



# Kickoffs

Keys and beyond

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the slide, framing the central text. The shapes include triangles and polygons, some with thin white outlines, creating a modern, layered effect.

Regular ol' kickoff

# Before the kick

- ▶ R - position middle of field behind deepest receiver, gives RFP.
  - ▶ Initial thoughts: endline is yours, Primary 4 on either side of kicker, early fair catch signal by deep receiver(s), primary illegal wedges
- ▶ H & L - Positioned on Pylons
  - ▶ Initial thoughts: goalline is most important line on field, secondary 4 on either side of kicker, primary on all fair catch signals
- ▶ S & F - positioned on receivers restraining line
  - ▶ Initial thoughts: hand on bean bag ready for surprise onside. Keys are #2 & #3. be alert for front line player giving fair catch signal either early in kick or during a pooch kick
- ▶ U & B - Positioned on kickers restraining line
  - ▶ Initial thoughts: hand on bean bag ready for surprise onside. Kickers offside and difference in philosophy on deep kick or surprise onside kick. Keys are #4 and #5. Cognizant of the kickers being in 5 yard restraining area and if kicker is deep then only he can kick.
- ▶ ALL - count your players. All low blocks are bad. It's a kick, stuff happens on kicks. Be ready for the worse, adjust to the normal. Also, these are special teamers trying to make an impression, watch for late hits, blow up blindsides and other situations.

## During kick

- ▶ Once ball kicked only acknowledge general direction of kick, DO NOT watch flight of ball, watch players
- ▶ R - move laterally to look through receiver to POA.
- ▶ H & L - wind clock when appropriate. Expect a dropped catch and know touching, status of ball, etc. and how that effects rulings (ie. if he missed it completely and then it hits endzone we kill it, but if he tipped it and it's in endzone he better go cover it)
- ▶ S & F / B&U - rarely need to move downfield more than 8-10 yards, don't rush. Before the kick you were expecting surprise onside and/or pooch kick, so take a half second to check off that neither of those happen. Check off that no first level receiver threw up a silly fair catch signal. Follow keys into the engagement zone. U&B added responsibility of illegal actions against the kicker

# Kick is caught

- ▶ R - you should know when the ball is caught as you positioned yourself to look through the receiver. Concentrate on POA illegal blocks in front of runner. Scan to find the blocker who missed his initial block and is now chasing his guy toward that returner
- ▶ H & L - If the ball kicked towards you then verify the catch and wind clock. If catch dropped in field of play wind anyway and calmly observe the mess that could develop from a free ball on the turf. If the ball is caught then depending on where it's kicked you are looking either in front of the runner or wide angle backside. DO NOT move from goal line until it's no longer threatened. Trail play by about 10 yards.
- ▶ S & F / U & B - you've watched your keys into the engagement zone. You know if they beat their man. Stick with them if there is a threat of foul. Know what a reverse takedown looks like. Keep in the back of your mind that you've got goal line and your starting position and movement should allow you to stay well in front of this play. Once you've cleared the onside/pooch stuff, the next contingency is every kick will go the distance.

## As return comes to an end.

- ▶ Finish the play. Again these are special teamers trying to make an impression. Watch for stupid stuff. The spot means exactly nothing. Watch players.
- ▶ Clock is stopped, no rush to get a ball. Yes after the free kick the 40 second clock starts but we have ways to deal with that if our responsibilities cause the ball to be put down late. Get a ball when players have cleared. Don't rush.

# Really, That's it?!?

- ▶ That is about all the manual says about the regular run of the mill kickoff.
- ▶ We know that kickoff is a lot more difficult than the manual makes it seem.
- ▶ How can we avoid problems on kickoffs?
  - ▶ 1) know the worse case scenerios, expect them on every play, know the rule cold
    - ▶ A) surprise onside up the middle - who blocked, who touched, was everyone onside
    - ▶ B) surprise pooch up the sideline - is anywhere there to catch kick
    - ▶ C) fair catch signals away from the ball
    - ▶ D) kick dropped right near the goalline - did receiver touch it
    - ▶ E) kick oob near goalline - touchback or KOB foul?
    - ▶ F) knucklehead returner catching ball near goalline where momentum could be issue or philosophy of 'make it a touchback' could be the best bet.
    - ▶ G) bigger knucklehead returner catching ball on run near limit of momentum area and taking it back anyhow then slipping down in EZ
    - ▶ H) biggest knucklehead returner starting out of endzone with ball and changing his mind. Did the ball get completely out of endzone and come back?
    - ▶ I) anything else?
  - ▶ 2) Know where our eyes should be. S,F,B,U. You've got keys and you see them initially during first engagement. H&L - start outside in with your eyes. R - look through the receiver to POA, that returner will lead you to the things you should see but your not really watching him. ALL - chase mode for IBB doesn't take much of a hit, reverse takedowns are a great blocking tool and will be used so we got to be ready to identify them, grab and restrict once everyone has broken down and started changing directions, blindsides are a huge deal and kickoffs are a great place to try to get away with one so someone has to notice the guy swimming against the current.

## The rest of the story - onsides, fouls, touchbacks, oh my.

- ▶ So we've discussed regular run of the mill kickoffs but as we talked about, kicks are where things happen so what else do we need to know.
  - ▶ Start simple. Kickoff out of bounds foul. The coach CAN NOT choose hash to place the ball. It's the hash nearest the sideline where it went out.
  - ▶ Touchbacks. Ball hits in endzone untouched. Ball covered by kicking team after being touched if it's the kick that put it there. (remember to wind if touched in field of play and then goes back into EZ) On touchbacks the coach can choose ball location.
  - ▶ Fair catches. The guy must signal and complete catch to allow for the 25 and ball location to be chosen. If fair caught outside 25 or catch not completed or caught by someone other than signaler then ball location is where it is when dead.
  - ▶ SURPRISE ONSIDE KICKS.
    - ▶ was it a pooch? Is there a fair catch signal? Does it matter when it comes to KCI foul? Can kicking team catch it in the air on a pooch or under what circumstances?
    - ▶ If not a pooch was it a dribbler up the middle for the kicker to cover? Did he touch it early? Did the guys next to him block early to clear the way?
    - ▶ If not pooch or dribbler is it a more regular onside style on ground towards sideline? Did it hit the ground twice? What does that do to KCI rules? Who touched it and where? Did kicking team block or were they engaged? On surprise onside kicks you will have fewer return team players in the area and they will probably be going for the ball so they probably aren't engaging the kicking team.



# The rest of the story - (CONT.) Expected onside kicks

- ▶ Now we have 6 in the box.
  - ▶ R - not a play off for you. Really worry about 4 on either side of kicker and be alert for fake kick and kick by another player and how that potentially changes how many on either side of the eventual kicker. Be alert for fair catch signals. Your worst case is that the kickers kick deep. The ball is still live back there so they could be coming to get it.
  - ▶ H&L - half way between restraining lines. Bean bag in hand. Observe touching of ball. But the main job is blocking. Know when the blocks happen in relation to where the ball is. Know the difference between passive and active where it relates to blocking. On expected onside is when you'll have some receivers whose job is to block so the hands guy behind them can catch the ball and drop.
  - ▶ U & B - kickers offside is a plane of glass now. You MUST know if the kicking team players are in the 5 yard restraining area. If they fake kick with one kicker and kick with another...only the guy who ACTUALLY kicks the ball could have been behind this 5 yard restraining area. Kicked on your side you help mainly with touching, kicked away from you and you help mainly with blocking
  - ▶ S & F - Bean bag in hand. Primarily involved in dealing with touching and knowing whether ball has crossed team b restraining line.
  - ▶ All - remember the clock starts when ball legally touched in field of play. This includes kicking team touching the ball beyond 10 yds. We write down the time of the score that caused the kickoff, so after play, if the clock should have moved and didn't then we should all know.