

Chain Crew Mechanics



Chain Set



Vests for chain crew and ball boy



Clip

Chain Crew Mechanics

- [Introduction](#)
- The chain crew is an extension of the on field officiating crew.
- They must perform the job in a professional manner.
- This includes holding the sticks and box straight up with the faces parallel to the sideline, and displaying hustle when changing positions.
- Chain crews must be neutral and impartial. There is no room for cheering, or relaying coaching instructions, while holding the sticks. Chain personnel are to make no remarks to players nor express opinions concerning any ruling. Any member of the chain crew doing so will be replaced and removed from the confines of the playing field.
- Working the chains means getting it right. If there is any doubt as to the location of the box and chains, or down number must be addressed immediately with the linesman and before the next snap. It also requires complete attention to what is happening on the field. There should be no need for the linesman or other officials having to shout to the chain crew multiple times to get them to move to the next spot.
- <https://youtu.be/z7Twx8nNI6w?t=15>

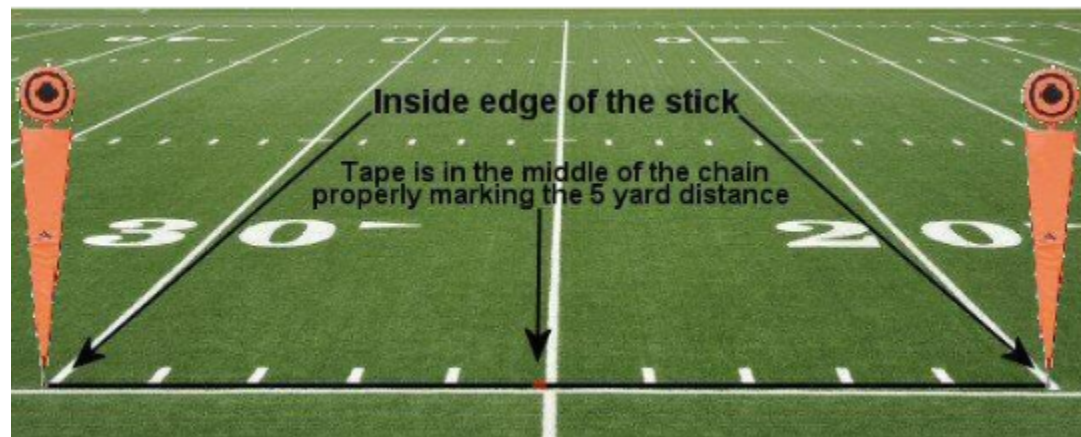
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- At least four people are required for the chain crew: two for the stakes, one for the down indicator (the box), and one to manage the clip (and penalty data). If additional people are available, the penalty data sheet can be assigned as well as charting plays (recommended if there is no replay).
- The chain crew should arrive at the game site no later than 45 minutes before kick off. They should secure the chain equipment and take it to the sideline opposite of the press box.
- Both the L & H will meet with the chain crew before the game (I suggest the best time to do this after the teams are warming up within their 45 yard lines) for the pre-game conference. During this time, they will inspect the equipment and go over the operation of the line to gain equipment, and the procedures for penalties and first down measurements. This is also the time for the chain crew to ask any questions they might have.
- Always position yourself facing out to the game field during this time; you are still responsible for monitoring potential safety or unsportsmanlike acts.
- In many occasions, schools have established chain crews with roles already assigned. But, when there are not, I recommend that the most agile person be assigned to the box, as the hurry up offense has become more prevalent in today's game. In the event the box cannot get to the LOS at the snap, instruct them to set up on the bean bag that will be dropped marking this spot. Ask them to give you your bean bag once instructed to move for the next down.

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- The persons assigned to the stakes should unroll the chain set and take out any kinks in the chain. They should inspect the entire set for overall condition. If there is any damage to the set such as bent poles or broken chain hooks, game management should be notified and the set should not be used and replaced with one that is suitable for play.
- The set is then measured for accuracy by placing one of the stakes on the edge of a 10 yard solid line with the entire line inside the inner edge of one of the poles as shown. On grass fields, it doesn't hurt to repeat this on different 10 yard marks to assess accuracy of field markings.
- The chain should have a piece of tape on it in the middle marking the 5 yard distance. Often times, there are multiple pieces of tape at different chain links. To avoid confusion, get some white tape from the trainer and establish the correct marking.
- If there is an auxiliary set of chains, and time permits, repeat these steps. If the primary chains are damaged during the game, this will be a time saver.
- Checking the Down Box: The down box operator will check the condition and operation of the down box. This is especially important if a mechanical lever type down indicator is used. If there is any indication that the box may develop problems during the game, the best time to replace it is during the pre-game checks.

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- **Recommended Discussion Points with the Chain Crew.**

- ALL:**

- Always introduce your self to every member of the crew.
 - Be engaging and let the crew know how important they are in the flow and efficiency of the game. Paying attention throughout the game will make all of our jobs easier. This means staying off their cell phones!
 - The crew should never move until directed to do so. The box will be spotted on all first downs that start a new series.
 - The box person will move on point. Stake people will move on a wave signal.
 - Instruct the crew that when the down is over, make a quick survey for any penalty flags that may be on the field. If clear, wait for the L or H to locate the next spot and give the order for the box to move. Move to the next spot and put the next down on the box when ordered by the L or H.
 - If there is a penalty on the play, both box and chains are to HOLD THEIR SPOT. If a penalty is accepted, ONLY THE BOX will be moved, unless the penalty results in a first down.
 - When moving about the team area, be patient, courteous, and professional at all times. If there is an issue with the crew's ability to move, they are to tell the L or H, and we will address that.

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Box Indicator:

- Make sure you know the first name of your box man; they will be your most important relationship on the crew.
- A good box man will give you down and distance on every play. Encourage them to give you this. Tell them that you want to know prior to each snap when the box is within the 5 yard tape mark on the chains. Communicate this information to the R prior to the play (via O2O or signal).
- Move the box first, then change the down with confirmation from the L or H. Review the down number after each play.

Stakes:

- On first downs (new series) the rear stake person sets up with the box indicator and then move six feet off the sideline and set on the down box.
- When a touchback occurs – The box and rear stake will be on the rear edge of the 20-yard line (nearer the goal line, going out).
- Remove the stakes when a first down and goal to go is established. They should be paced on the ground well outside the limit lines.
- Chains will sometimes break or become disconnected during the game. When this happens, make sure the L or H is told immediately.

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Clip:

- Clip the marker on the five-yard stripe closest to the rear chain rod (provided it is less than 9 yards and at least 5 yards from the front line-to-gain rod). Be sure we have two of these markers. Adjust the corresponding number of the marker to the yard line.
- Clip the marker on the back edge of the stripe.
- Use of a second clip is mandatory. The clip person should mark the new yard line with a second clip, leaving the original clip in place until after the first-down play ends.

Penalty/Down & Distance Recorders:

- Review the NCAA penalty chart, indicating what information needs to be recorded. Emphasize that the foul time of the foul is most important. Have them ask the L or H in between plays or during a dead ball period for any missed information. Make sure all flags are recorded, whether they are waived off or the penalty is declined.
- If there is a down and distance recorder, instruct them accordingly. If there is a need to reset the chains due to a correction, knowing whether it is the long field (i.e. the minus 47 yd. line) versus the short field (i.e. plus 47 yd. line) is a benefit.

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- **Always** review chain crew safety.
 - When play comes your way: Lift sticks/box and step back.
 - When threatened – *Drop everything and move for safety!*
 - Not all contact during a game is limited to the playing field or between players. The sidelines can be dangerous for ANYONE who is there and the risk of severe injury is high for those not paying attention to the play on the field.
- <https://youtu.be/HNTAW6DkmSY>
- Crew Communication: Prior to meeting with the chain crew, the L and H should review any signals or methods of communication used when engaging with the chain crew. If we can be consistent in some manner, this can lead to less confusion with the chain crew.

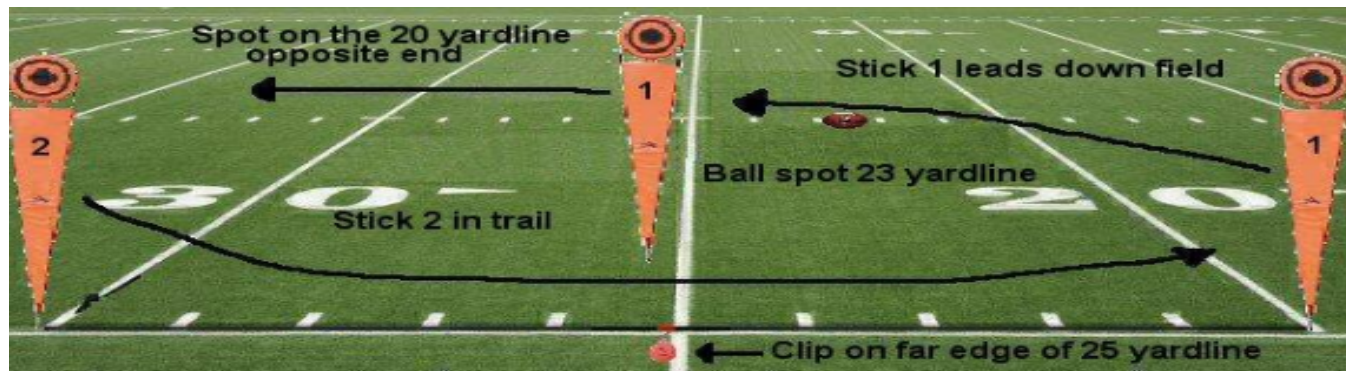
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- **Play Types:**
- **Free Kicks:** Position near receiver's 25 yard line. Keep the sticks and box together.
- **Scrimmage Plays:**
- **New set of Downs:** Hustle into the area near the first down spot. The rear stake and box should align on the spot marked by the wing official 6 feet back from the sideline with the box directly behind it with "1" showing on the box. The other stake should be positioned at the line to gain spot. The stake should be pulled so it is straight and taught, and free of loops and kinks. The chain should not be pulled so hard as to move the stake marking the spot. (A method to avoid this is to have the person holding the stake marking the spot, put a foot on the chain about 6 inches away from the rear stake)The clip person will adjust the clip marker until the number corresponding with the yard line the clip is placed on, shows up in the clip window. This is now the reference point return the chains to the proper location if they are inadvertently moved.
- If a play results in a 1st down and goal, only the box is used. The chains should be laid flat on the ground off the sideling just outside the team box.
- **Scrimmage Kick Downs:** On field goals and punts, the chains and box should not be moved until ordered by the L or H. The box holder should be instructed that if Team A attempts a field goal outside Team B's 20 yard line, the box must remain in place after the kick. If the kick fails, the ball may be next snapped from the previous spot.
- **Try Downs:** It is the same procedure as for a 1st down and goal except the down box should be turned sideways so not to show a numbered down.

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- **MOVING THE CHAINS BETWEEN QUARTERS:**
- At the end of the first and third periods, the chain crew should not move until instructed by the L or H.
- The L or H will record down, distance, yard line and position of the clip. This should be confirmed with the R and U.
- The F or S will move the box man to the succeeding spot; the L or H will oversee the repositioning of the clip and set it on the new mark for the next period.
- The L and H will direct traffic for the stakes, ensuring that they move in reverse order to their new positions.
- Do not rush this process as this leads to mistakes. Most of us have time via media time outs, but if there is none, the game won't start until we are all positioned properly (this includes the chain crew).

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Measurements:

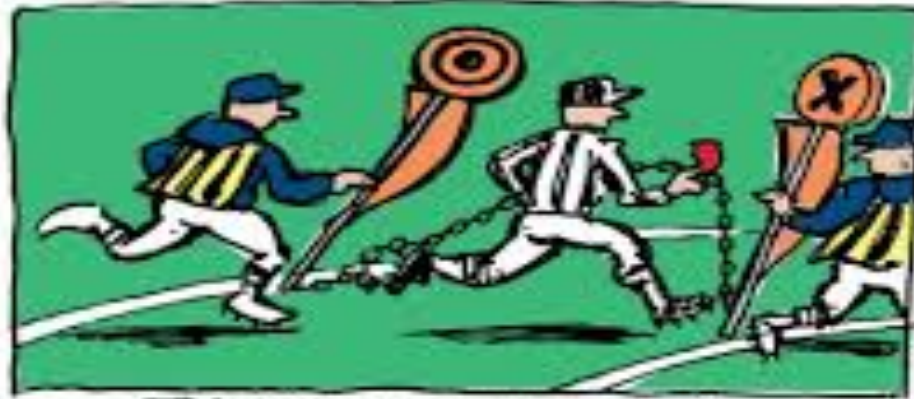
- Place the down indicator (box) at the location of the more forward stake. This will be near the spot for either the next down, or a first down. Do not change the down indicator until directed by the L or H.
- The L or H will take the clip, and together, jog with the two stakes at a steady pace to the position of the measurement.
- Once the Head Line-Judge or Line Judge tells the Referee he has the chain on the proper mark, the Umpire takes the forward stake from the chain crew member, then pulls the stake to ensure the chain is taut and the stake is perpendicular to the ground.
- When a first down is not made, the L or H must again hold the chain on either side of the clip while he accompanies the chain crew and the chains are moved back to the sideline.
- If the measurement results in a new series, the L or H need not hold the chain as he accompanies the chain crew back to the sideline, but he must go all the way to the sideline and indicate to where the new series will begin

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How Would You Handle This?

- [https://youtu.be/S46W3_Dbw7Y?
list=TLPQMDQwNzlwMjBaDXoLmfpQow&t=2](https://youtu.be/S46W3_Dbw7Y?list=TLPQMDQwNzlwMjBaDXoLmfpQow&t=2)
- Finally: Be sure to thank your chain crew at the end of the half, especially if they worked well.

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THE MEDIEVAL CHAINS



'SMART' FOOTBALL

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