As the ball passes the neutral zone on his side of the field, the Linesman determines the legality of the play around the ball.

### PRE-GAME (IN THE LOCKER ROOM)

- In the absence of the Referee, the Linesman will conduct the pre-game conference.
- Discuss with the Line Judge formations on the line of scrimmage.
- Discuss with the Back Judge coverage of formations, pass coverage, kicks.
- Discuss with the Umpire line foul rulings (i.e, false starts, offside, etc.)
- Discuss with the Referee reporting of fouls.

### PRE-GAME (ON THE FIELD)

- Find the chains and crew ( opposite the press box).
- Insure that the chains are at least 10 yards in length.
- Insure that there is tape halfway (5 yards).
- Instructions to the crew;
  1. Know the names of your crew (especially, the down / box person) and write them down. Make them feel that they are part of the game.
  2. Box person – inform him / her not to move and / or flip the indicator until you verify the next down with the Referee. Basically, the indicator should never changed until the Linesman Directs the Box person to do so.

## **PRE-GAME (ON THE FIELD) CONTINUED**

3. Chains – Not to move until you have instructed them to do so.
4. Clip person – show them how to attach the clip to the chain.
5. What is going to happen after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> periods?
6. Position on Free Kicks.
7. Box person on Trys.
8. Measurements.
9. 1<sup>st</sup> and goal situations.

## **LINESMAN – LINE JUDGE**

### **1. Prior to the snap;**

- a) get into a routine – set of things that you do on every play.
- b) count number of players in the backfield...no more that four.
- c) make decision as to the status of the WR – is he on or off the LOS?
- d) an extended foot will let WR know where the LOS is located. Be careful here, don't coach the WR or be talking to him as the ball is snapped.
- e) if the widest player on your side is in the backfield – extend your arm out, shoulder high pointing towards the backfield – hold this arm up until just before the snap. Shits may change who is on the LOS.

### **2. At the Snap;**

- a) “read” the snap (legal?), tackle / tight end (blocking), back coming out of the backfield (with or without the ball). These are your “keys” to the play.
- b) is the defense in the NZ? If defense is in the NZ prior to the snap, did such action cause the offense to move?
- c) does the offense move? Lineman in a three-point stance can adjust their feet but cannot lift a hand, make a quick move or lean / sway before the snap.
- d) never make a decision on the status of a player if he is in front of your partner. Officiate your side of the ball / field.

### **3. Running plays;**

- a) ‘read’ the play.
- b) look at the initial block of the tackle and / or TE on your side. (Keys)
- c) stay with the tackle and / or TE until the ball carrier moves towards the LOS.

**Note:** it is better to pick up the ball carrier too soon, than too late. You will most always be forgiven for missing a hold, but you will never be forgiven for missing a fumble or a downed runner.

- d) once the ball has passed your position – you will follow the play up field.

You are responsible for forward progress as far as you can go.

- e) when the play ends – do not angle in to the spot of the progress – square off the progress (a 90 degree angle).
- f) if a player goes out of bounds, mark the spot with your foot but continue watching the player action in the out of bounds area...especially, into the opposing bench / team area. Do not drop a bean-bag and leave the spot unless absolutely necessary. Keep your head up and eyes on the players.

#### 4. Passing Plays;

- a) “read” the play.
- b) know who you have initial responsibility to watch.
- c) go to zone coverage as play develops.
- d) when the ball leaves the passer’s hand, all eyes (except the Referee’s) must go to the ball. Once the ball is caught, you go back to zone (action around the receiver / ball carrier).

#### 5. Communication With Back Judge;

- a) talk with Back Judge regarding who has goal line responsibility as ball gets closer to goal line. Linesman / Line Judge will usually cover the goal line from the 15 or 10 yard line and Back Judge will then cover end line. (This matter can be discussed in the pre-game conference or on the field. Communication is the key.

#### 6. Goal Line Coverage;

- a) when the ball is at the 5 yard going in – your first movement after the snap is directly to the goal line.
- b) when the ball is at the 5 yard going out – go back to the goal line and take the runner out.

#### 7. Punt Plays;

- a) must know all eligible receivers on your side of the line.
- b) Line judge – release downfield at the snap, locate the ball, observe blocks.
- c) Linesman – stay on the LOS until the punt has crossed the LOS. Then release downfield.
- d) Linesman - snap over punter’s head – reverse direction and go back into offensive backfield (where the ball has gone) and assist Referee.
- e) punt OB in the air – Back Judge / Line Judge walk up field on the side where kick went OB and wait for the Referee to “chop” you where kick went OB.
- f) punt OB after touching ground (bounce) – Back Judge / Line Judge responsibility.

## 8. Field Goals / PATs;

- a) make sure that the ball crosses the LOS.
- b) know the eligibles on your side of the LOS.
- c) Linesman – responsible for LOS (Referee may assist you depending on his preference for positioning (e.g. on LOS or slightly off)).
- d) Line Judge – under the goal post up right on your side of the field.
- e) any “breakdowns” – Linesman move to pylon on the goal line. Line judge – (depending on Referee’s position) end line or goal line pylon (pre-game conference discussion).

## 9. Kickoffs;

- a) (5-man, ANEFO Technique) Linesman – 50 yard line, kicking team restraining line. Line Judge – receiving team restraining line.
- b) Linesman / Line Judge – responsible for legality of blocks in front of kick receiver. Ball carrier to your side – action around ball carrier and forward progress as far as you can take it.
- c) when the ball is opposite you – you must look at the blocking in the middle of the field.

## 10. Measurements;

- a) Linesman – has the chains and the clip.
- b) Line Judge – has the spot (with your shoe) where the clip will be placed.

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## A FEW RANDOM THOUGHTS

- Make sure you know the Rule pertaining to sideline warnings (M.I.A.A. / NCAA).
- Always carry two whistles.
- Don’t bend over as you look across the field or down the LOS.
- When getting forward progress, stop at resistance as you move to the ball. Don’t try to run around players.
- Runs up the middle, always try to “mirror” your partner.
- All plays – **SEE THE BALL.**