

Next Level Football Officiating

FORMATIONS

1. Actions during the execution of a trick or unusual play have the highest degree of scrutiny and should be completely legal.

Deception and trickery are a big part of the game. Fake field goals, simulated handoffs, shifts, motion and varied snap counts are all common and, run properly, are legal. The key phrase there is “run properly.” When an offensive team chooses to attempt a trick play, officials must be even more picky when it comes to the formation, player movements, etc.

A good example is an onside kick. On a run-of-the-mill free kick, it is accepted practice to not flag a player who is slightly beyond his free-kick line at the kick. However, on an onside kick, the free-kick line should be treated as a pane of glass; it is a foul if a team K player breaks that pane, since a big advantage can be gained.

2. When in question, a quick or abrupt movement by the center or quarterback is a false start.

Subtle movements like a head bob by the quarterback or the center raising his hind end before snapping the ball should be considered false starts even if the defense doesn't react. Those

movements may or may not be planned. Call those fouls early in the game and you likely won't see them the rest of the game.

3. If you can't discern who moved into the neutral zone first, give the benefit of the doubt to the defense.

When an offensive lineman and a defensive lineman move into the neutral zone simultaneously or close to it, the benefit of the doubt go to the defense. It is incumbent on offensive players to be motionless because they know the snap count and the defense does not.

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