

Chapter 6- The Kicking Game

There are two types of kicks.

1. Free Kicks
2. Scrimmage Kicks

Free Kicks

- There are three types of free kicks. They are:
 - a) Kickoffs- This is either a drop kick or a place kick and must be made on K's free kick line between the hash mark (normally the 40 yard line). Team K cannot score on this type of free kick. A kick off only occurs after a try, a successful field goal or to begin each half of play.

Free Kicks

- b) Free Kick After a Safety: Unless moved by a penalty this is from team K's 20 yard line. Team K can use a drop kick a place kick or can punt the ball from one step behind K's free kick line. Once again K cannot score on this kick. This is not a kick off.

Free Kicks

- c) Free Kick After a Fair Catch or Awarded Fair Catch: This is either a drop kick or place kick and must be made on the yard line of the fair catch or awarded fair catch. For a place kick the ball can be set up on a Tee. For this type of free kick, team K can score a field goal if the kicked ball goes above the cross bar and between the uprights.

Free Kicks

1. On all free kicks, the two teams have restraining lines known as free kick lines. These are essentially lines of scrimmage for each team. The free kick lines are always 10 yards apart and no player of either team may encroach upon their own free kick line once the ball is marked ready for play and until the ball is legally kicked. If they do so this is a dead ball foul.

Free Kicks

- Formation Requirement after the RFP and before the kick (new for 2014):
 - No K players, except the kicker, may be more than five yards behind the kicking team's free-kick line. A player satisfies this rule when no foot is on or beyond the line 5 yards behind K's free kick.
 - This is enforced as a dead ball Encroachment foul with penalty enforcement from the succeeding spot.

Free Kicks

- (new for 2015) At the time the ball is kicked, at least four (4) K players must be on each side of the kicker.
 - This is enforced as a dead ball Encroachment foul with penalty enforcement from the succeeding spot.

Free Kicks

2. All free kicks other than a successful field goal after a fair catch or awarded fair catch that breaks the plane of R's goal line become dead and the result is a touchback.

Free Kicks

3. If a free kick enters K's end zone (I would say that this would be very rare) it would result in one of the following:
 - 1) Safety: If K forces the ball into the end zone and recovers there or the ball goes out of bounds once it enters the end zone.
 - 2) Touchdown: If K or R forces the ball into the end zone and R recovers there.
 - 3) Touchback: If R forces the ball into the end zone and K recovers or it goes out of bounds.

Free Kicks

4. Free kicks that travel 10 yards or more and touch the ground may be recovered by either team. They can only be advanced by the receiving team.
5. A free kick that is untouched by R may not be touched or caught in flight by K. If they do so it is kick catching interference. R may choose to accept the penalty and have it enforced from the previous spot or they may choose an awarded fair catch at the spot of the illegal touching by K or they may accept the result of the play.

Free Kicks

6. No team may legally bat a free kick (grounded or in flight) in any direction. The penalty for this would be an illegal bat and would be penalized from the previous spot.

Free Kicks

7. The kicker (K) may not kick the ball such that it goes out of bounds untouched by R. If they do so this results in a penalty on team K. The receiving team has three options on this foul.
 1. Take the ball at the inbound spot 25 yards in advance of the free kick.
 2. Take the ball at the inbound spot at the spot where the ball goes out of bounds.
 3. Have the kicking team rekick the ball after a five yard previous spot penalty.

Free Kicks

- Blocking
 - Team R is prohibited from blocking the kicker or holder until:
 - They have advanced 5 yards, OR
 - The kick has touched the ground or another player
 - Team K is prohibited from blocking an opponent until:
 - They are eligible to touch the ball, OR
 - The ball has gone 10 yards, OR
 - R initiates a block within the neutral zone.

Free Kicks

8. A free kick ends in the following manner:
 1. Either team gains possession of the ball.
 2. The kicked ball goes out of bounds.
 3. The kicked ball breaks the plane of R's goal line.
 4. The ball lays motionless on the ground with no team attempting to recover it.
 5. An Inadverant whistle.
 6. The field goal is successful.
 7. A fair catch is made or a fair catch signal is made and another team R player actually catches the kicked ball.

Free Kicks

Special note. A free kick remains a free kick until the ball is possessed or it otherwise becomes dead by rule (see previous slide). Thus if there is a muff of the kicked ball it remains a kick and whatever happens then takes place during a kick.

Free Kicks

An example: K free kicks from his 40 yard line. The kicked ball is muffed by R1 at his 10 yard line. There is a scramble for the loose ball and K2 accidentally kicks the ball. It rolls into R's end zone where it is recovered there by K3. Ruling: The kick never ended and the result is not a touchdown for K but a touchback and Team R's ball first and 10 on the 20.

Scrimmage Kicks

A scrimmage kick is a legal kick made in or behind the neutral zone during a scrimmage down (a down started with a legal snap).

1. A punt, drop kick or a place kick may be used for a scrimmage kick. It is possible for a scrimmage kick to score (either a field goal or an extra point). However, no punted scrimmage kick can score a field goal or extra point.

Scrimmage Kicks

2. All scrimmage kicks, other than a successful field goal and a try, that break the plane of R's goal line results in a touchback.
3. On any scrimmage kick (other than a try) if the kicked ball goes out of bounds anywhere in the field of play the ball will belong to R and the next down will be first.

Scrimmage Kicks

4. A fair catch of a scrimmage kick can be signaled for anywhere on the playing field. However, a fair catch of a scrimmage kick can only be made by the player signaling for the fair catch and only if said kick was beyond the neutral zone and in advance of the goal line.
5. If a scrimmage kick is first touched by R in advance of the neutral zone the next down will be first down for the team in possession of the ball at the end of the down.

Scrimmage Kicks

6. Team R is the only team that may advance a scrimmage kick that is beyond the neutral zone. However, any scrimmage kick that is behind the neutral zone may be advanced by either team.

Scrimmage Kicks

7. A kicker or holder of a scrimmage kick may not be contacted by a Team R player unless:
 1. He is blocked into the kicker/holder by a Team K player.
 2. The kick is touched by a team R player and contact is unavoidable.
 3. The contact is caused by the kicker/holder.
 4. It is not certain that the ball will be kicked.

Scrimmage Kicks

8. All fouls by team K (except kick catching interference) that take place during a scrimmage kick are penalized under the all but one enforcement principle.
9. All fouls by the R that are not post scrimmage kick fouls are penalized from the previous spot.

Scrimmage Kicks

10. All post scrimmage kick fouls by Team R are penalized under the all but one enforcement principle. To be a post scrimmage kick foul the following conditions must be met.
 1. The foul must be by team R.
 2. The foul must be beyond the expanded neutral zone and before the kick has ended.
 3. The kicked ball must have traveled beyond the expanded neutral zone (it does not have to stay beyond the expanded neutral zone).
 4. At the end of the down, team K cannot be in possession of the ball.

Scrimmage Kicks

11. Team R receivers of a scrimmage kick must be given an unhindered path to the ball. It does not matter if they have or have not signaled for a fair catch. If they have not been given this unhindered path to the ball, the penalty is for kick catching interference.

Scrimmage Kicks

12. During the kick, a team K player may not go out of bounds and return to the field any time during the down, unless he was blocked out of bounds and returns at his first opportunity. If a team K player accidentally steps out of bounds after the change of possession, then he may return to the field without penalty.

Things that are similar or the same for scrimmage kicks and free kicks.

1. There is a neutral zone on all kicks.
 1. For free kicks, the neutral zone is always 10 yards wide.
 2. For scrimmage kicks, the neutral zone is as wide as the ball.

Things that are similar or the same for scrimmage kicks and free kicks.

2. First touching by the kickers can take place on both types of kicks. First touching is not a penalty, it is more like a violation. With first touching we must throw a bean bag. First touching is a spot where the receivers may chose to next put the ball in play. There can be more than one spot of first touching on either type of kick.

Things that are similar or the same for scrimmage kicks and free kicks.

First touching occurs when the kicking team touches the ball when they cannot legally possess the ball

- For a free kick, first touching can only take place in the neutral zone. The ball remains alive but the clock does not start.
- For a scrimmage kick, first touching can only take place beyond the neutral zone and in front of team R's goal line. The ball remains alive and the clock continues to run.

Things that are similar or the same for scrimmage kicks and free kicks.

- First touching can only occur when K touches a ball that they may not legally possess.
- First touching is ignored if it is caused by a player of R blocking a player of K into the ball.
- First touching (and the right of team R to take the ball at the spot of first touching) is ignored if after the first touching team R commits a foul or if the penalty for any foul committed by either team during the down is accepted.

Things that are similar or the same for scrimmage kicks and free kicks.

3. Momentum Exception: This applies to both types of kicks. This is where a team R player may catch or recover a kicked ball on his five yard line or inside the five and his original momentum takes him into the end zone where he is downed. If this happens team R may take the ball at the spot of the catch or recovery.

Things that are similar or the same for scrimmage kicks and free kicks.

4. Both type of kicks end in the same manner. Once a player for team R catches or recovers a kick, the kick ends and a running play is in progress. If a player for Team K catches or recovers a kick, the kick ends but the ball becomes dead immediately (unless this is a scrimmage kick recovered or caught by K behind the line of scrimmage).

Things that are similar or the same for scrimmage kicks and free kicks.

5. Both types of kicks are loose ball plays. Thus for a live ball foul (except PSK) the basic spot for penalty enforcement is the previous spot.
6. For both types of kicks, if the ball is muffed the ball remains a kick. The kicked ball does not stop being a kick until it is caught, recovered or becomes dead by rule.

Basic Fouls That Can Occur During a Kick:

As stated earlier, legal kicks are considered to be loose ball plays. The basic spot for all loose ball plays is the previous spot. To that end the vast majority of fouls that occur during a kick will be penalized from the previous spot. Examples:

1. **Roughing the kicker/holder:** This foul can take place on either a scrimmage or free kick. It will always be penalized from the previous spot. If on a scrimmage kick it also carries an automatic first down.

Basic Fouls That Can Occur During a Kick:

2. Kick catching interference. Previous spot enforcement or the Receiving team may choose a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the penalty and accept an awarded fair catch.
3. Invalid Fair Catch Signal: On a free kick, will always be penalized from previous spot. On a scrimmage kick, will always be penalized under the provisions of PSK.

Basic Fouls That Can Occur During a Kick:

4. Illegal blocking after a fair catch signal. On a free kick, this will always be penalized from the previous spot. On a scrimmage kick, we will most likely penalize under PSK.
5. Illegal blocking by the receiving team. Free kick-Always previous spots. Scrimmage Kick, most likely penalize using PSK.

Basic Fouls That Can Occur During a Kick:

6. Illegal blocking tactics by the Kicking team. Free Kick and Scrimmage Kick. All but one. In both cases it matters where the foul takes place but on free kicks most will be enforced from the previous spot and on scrimmage kicks all K fouls behind the basic spot will be enforced from the spot of the foul.

Basic Fouls That Can Occur During a Kick:

7. Kicked ball out of bounds untouched by R. Free kick: Special provisions. Scrimmage kick, no foul.
8. Running into the kicker/holder: Only on a scrimmage kick and against the Receiving team. Previous spot enforcement. This is not an automatic first down.
9. Roughing the snapper. This can only occur on a scrimmage kick. Previous spot enforcement and an automatic first down.

Things about the kicking game that seem to confuse us.

1. On scrimmage kicks. If team R is the first to touch a kick, it will be first down for which ever team is in possession of the ball when the down ends.
2. On a scrimmage kick, if the ball goes out of bounds it will always be R's ball regardless of where the ball went out of bounds and regardless of what down the ball was kicked on.

Things about the kicking game that seem to confuse us.

3. On a scrimmage kick by K on a down other than fourth, K can only retain possession and the down count if they (Team K) catch or recover the kick behind the line of scrimmage.
4. Who can and cannot bat a kick.
 1. Free Kicks: No batting allowed by either team.
 2. Scrimmage Kicks: Batting is only allowed by K and only if the ball is in advance of the neutral zone and the bat is toward his own goal line.

Things about the kicking game that seem to confuse us.

5. Can a team kick the ball a second time?
Yes, as long as they are behind the line of scrimmage and there has been no change of team possession.
6. Is it legal to scrimmage kick a ball that is laying on the ground? No, even on field goal attempts the ball must be held in place.

Scrimmage Kick Formation

- A team can be in scrimmage kick formation on each and every scrimmage down, and they never have to kick the ball.

Scrimmage Kick Formation

- To be in scrimmage kick formation, a team must be aligned in the following manner:
 - No one in position to accept a direct hand-to-hand snap
 - One player a minimum of 10 yards behind LOS and in position to catch the snap (generally punting formation)
 - One player 7 yards behind LOS and in position to hold with another player no more than 3 yards behind him in position to kick (generally field goal formation)

Scrimmage Kick Formation

- The kicking team/offense must have a minimum of seven players on the line of scrimmage.
- Unless the numbering exception is utilized, they must have a minimum of five players numbered 50-79 on the line of scrimmage.

What is the numbering exception and why is it in place?

- The numbering exception allows teams to have fewer than five players numbered 50-79 on the LOS.
 - Sometimes teams only have one player who can long snap and that player may not be an offensive lineman.
 - It also allows faster, more athletic players to cover kicks

What is the numbering exception and why is it in place?

- A team is not using the exception if they have at least five players on the LOS who are numbered 50-79. If they are not using the exception, then they can do anything from the scrimmage kick formation that they could normally do and on any down.

The Numbering Exceptions are:

- On 1st, 2nd, or 3rd downs, a team can line up in “field goal” formation and only have four players numbered 50-79 on the LOS. The snapper is the only player who can be exempted from the numbering requirement. The snapper can never be an eligible receiver if using this exception.

The Numbering Exceptions are:

- On 4th down, a team can line up in “punt” formation and they do not have to have any players on the LOS numbered 50-79. All players eligible by position and number are eligible receivers.
- On 4th down or on a try, a team can line up in “field goal” formation and they do not have to have any players on the LOS numbered 50-79. All players eligible by position and number are eligible receivers.