

# Touch Football and Flag Football

Completion of this chapter should enable the reader to:

- Appreciate the historical development of touch and flag football
- Know the rules for each of these activities
- Practice and demonstrate the basic skills of blocking and touching opponents and kicking, passing, and receiving a football
- Be familiar with fundamentals of offense and defense for touch and flag football
- Correctly execute several offensive and defensive formations used in the two activities
- Teach the fundamentals of touch and flag football to a group of novice players

Touch and flag football are similar to regulation rugby football and to American football except that the ball carrier is downed differently. In touch football the ball carrier is stopped by being touched with both hands rather than being tackled. Flags being removed will down a ball carrier in flag football versus tackling or touching. In addition, noncontact blocking (screen blocking) is utilized in both flag and touch football. These changes lessen the danger of injury and encourage a more open game. Forward passing is usually the principle offensive weapon, with all players eligible to receive a pass.

With the exception of a few rules, flag and touch football in all aspects are virtually the same (e.g., equipment, field of play, scoring). Therefore, they will be discussed together, and any differences will be noted in the text.

## HISTORY

Football as it is played today is derived from soccer and rugby. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Rutgers universities were early players of the game, which at the time was not much more than a gang fight over a round ball.

However, since 1869 rules have been formulated, equipment has been adopted and qualified, and coaches

and members of the medical profession have worked toward making football a relatively safe game.

Touch football is a modification of football that can be safely played without pads. Playing the game without costly equipment has enabled children and young adults to participate. Touch football is an interesting and beneficial game for all who desire competition and fun.

In 1932, the Intramural Sports Section of the College Physical Education Association adopted rules for school and college play.

The National Touch and Flag Football Rules were first developed after considerable study of the variations of the game played in colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada by a National College Touch Football Rules Committee of the College Physical Education Association. In 1950 this committee, in addition to an advisory committee and subcommittees, submitted questionnaires to more than 100 schools concerning the rules and recommended their standardization. The recommendations were then approved by the Intramural Section of the College Physical Education Association. Through cooperation with the Athletic Institute, the first rule book was published in 1952. The latest version of these rules is located in the second edition of the Official

U.S. Flag and Touch Football Rules published in 1992. Even though official rules exist for these sports, local custom, available facilities, and tradition often dictate the rules used.

## EQUIPMENT

**Playing field.** The field is 40 yards (36.6 m) wide by 100 yards (91.4 m) long (Fig. 36-1).

**Ball.** A regulation American football is used for men, and a junior-sized football is used for women.

**Uniforms.** No special uniform is necessary, and a gym uniform is adequate. Teams should be equipped with distinctively colored jerseys. Cleated shoes are recommended; however, basketball, tennis, and gym shoes are suitable. Cleated shoes have some restrictions covered in the rules and regulations section.

## THE GAME

### Length of game

The game may consist of a variety of time frames:

1. A game with four 12-minute periods, with 1 minute between quarters and 10 minutes between halves. The clock will start when the ball is snapped or the

kickoff is legally touched. The clock will stop during the game for a:

- a. Score; clock starts again when the kickoff is legally touched or ball is snapped.
  - b. Team time-out; starts on the snap.
  - c. Referee's time-out; starts at his or her discretion.
  - d. Incomplete pass; starts on the snap.
  - e. Out-of-bounds; starts on the snap.
  - f. First down; starts on the snap.
  - g. Fair catch or an awarded fair catch; starts on the snap.
  - h. Penalty and administration; starts when the referee marks the ball ready for play (exception: delay of game, which starts on the snap).
  - i. Touchback; starts on the snap.
  - j. Change of possession; dependent on the previous play.
  - k. Team attempting to conserve time illegally; starts when the referee marks the ball ready for play.
  - l. Team attempting to consume time illegally; starts on the snap.
2. A game with two 20-minute halves, with 10 minutes between halves. The clock will start when the ball is snapped or the kickoff is legally touched. It will run continuously for the first 18 minutes unless it is stopped for a:
    - a. Score; starts on the snap.
    - b. Team time-out; starts on the snap.
    - c. Referee's time-out; starts on the ready-for-play signal. During the final 2 minutes of each half the clock will stop for any of the 12 reasons mentioned in the four-quarter scenario (number 1, above).
  3. A game with two 20-minute halves on a running clock with 10-minute halves. The clock will start when the ball is legally snapped or the kickoff is legally touched. It will run continuously for 20 minutes unless stopped for a:
    - a. Score; starts when the kickoff is legally touched.
    - b. Team time-out; starts on the snap.
    - c. Referee's time-out; starts on the ready-for-play signal.

At the end of the 20-minute period six additional plays will be executed without the game clock. The clock will only be used during this period to monitor the time allowed between plays. When the official announces that regulation time has expired and that only six plays remain, the play continues normally. During this time each down will count as one play of the six. If a penalty occurs and causes the down to be repeated, the play number will be repeated. (For example: On the last play of the game there is a defensive penalty and the offense accepts. The offense gets to repeat the last down.) If a team scores, the extra point attempt does not count as one of the six plays. In addition, a punt counts as a play.

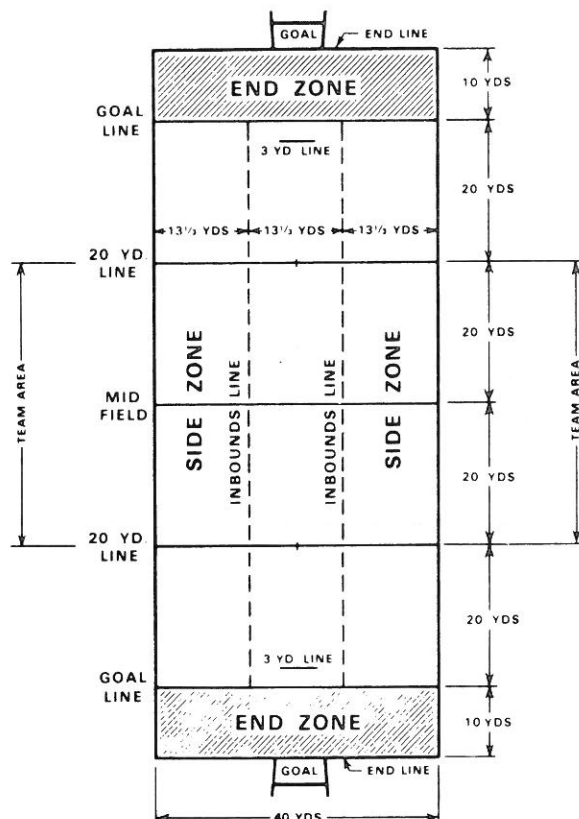


Fig. 36-1. Football field.

## Overtime

An overtime period is played in case of a tie. There are two common methods of playing an overtime period:

1. Each team is given four downs from the first 20-yard (18 m) zone line heading away from the nearest end zone; the team advancing the ball the farthest in the four downs is the winner. If both teams score, repeat the procedure.
2. Each team is given four downs from the same 10-yard (9.1 m) line heading into the nearest end zone. The team that scores is the winner. If the score is tied or there is no score after the four downs, the procedure is repeated.

One additional option is to award the win to the team with the most 20-yard (18 m) zone line penetrations during the game. If penetrations are also tied, one of the overtime procedures mentioned previously may be employed.

## Time-outs

Many leagues and flag/touch football organizations limit the number of time-outs per game to speed up play. It is recommended to limit each team to two or three time-outs per game.

## Scoring

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. Safety: 2 points and possession of the ball by punt
3. Forfeited game: 1 point
4. Point after touchdown: 1 point from the 3-yard (2.7 m) line and 2 points from the 10-yard (9.1 m) line.

If there are goalposts available, there may be kicks for extra points from the 3-yard (2.7 m) line for 1 point. Two points are awarded for running or passing. In addition, a team may be allowed to attempt a field goal for 3 points. Many leagues and organizations do not use kicks because of the lack of goalposts. If kicks are used, the defense should not be allowed to rush the kicker, for obvious safety reasons. To have kicks without a defensive rush would give the offense an unfair advantage; therefore, kicks are rarely used.

## Players and substitutions

1. A team consists of 7 to 11 players. The offensive team must have at least three players on the line of scrimmage.
2. Any number of substitutions may be made during the game. Substitutes must report to the referee before entering the game.

## Playing regulations

1. Start of the game: The game is started by the following procedures:
  - a. A coin is tossed, and the winner gets the choice of which goal to defend and whether to receive the ball or defer the choice until the second half.

- b. Putting the ball into play: The ball is put into play at the beginning of the game, at the beginning of the second half, and after a score by one of two ways depending on league or organization requirements. The ball may be put into play by a kick, a dropkick, or a punt from the 20-yard (18 m) line. If kicks are not allowed, the team that would normally receive the ball puts the ball into play by starting its offensive series from its own 20-yard (18 m) line.
  - c. Recovery of a kickoff or punt: A punt or kickoff is only a live ball for the receiving team. If the receiving team touches the ball in the air but does not catch it, the ball becomes dead when it touches the ground. If the ball hits the ground before a receiving player touches it, it is still a live ball and can be picked up and advanced by the receiving team only. If a kicking-team player touches a ball that is live on the ground or in the air, the ball becomes dead and the receiving team remains in possession. No member of the kicking team may interfere with a receiving-team player's attempt to catch the ball.
2. Ball kicked or punted over opponent's endline (back of the end zone): If the ball goes through the opponent's endline, it goes to the opponents for scrimmage on their own 20-yard (18 m) line.
  3. Ball kicked or punted out of bounds: If the ball goes out of bounds, the receiving team gets possession of the ball where it went out of bounds.
  4. Fumbled ball: If a ball is fumbled and touches the ground, it is a dead ball and the offense retains possession of the ball.
  5. A down: A down is a unit of the game that starts with a legal snap or legal free kick and ends when the ball next becomes dead. "Between downs" is any period when the ball is dead.
  6. Series of downs: A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs to advance to the next zone by scrimmage. Any down may be repeated or lost if provided by the rules.
  7. Zone line-to-gain: The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such cases, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line-to-gain. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.
  8. Awarding a new series: A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the opponents moves the ball into the next zone; or an accepted penalty against the opponents involves an

- automatic first down; or either team has obtained legal possession of a ball as a result of a penalty, free kick; protected scrimmage kick, touchback, pass interception, or failure to gain the zone in advance of the ball.
9. Failure to advance: If in four consecutive downs a team fails to advance the ball to the next zone, the defense receives the ball. If on the fourth down the offense elects to punt, it must declare that intention to the officials. Quick kicks are not allowed. On the punt the offense must have every player except the punter on the line of scrimmage. No offensive player may move until the ball is kicked. The defense must have at least three players on the line of scrimmage, ~~and they may not move until the ball is kicked.~~ All punts must be announced. The defense is not allowed to attempt a punt block.
  10. Downed ball: The player is downed in touch football when touched by an opposing player with both hands anywhere between the offensive player's knees or shoulders. In flag football a player is downed when one or both of the flags are removed by an opposing player. If the offensive player's flags fall off inadvertently, a defensive player may down the offensive player by the rules of touch football.
  11. Passing:
    - a. All players on the offensive team are eligible to receive a pass. Any member of the defensive team may intercept a pass.
    - b. Only one forward pass may be thrown per down. Any forward pass must be executed behind the line of scrimmage. There is no limit to the number of laterals a team may use on any given down. A lateral is any ball thrown or tossed parallel or backward from the line of scrimmage.
  12. Snapping: The snapper shall pass the ball back between her or his legs from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hand(s). Any player may receive the snap as long as he or she is a minimum of 2 yards (1.83 m) back from the line of scrimmage.
  13. Motion: One offensive player may be in motion during the snap as long as three other offensive players are on the line of scrimmage. The player in motion must not be moving toward the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
  14. Mercy rule: If a team is 17 or more points ahead when the referee announces the 2-minute warning or that there are six plays left in the game, the game shall end.
  15. Scoring:
    - a. Touchdown: A touchdown shall be scored when a legal forward pass is completed or a fumble or backward pass is caught on or behind the opponent's goal line or when a player who is legally in possession of the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line.
    - b. Extra points: An opportunity to score 1 point from the 3-yard line or 2 points from the 10-yard line shall be granted the team scoring a touchdown. If the league has goalposts, a successful kick will be 1 point and running or passing into the end zone from the 3-yard line will be 2 points.
    - c. Safety: A safety results when a runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his or her own goal line, and it becomes dead there in his or her team's possession. Exception: When a defensive player intercepts a forward pass in his or her end zone and downs the ball, it is not a safety. If the interceptor attempts to run the ball out of the end zone and the ball becomes dead, it is a safety.
  16. Uniforms:
    - a. Shoes: All athletic shoes are legal, with the exception of track and baseball shoes with metal spikes or cleats. Shoes with cleats are permitted, but they are restricted to those with cleats having a maximum of three-quarters length.
    - b. Pants and shorts: All shorts and pants are legal, but they may not have pockets or belt loops.
    - c. Shirts: All shirts are legal, but they must be tucked inside the pants or shorts in flag football.

### Fouls and penalties

1. Delays: The ball must be put into play promptly and legally, and any action by either team that tends to prevent this is delay of game. This includes:
  - a. A failure to snap or free-kick within 25 seconds after the ball is declared ready for play.
  - b. Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready for play.
  - c. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.
  - d. A failure to kick the ball immediately after receiving the snap on a punt. Penalty: Delay of game; 5 yards (4.6 m) from spot of the snap.
2. Ball in play; dead ball; out-of-bounds:
  - a. A dead ball becomes alive when it is snapped or kicked. A ball is declared dead when:
    - (1) It goes out-of-bounds.
    - (2) Any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground.
    - (3) A touchdown or safety is scored.
    - (4) When the defense obtains possession of the ball during an offensive play.
    - (5) A player catches a free kick and then drops it on the ground.
    - (6) A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.



- (7) A backward pass or fumble touches the ground.
- (8) A runner is legally tagged (touched or flag pulled).
- (9) An official sounds a whistle.
- b. Out-of-bounds: A player is out-of-bounds when any part of the body touches anything other than another player or a game official that is on or outside the sideline or endline.
3. Fair-catch interference: While any free kick is in flight beyond the kicking team's scrimmage line, no kicking-team player shall touch the ball or receiver nor obstruct the receiver's path to the ball. Penalty: Fair-catch interference; 10 yards (9.1 m) from the previous spot, and replay the down.
4. Encroachment: Following the ready-to-play signal and until the snap, no player on the defense may encroach (enter the neutral zone) nor may any player contact opponents or in any other way interfere with them. After the center has placed his or her hands on the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the scrimmage line plane. Penalty: Encroachment; 5 yards (4.6 m) from the previous spot.
5. False start: No offensive player shall make a false start, which includes simulating a charge or start of the play. An infraction of this rule may be penalized whether the ball is snapped or not. Penalty: Dead-ball foul, illegal procedure; 5 yards (4.6 m) from the previous spot.
6. Snap: An illegal snap is one not between the center's legs or to a player not at least 2 yards (1.83 m) back. Penalty: Dead ball foul, illegal procedure; 5 yards (4.6 m).
7. Minimum line players: The offensive team must have three players on the line of scrimmage prior to the snap. Penalty: Dead ball foul, illegal procedure; 5 yards (4.6 m).
8. Motion: More than one player in motion during the snap or a motion player moving toward the line of scrimmage during a snap is illegal. Penalty: Illegal motion; 5 yards (4.6 m).
9. Illegal forward pass: A forward pass is illegal if:
  - a. The passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the hand.
  - b. Thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
  - c. Intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage.
  - d. There is more than one forward pass.
 Penalty: 5 yards (4.6 m) from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.
10. Simultaneous catch by opposing players: If a legal pass is caught simultaneously by opposing players, the ball is declared caught and retained by the team that snapped the ball.
11. Pass interference: Contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference unless it occurs when two or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged or tagged prior to touching the ball. Penalty:
  - a. Offensive pass interference: 10 yards (9.1 m) from the previous spot and loss of down.
  - b. Defensive pass interference: 10 yards (9.1 m) from the previous spot and automatic first down. If it is ruled intentional or unsportsman-like, an additional 10 yards (9.1 m).
12. Unsportsman-like conduct. No player shall:
  - a. Commit any acts of unfair play.
  - b. Use disconcerting words prior to a snap.
  - c. Intentionally kick at a ball.
  - d. Intentionally kick at an opposing player. This action results in a disqualification (DQ) of the player.
  - e. Intentionally swing an arm, hand, or fist at an opposing player (DQ).
  - f. Intentionally kick a ball.
  - g. Spike the ball into the ground.
  - h. Throw the ball high into the air.
  - i. Attempt to influence a decision by an official.
  - j. Disrespectfully address an official.
  - k. Indicate objections to an official's call.
  - l. Intentionally contact a game official physically during the game (DQ). Penalty: Unsportsman-like conduct: 10 yards (9.1 m). If the action is flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.
13. Personal fouls: No player shall commit a personal foul during the game or an intermission. Any act prohibited or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. No player shall:
  - a. Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
  - b. Trip an opponent.
  - c. Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
  - d. Throw the runner to the ground.
  - e. Hurdle any other player.
  - f. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
  - g. Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary.
  - h. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
    - i. Clip an opponent, that is, hit a player from behind.
    - j. Tackle the runner.
 Penalty: 10 yards (9.1 m); if flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.
14. Roughing the passer: Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown. Penalty: 10 yards (9.1 m); automatic first down.

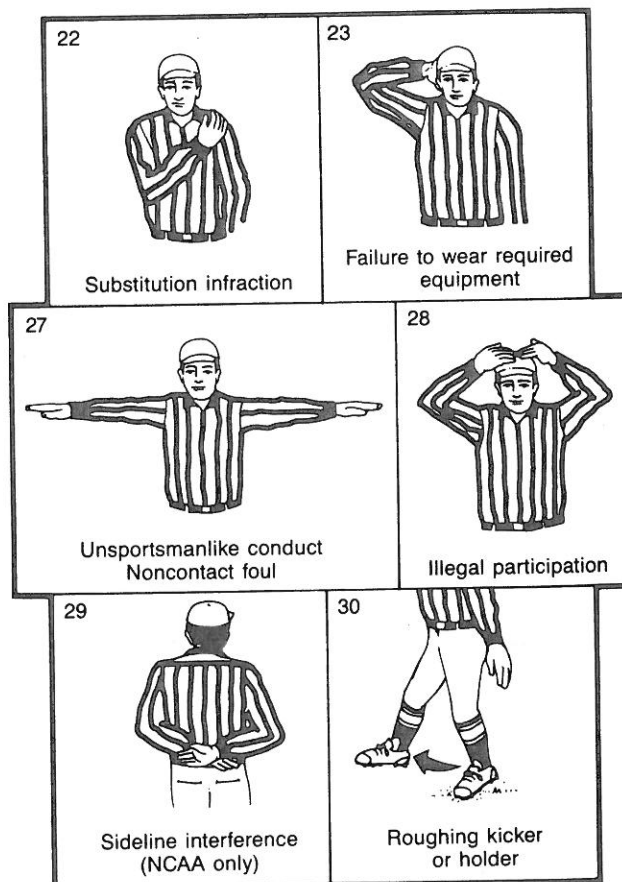
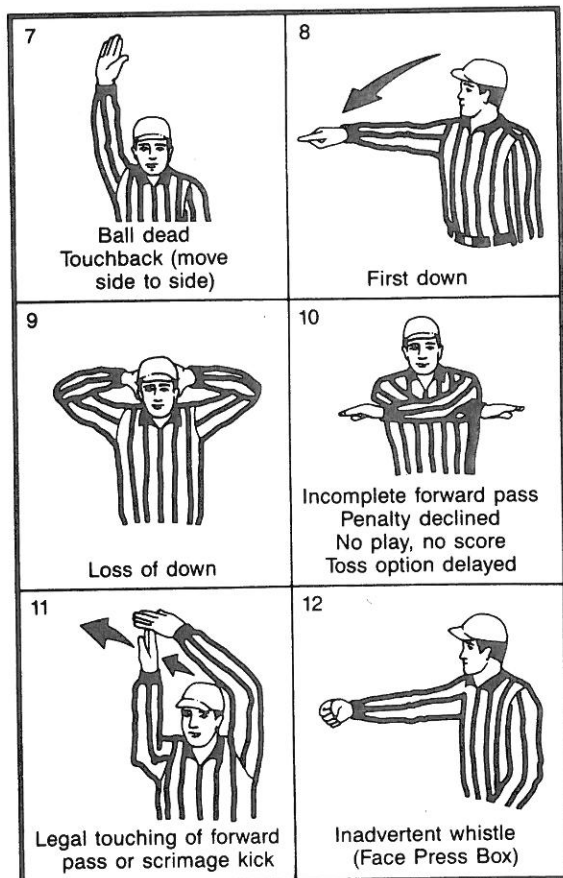
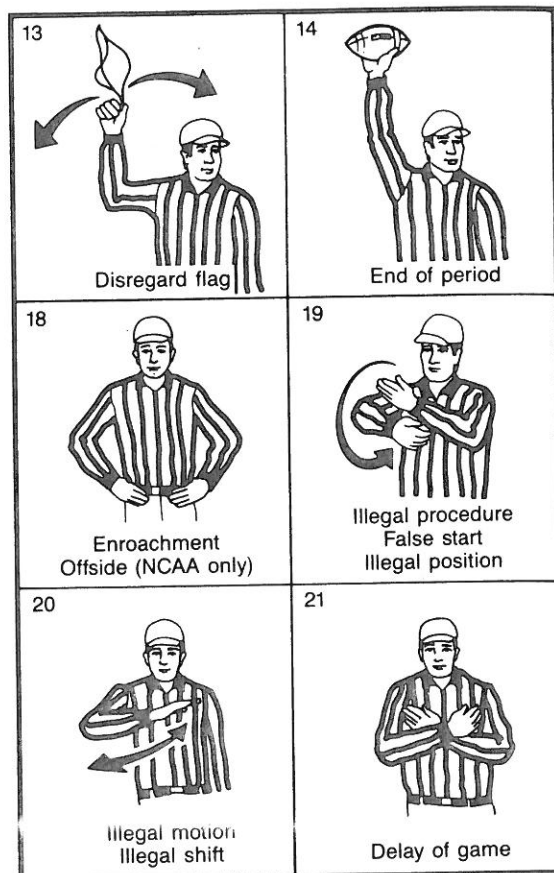
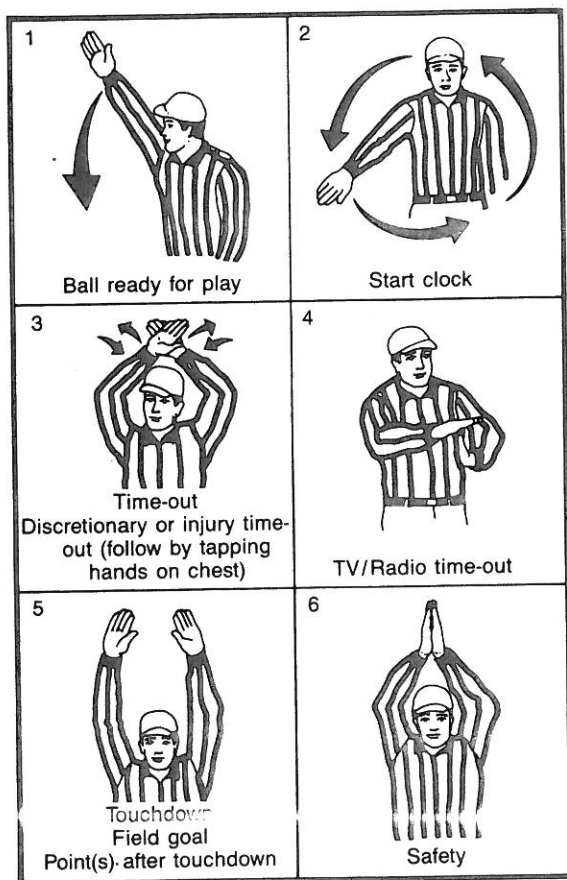


Fig. 36-2. Men's and women's touch and flag football signals.

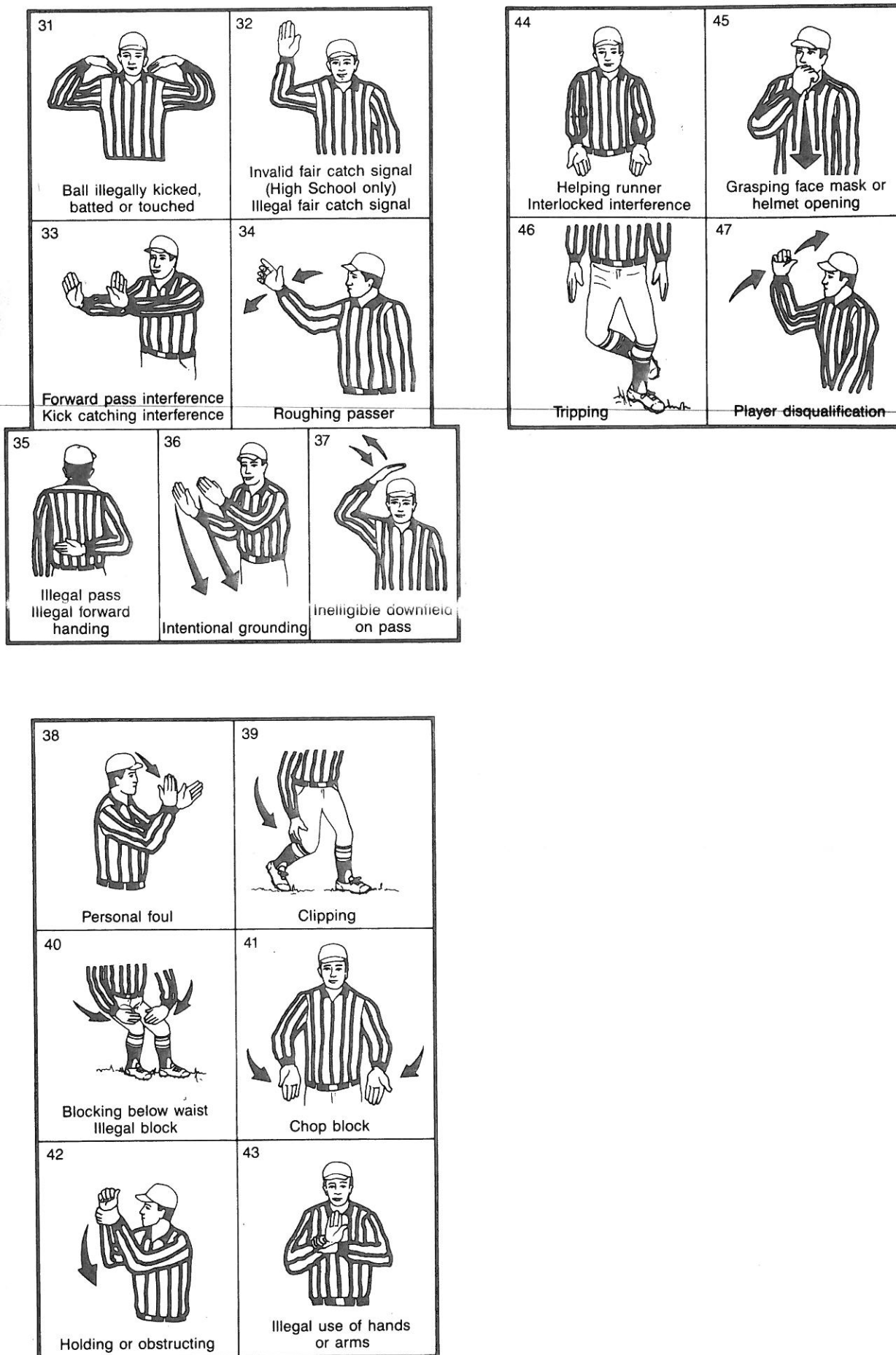


Fig. 36-2. —cont'd. Men's and women's touch and flag football signals.

15. Blocking: The offensive screen block shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall keep the hands and arms at the side or behind the back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during a block is illegal. Penalty: Personal foul; 10 yards (9.1 m).
16. Use of hands or arms by the defense: Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent. Penalty: Personal foul; 10 yards (9.1 m).
17. Runner:
  - a. Guarding the flag or deflecting a touch: Runners shall not flag-guard or guard their body by using ~~their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity~~ for an opponent to tag or remove a flag belt. Penalty: Guarding or flag guarding; 10 yards (9.1 m).
  - b. Stiff-arm: The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. Penalty: Personal foul; 10 yards (9.1 m).

### Officials

1. The referee has absolute charge of the game, and decisions made by the referee are final.
2. The umpire pays particular attention to holding and interference on forward-pass plays.
3. The line judge measures distance and reports offside and personal fouls, such as holding and roughness. The line judge may also be the timekeeper if no special individual is assigned this duty. (See Fig. 36-2 for official football signals.)

## FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

### Stance

The player must be positioned within 1 foot (30.5 cm) of the scrimmage line in a 2-point stance.

**Offensive-line stance.** The stance used by players on the offensive line must enable them to move forward, backward, and laterally; therefore, it must be a position with the feet comfortably apart and staggered, knees bent, with the body in balance to facilitate a quick movement in the desired direction.

**Defensive-line stance.** This stance is similar to the offensive stance, but the body is closer to the ground. Weight must be forward so a lineperson can charge forward.

#### Offensive-backfield stance (2-point stance)

1. The feet are about shoulder-width apart, with the toes pointed straight ahead.
2. Weight is equally distributed on the balls of both feet, and the knees are slightly flexed.
3. The hands or elbows are on the knees, arms are slightly flexed, thumbs are on the inside of the knees, the head is up, and the eyes are straight ahead.

**Defensive-backfield stance.** Players should stand in a natural but alert posture, feet apart and staggered. A semierect body position facilitates quick movements yet affords an effective position to observe movements of the offense.

### Blocking

The object of blocking is to stop or deter a defensive rusher's attempt to reach the quarterback on a pass play. It may also be used to obstruct the path of the defender on a running play. Screen blocking is utilized in that the player on the line attempts to stay in front of the defensive player without making contact (Fig. 36-3, A and B).

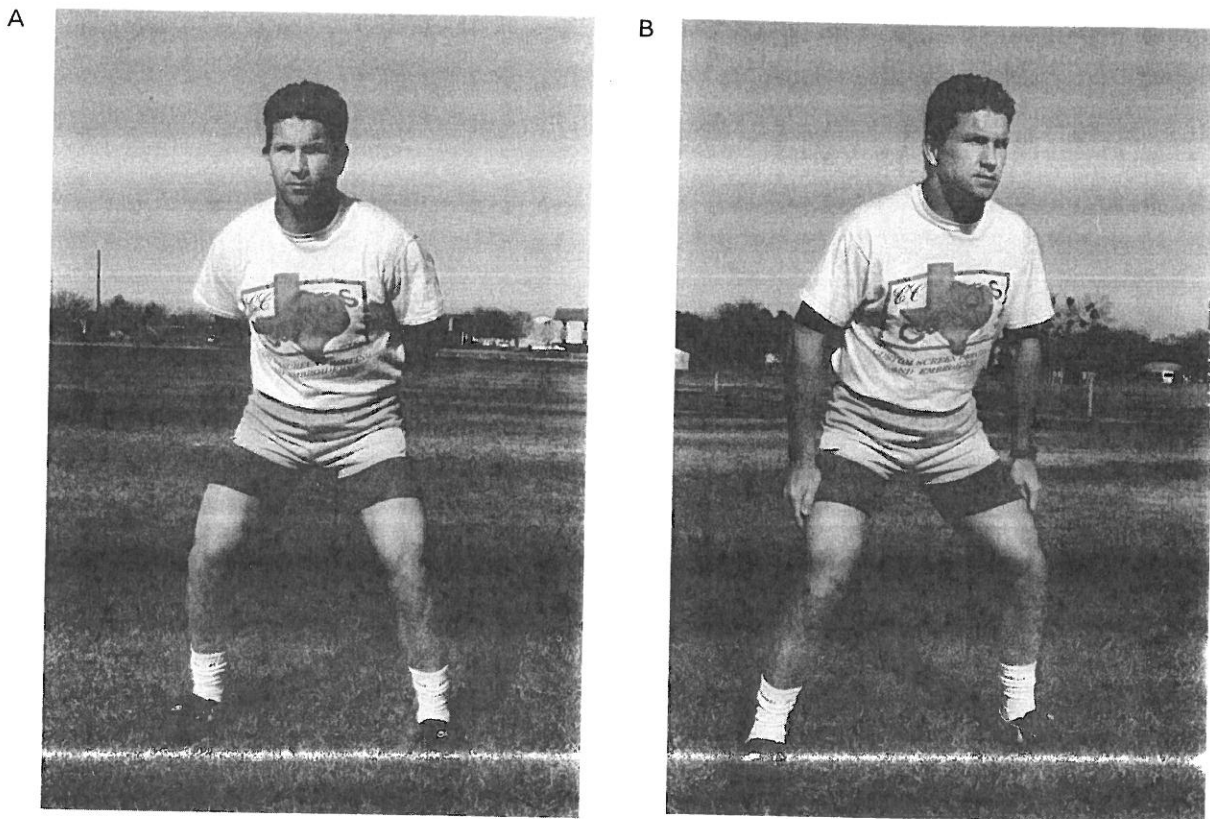
#### Blocking techniques

1. Assume a 2-point stance.
2. Feet are parallel with the knees, which are bent to achieve a low center of gravity and afford maneuverability in any direction.
3. Keep your head up and concentrate on the defender's midsection.
4. Arms and hands are held behind the back or at the sides.
5. In pass blocking, take an inside-position step with the foot nearest the center to take away the inside rushing lane. Attempt to make the rusher take an outside path that will allow a pocket for the passer to throw from. If the blocker gets past, the blocker should immediately turn and face the passer while retreating backward and alert the passer or the oncoming rusher. This allows two things: (a) it does no good for the blocker to follow the rusher to the passer, which reduces the traffic the passer must scramble through, and (b) it gives the passer a safety valve to throw to if pressured. At worst, the blocker will get to the original line of scrimmage.
6. If blocking for a run, attempt to maneuver between the rusher and the running lane.

#### Blocking strategies

1. If the passer wishes to stay in the pocket, the blocker should line up as near the offensive center as possible without interfering with the snap. This virtually takes away the inside path toward the passer. The blocker needs to be patient, protect the inside, and let the rusher commit to the outside rush. Once the rusher starts outside, pivot on the inside foot, staying low, and attempt to run with the rusher on an inside-out path past the passer. Blockers should also be careful not to become overly anxious and step outside to an outside fake, thus leaving an opening to the inside.
2. If the passer wishes to sprint (roll) out to one side, the blockers should block as follows:
  - a. Play-side blockers should line up wider than normal to entice the rusher to the inside. The passer can





**Fig. 36-3.** Screen block. **A.** Arms behind back. **B.** Arms at sides.

help entice the rusher by taking an initial step in the opposite direction of the rollout. The blockers then attempt to hook (reach) the rusher and make him or her take an inside path to the passer. This block can be assisted by lining up a receiver near the outside of the rusher. On the snap, the blocker and the receiver double-team the rusher.

- b. Off-side blockers should line up very tight to the center to make sure the rusher cannot take an inside path toward the rollout. Getting the rusher to take an outside path complements this type of play.
3. If the passer wishes to run to the outside or run an option, the blockers would block the same way as on a sprint-out pass. Exception: If the team runs an option attack, the quarterback may option off the rusher instead of the defensive back. In this case the blocker would not attempt to block the rusher and would release and block downfield.

### **Touching (touch football)**

Touching is used as a substitute for tackling. The location of the ball carrier when touched by a defensive player will determine the location for start of the next play.

1. Pursue the ball carrier quickly, but with controlled speed, and be ready for a change of direction by the ball carrier.

2. Touch the opponent between the knees and the shoulders.

### **Flag removal (flag football)**

Pulling flags is used as a substitute for tackling. The flags are located on a belt around the runner's waist.

1. Pursue the ball carrier quickly, but with controlled speed, and be ready for a change of direction by the runner.
2. If close enough, it is good strategy to use both hands to grab at the flags to reduce the chances of an unsuccessful grasp.

### **Kicking**

**Punting.** The punt is one of the most important plays in football. It can determine the outcome of the game. The punt is used to gain yardage or to better a team's position on the field. Punting is highly specialized, and constant practice is necessary to develop into a good kicker.

1. Stand with the feet slightly apart and staggered, legs flexed at the knees, and weight equally distributed on the balls of both feet.
2. Incline the body forward from the waist, arms and hands extended in front of the body, fingers spread, and palms up.
3. Have the kicking foot ahead at the start of the kick.

4. Follow the ball with the eyes from the center and after the ball is caught; keep the eyes on it until it has been kicked.
5. Hold the ball with both hands, laces up and with the long axis of the ball cocked slightly to one side.
6. Hold the ball on the kicking-foot side just below the chest.
7. Take a maximum of three steps before contacting the ball.
8. Keep the kicking foot plantar-flexed (pointed) at and through the impact with the ball.
9. Release the ball so that it remains in its long axis until after being kicked and before the nonkicking foot touches the ground.
10. **Contact the ball between the toe and upper part of the kicking foot.**
11. Swing the leg from the hip through the perpendicular arc, the center of the long axis of the ball meeting the instep approximately 2 feet (60 cm) above the ground.
12. As the foot meets the ball, extend the lower leg and lock the knee joint. The kicking motion should follow a path slightly across the ball (for a right-footer, the kicking leg goes slightly left), which imparts spin on the ball.
13. The follow-through extends along this line and should end up slightly across the body and as high as the kicker's flexibility allows. A higher follow-through will create a higher apex of the punt. A high punt allows for better punt coverage.
14. When advantageous, kick out-of-bounds.

### Punting drills

1. Drop drill. One of the most common errors of punting is a poor drop. If dropped correctly the ball will not tumble or turn and should land on the kicking foot in the same position as when dropped.
  - a. Assume the normal starting position.
  - b. Extend arms to the position used in a normal punt.
  - c. Release the ball with both hands simultaneously.
  - d. Do not attempt to kick the ball, but let it hit the ground.
  - e. Watch the patch of the ball to see if it turns or tumbles.
  - f. If the ball is dropped properly, it will bounce straight up or back toward the kicker.
2. One-step drop drill. This incorporates a stepping motion with a drop.
  - a. Assume a normal starting position or one with the kicking leg slightly forward.
  - b. Take an elongated stride with the nonkicking leg and drop the ball before the foot touches the ground. Do not take another step.
  - c. Concentrate on the ball, and observe whether the ball tumbles or turns and how it bounces. Both of these

drills work to improve the drop and can be done alone or with partners who can help watch for mistakes.

3. One-step drop, punch (pass). This works on the drop and proper foot contact. Have kickers choose partners and face each other approximately 5 to 7 yards (4.5 to 6.5 m) apart.
  - a. Same as *a* in one-step drop drill above.
  - b. Same as *b* in one-step drop drill above.
  - c. Swing kicking leg through the correct motion but at one-quarter speed, and stop the motion after contact is made with the ball. Make sure the kicking foot is plantar-flexed at impact.
  - d. If contact is made correctly, the ball should spiral. The objective is to kick the ball to the partner with a spiral.
  - e. The distance between partners as well as the speed of the kicking motion can be gradually increased. Distance and speed of the kicking motion should not be increased unless the kicker is making correct contact with the ball and consistently spiraling the ball. This drill can be expanded by adding one step and then another until the desired number of steps is achieved. In addition, kickers should be reminded to attempt a full motion and not a full-speed motion until their level of skill allows it.
4. Coffin corner drill. This is a buildup drill that concentrates on technique and accuracy.
  - a. Line up on a hash mark on the 20-yard (18 m) line and face the nearest corner of the end zone.
  - b. Kick five punts and attempt to land in or near the corner out-of-bounds.
  - c. After five punts, increase the distance by 10 yards (9.1 m) and repeat.
  - d. Continue to increase the distance as the kicker's strength allows.
  - e. This drill makes kickers use less force and concentrate on accuracy because the starting distance is short. In addition, it is an excellent warm-up for kickers.

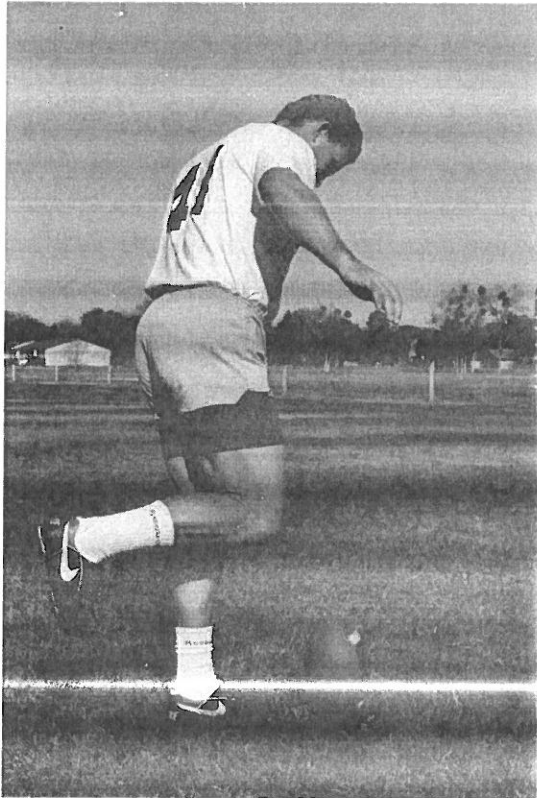
### Receiving punts

1. Concentrate on the ball from the time it leaves the kicker's foot until it is safely caught.
2. Sprint to the point just below the ball and assume a good football position. This allows movement in any direction if the ball drifts.
3. Form a basket with the hands (fingers spread), arms, and forearms nearly parallel, and give with the arms and legs as the ball impacts.
4. The eyes should follow the ball into the arms, while making a nodding motion with the head.
5. Do not attempt to run upfield until the catch is ensured.

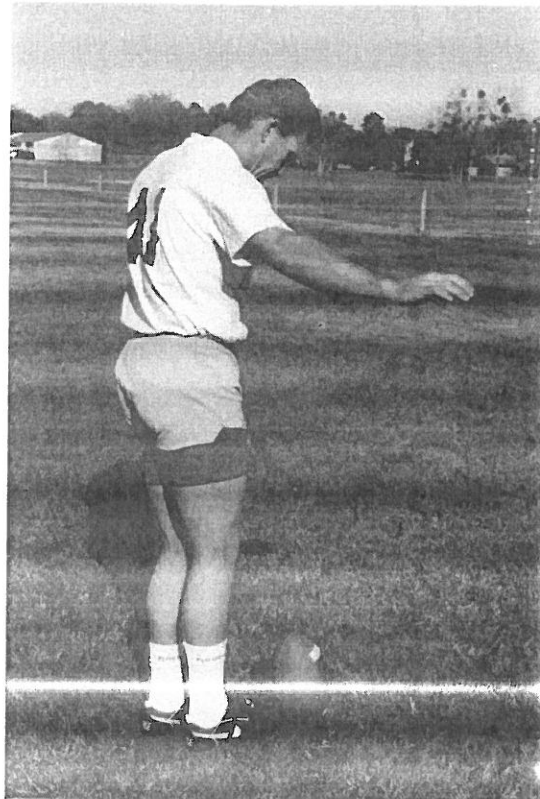
### Punt-receiving drills

1. Throwing the ball
  - a. Partner up by twos, start at 20 yards (18 m) apart, and throw the ball high in the air.

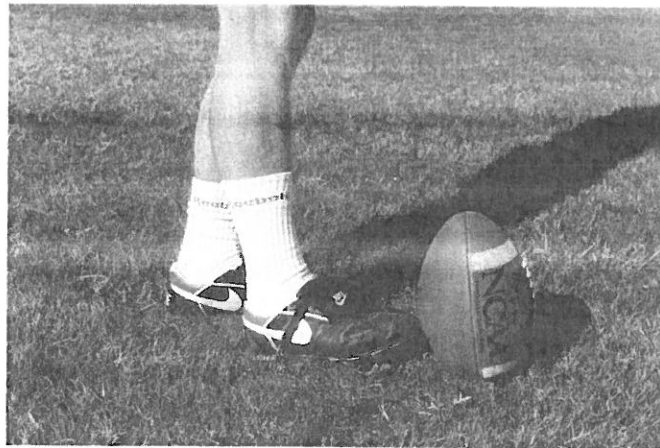
A



B



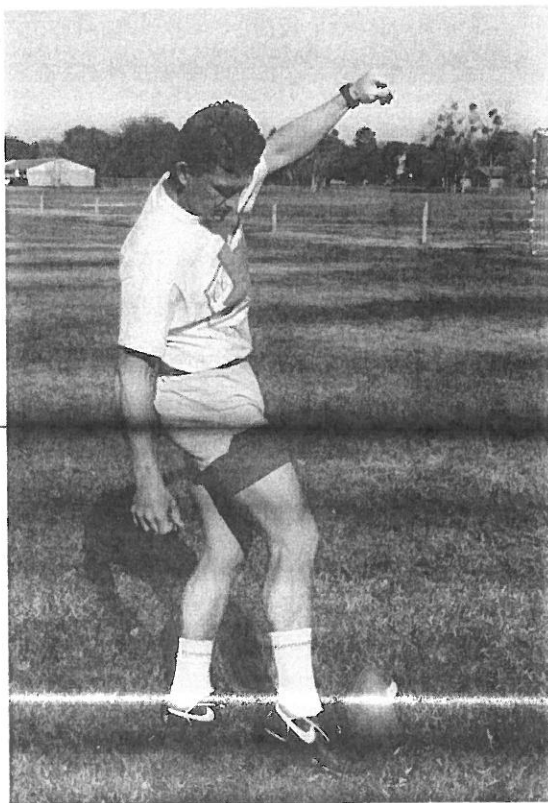
C



**Fig. 36-4.** Conventional style kick. **A.** Backswing (ankle locked). **B.** Downswing/foot position. **C.** Dorsi-flexed position.

- b. Receivers position themselves under the ball and attempt to catch it.
  - c. Gradually increase the distance between partners, but always attempt to throw the ball high.
  - d. When possible, throw the ball sometimes so the nose turns over and sometimes with the nose staying up. This will change how the ball descends and help the receiver work on judgment.
2. Punt drill. Have partners actually punt the ball to each other. As with the previous drill, start rather close and gradually increase the distance between partners.
  3. Concentration drill
    - a. Put players in groups of three: one punter, one receiver, and one distracter.
    - b. The punter lines up approximately 35 to 40 yards (32 to 36.5 m) away from the receiver and punts the ball to the receiver.

A



B



**Fig. 36-5. Soccer-style kick. A, Body and foot position. B, Plantar-flexed position.**

- c. The receiver attempts to catch the ball.
- d. The distracter waits until the ball almost makes contact with the receiver and then screams or lightly touches the receiver as a distraction.
- e. After the kicker kicks five balls, have the partners rotate positions.
- f. This drill is an excellent concentration builder.

### Placekick

The traditional and soccer styles of placekicks may be used. The soccer-style kick is a popular form that has evolved in recent years.

#### Traditional style

1. The kicker should stand so that the path of the kicking leg will be in line through the point of the kick and over the center of the crossbar.
2. A spot slightly below the center of the ball should be picked in advance and the eyes kept focused on this spot throughout the kicking action.
3. The feet should be comfortably spread, knees slightly bent, and body slightly inclined forward from the hips.
4. For the kickoff, any number of steps may be taken in the approach to the kick, but for a field goal or

point after touchdown, only two- or three-step approaches are valid.

5. The nonkicking foot should be planted slightly to the side and far enough back of the ball to allow contact to be made below the middle of the ball. Both side and back positions should be within 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 cm).
6. As the nonkicking foot is planted, the kicking lower leg should reach a position at least parallel to the ground. The higher the back swing, the more force that can be imparted to the ball.
7. The eyes should remain focused on the ball from the start of the approach until contact is made with the ball. The kicker should actually see the foot contact the ball.
8. On impact, the foot should be locked in a dorsal-flexed position of about 90 degrees. This allows a consistent point of impact and solid impact (Fig. 36-4, A, B, and C).
9. The follow-through of the kicking leg is toward the intended line of flight.
10. If greater height is needed, the kicker should start the approach slightly closer to the ball. This makes the impact point lower, which achieves a higher trajectory. If more distance is needed, the kicker should move further away. This causes the impact



position to be higher, so that the ball will travel further but with less trajectory.

### **Soccer-style kick**

1. The approach should have the same number of steps as the conventional kick, except from a different angle. The kicker should approach from approximately a 45-degree angle.
2. On the last step, the nonkicking foot should land in approximately the same spot as in the conventional style. The plant foot might land slightly wider in this style due to the approach.
3. On the last step, the backswing of the kicking lower leg should reach a position at least parallel to the ground. The higher the backswing, the more force that can be imparted to the ball.
4. The downswing should be made down and slightly across the kicker's body, so that the foot makes contact behind the ball in line with the intended line of flight.
5. At impact, the kicking foot should be plantar-flexed and make contact slightly below the middle of the ball (Fig. 36-5, A and B).
6. The eyes remain focused on the ball from the start of the approach through the kicking motion.
7. The follow-through finishes close to the intended line of flight.

*Note:* In both styles of kicks, the follow-through does not have to be very high.

### **Drills for kicking (both styles)**

1. No-step wall drill. Position partners 10 feet (3 m) away from a wall with a target taped to the wall 3 feet (90 cm) high. Partners take turns holding for each other and kicking.
  - a. Conventional: Stand directly behind the ball with the feet parallel and the plant foot in the desired position. Soccer: Stand in the same manner but at a 45-degree angle to the intended line of flight.
  - b. Lift kicking lower leg up past parallel to the ground and down into the ball slightly below the center.
  - c. On impact, soccer-style foot is plantar-flexed and conventional style is dorsal-flexed.
  - d. Follow-through is short, about 12 to 18 inches (30 to 45 cm), and toward the target.
  - e. The object is to use good form, keep the head down, and hit the target.
2. One-step partner drill
  - a. Drill is exactly like the preceding drill, except that the kicker stands in the same starting position and takes one elongated stride backward.
  - b. From this position, the kicker takes a stride toward the ball and pulls the lower leg up past parallel in the backswing and then down through the ball.
  - c. The follow-through is short to emphasize technique, not direction.

- d. The kicker attempts to kick the ball to the partner 10 yards (9.1 m) away.
- e. The distance can gradually be increased between partners. The kickers will find that they can kick the ball a great distance with only one step if done correctly.
- f. This drill can also be expanded by increasing the number of back steps taken by the kicker until the desired number of steps is reached.

*Note:* Kickers may have a problem when taking back steps and then approaching the ball. Typically, they take normal steps backward but elongated steps toward the ball. Therefore, they will be too close to the ball at contact. Most kickers use a 3:1 ratio when determining how far back to go—for example, if using a one-step kick, the kicker would position himself or herself behind the ball in the desired plant position and take three normal steps backward from the ball. A conventional kicker would start here, and a soccer-style kicker would then take one or two lateral steps. It is important for soccer-style kickers to remember as they take lateral steps not to go directly lateral (parallel) to the line of scrimmage. This would put them further away from the ball than they marked off. Therefore, the lateral steps should be slightly less than parallel to the line of scrimmage.

### **3. Accuracy and progression drill**

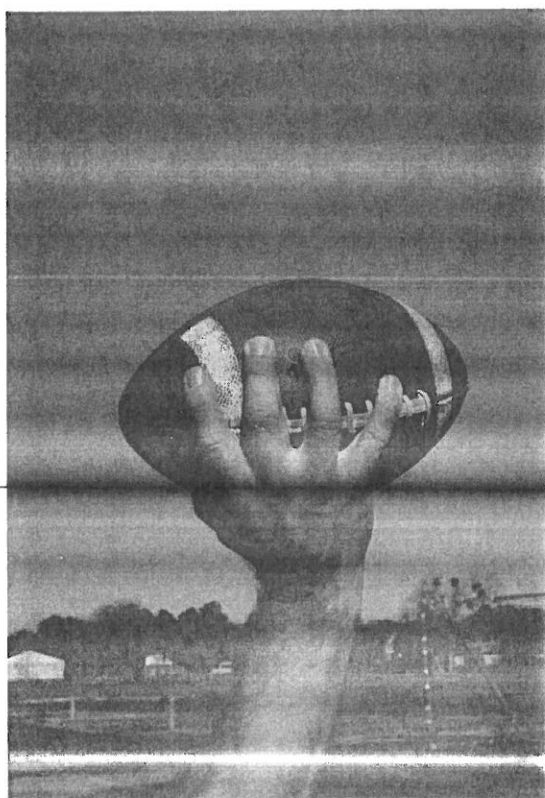
- a. Position the ball at the extra-point mark and have the kickers attempt to make five in a row.
- b. If they are successful, have them move back 5 yards (4.6 m) and attempt to make five more.
- c. As long as they are successful, they can continue to move in 5-yard (4.6 m) increments.
- d. Once a kicker misses, the partners switch.
- e. This builds concentration, leg strength, and is an excellent warm-up.

### **Passing**

The forward (overhead) pass is an offensive technique used to advance the ball and to hold secondary defensive players deep enough to make the running game function.

### **Grip**

1. Grip the ball slightly behind the middle with two to three fingers on and across the lace. How far behind the middle a player grips the ball depends upon the passer's hand size. Typically, throwers with smaller hands grip the ball near the back of the ball (Fig. 36-6).
2. The fingers and thumb should be relaxed and well spread, but not to a point where the passer's palm is on the ball. Keep the ball in the fingers, not in the hand.
3. In the event that the front part of the ball fails to drop in flight, the index finger should be extended toward the rear point of the ball.



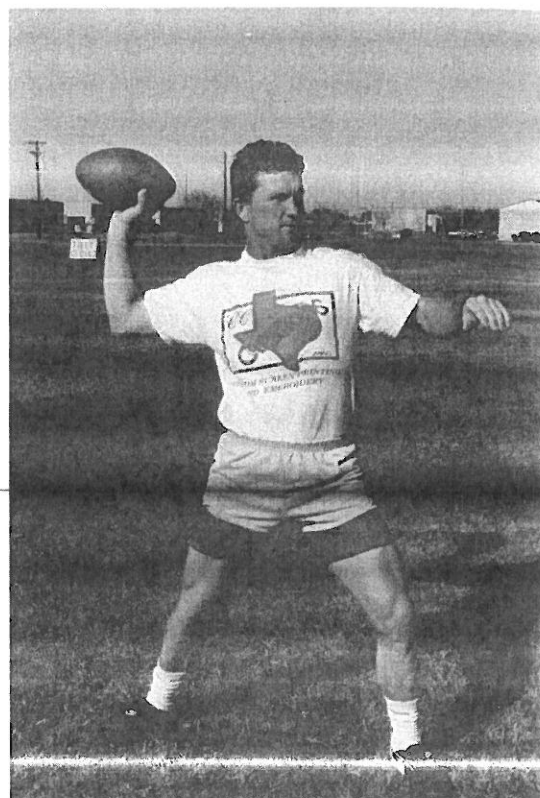
**Fig. 36-6.** Passing grip.

**Ready position (stance and position before the throw)**

1. The stance should be such that the line of the shoulders are perpendicular to the line of scrimmage.
2. Feet should be slightly less than shoulder-width apart.
3. The throwing hand is positioned on the ball as mentioned above, and the nonthrowing hand is placed lightly and on the opposite side for control.
4. The ball is held near the head and shoulder area. This allows the passer to deliver the ball as quickly as possible.

**Throwing motion**

1. The ball is raised toward the throwing shoulder with both hands. The nonthrowing hand releases the ball as the throwing hand is pulled back with the ball to a position behind the ear with the upper arm parallel to the ground (Fig. 36-7).
2. As the forward throwing motion begins, the passer should take a large stride with the lead foot.
3. As the passer steps, the nonthrowing arm is pulled back sharply in the direction opposite to the pass. This aids shoulder rotation and promotes a stronger throwing motion.
4. As the nonthrowing arm is pulled back, the throwing hand is led by the elbow and moved directly over the shoulder in a sharp downward motion, with the thumb



**Fig. 36-7.** Upper-arm and ball position.

rotating down toward the knees. The thumb-down position promotes the proper spiraling effect.

**Follow-through**

1. The majority of the thrower's weight should be shifted to the front foot as the ball is delivered.
2. The throwing hand should finish across the body over the opposite knee.

**Additional coaching points**

1. A common error passers make is stepping toward the receiver instead of toward where the receiver will be when the ball arrives. This typically causes the ball to end up behind the receiver. Therefore, the passer should always step toward the point where the ball is intended to meet the receiver. The step also transfers momentum, allowing more force in the throwing motion.
2. The passer should concentrate on that point where the ball is intended until the ball reaches the receiver. Concentrating on the receiver during the throwing motion or ball during its flight will inhibit accuracy.

**Lateral pass**

The lateral pass is one of the most successful methods of producing touchdowns, provided a few general rules are followed.

1. Use for passes under 5 yards (4.6 m).
2. Use when you are prevented from breaking away.
3. Do not wait for a lateral pass when you are in a position to block for the ball carrier.
4. Use a lateral pass as late as possible.
5. Do not throw lateral passes indiscriminately.
6. Practice either the basketball-type lateral or the one-handed underhand lateral pass.
  - a. Basketball pass:
    - (1) The ball is delivered by both hands with arm and wrist action, so that it turns relatively slowly end over end.
    - (2) There is very little arch on the ball.
  - b. One-hand underhand pass:
    - (1) The ball rests in the right hand and is held there by the left hand until the toss is made, the ball rolling off the fingertips with a slight spiral action.

### Centering

Centering is much like a forward pass, but upside down.

1. Hold the ball on the ground with the dominant hand.
2. Place your fingers on the laces.

3. Use the nondominant hand to guide the ball, if necessary. A center may use a one- or two-handed snap (Fig. 36-8, A and B).
4. Spread the feet wider than shoulder-width.
5. With the quarterback right behind the center, pass the ball with the dominant hand only.

### Pass receiving

1. Concentration is the most important teaching point. The receiver should watch the ball from the time it leaves the thrower's hand until the catch is tucked away.
2. Whenever possible, the receiver should reach forward to meet the ball as it approaches and give with the arms and hands on impact. This will cushion the impact and reduce the chances of the ball bouncing off the hands.
3. The arms and hands should be relaxed.
4. The fingers should be spread, with the palms facing the ball.
5. The hands should be very close together and if:
  - a. chest high or higher, the rule is "thumb to thumb."
  - b. below chest high, the rule is "little finger to little finger." Keeping the hands close together and fingers spread creates a natural pocket for the ball

A



B

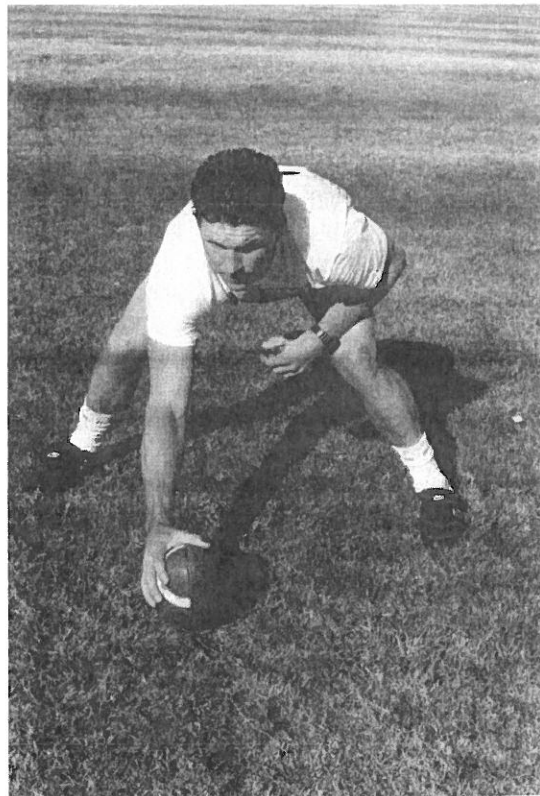


Fig. 36-8. Centering. A, Two-handed snap. B, One-handed snap.

6. As the ball is caught, the receiver should tuck the ball away into a protected position, with the arm close to the body.
7. In the protected carrying position, the front nose of the ball is covered with the hand with the fingers spread. The back point of the ball is locked into the elbow joint. The arm is then held closely and tightly to the body for added protection.

### **Pass-receiving drills**

The following drills may also improve throwing.

1. Target drill
  - a. With a partner, starting at 10 yards (9.1 m), the receiver makes a target with the hands above, below, or to the side. The arms are extended and the hands form a pocket. The passer attempts to hit the target, and the receiver catches the ball, concentrating on technique.
  - b. The partners throw the ball back and forth, alternating targets and gradually increasing the yardage.
2. One-handed drill
  - a. Partners face each other from 10 yards (9.1 m) and lightly throw the ball with a slight loft.
  - b. The receiver attempts to catch the ball using one hand.
  - c. The receiver may use the body to assist, but not the other hand or arm.
  - d. As the receivers become adept at this speed, the passer may increase the speed of the throw.
  - e. This drill teaches receivers to reach and give with the ball as well as to improve concentration.
3. Ball drill
  - a. Partners set up 15 yards (13.7 m) apart.
  - b. The receiver turns his or her back on the passer.
  - c. The passer throws a soft, lofted pass about the shoulder height of the receiver and to the outside (right or left).
  - d. As the ball is released, the passer yells "Ball!"
  - e. The receiver turns as quickly as possible and attempts to catch the ball.
  - f. The passer should never throw the ball at the receiver, but can increase the difficulty by increasing the ball speed or yelling "Ball" later.
  - g. This drill teaches the receiver to turn the head around quickly on a route to locate the ball and then make an adjustment to the ball's flight.
4. Toe dance drill
  - a. The passer lines up on a sideline.
  - b. The receiver lines up 10 yards (9.1 m) away on a yard line approximately 10 yards away from the sideline. For example, the passer stands on the intersection of the 10-yard line and the sideline facing the 20-yard (18 m) line. The receiver

stands on the 20-yard line, 10 yards away from the sideline and facing it.

- c. The receiver jogs toward the sideline, and the passer attempts to throw the ball so the receiver and the ball meet at the intersection of the yard line and the sideline.
- d. Once there, the receiver tries to get possession of the ball before going out-of-bounds.
- e. As the receivers become proficient at this task, the passer can widen the throw out-of-bounds, forcing the receiver to stretch to catch the ball and attempt to keep at least 1 foot (30 cm) inbounds.
- f. This drill can also be used in the end zone. The passer sets up on the endline, while the receivers run toward the endline.
- g. This drill promotes concentration and body awareness in relation to the sideline and endline.

### **LEARNING SEQUENCE**

1. Practice all the physical skills related to the game:
  - a. Throwing
  - b. Receiving
  - c. Kicking/punting
  - d. Blocking
  - e. Pass coverage
  - f. Deflagging
  - g. Lateral passing
  - h. Running with the ball and fakes
  - i. Pass rushing
2. Learn the positions, including duties and common formations
3. Learn kicking formations and assignments involved:
  - a. Getting down field quickly and keeping the runner inside
  - b. Kicker as safety
4. Practice offensive plays:
  - a. Routes
  - b. Blocking schemes
  - c. Defensive-formations recognition
  - d. Audibles
5. Practice defensive formations:
  - a. Player to player
  - b. Zones:
    - (1) Two-deep straight
    - (2) Two-deep rotation
    - (3) Three-deep
  - c. All defensive formations change depending on how many players rush the passer
6. Practice the kicking game:
  - a. Punt return
  - b. Punt coverage
  - c. Extra point
  - d. Kickoff
  - e. Kickoff return



## 7. Playing suggestions:

- Assignments should not be tipped off by players' leaning or pointing the eyes, head, or body or by changing facial expression.
- Remember that the passer is a ball carrier as long as the ball is in his or her hands.
- Vary your style of defensive play when flanked by an offensive player. Move out and set, move out and come back in motion, and move and dart through the split if it is wide enough.
- Early in the game discover which defensive players are weak in covering passes.
- Set up plays by sacrificing one or two downs to make future plays function properly.
- Plays should be set up in a sequence, including both passing and running plays.

**DEFENSE**

With the rule changes that eliminated contact blocking, offensive football is almost exclusively passing. Therefore, the type of defense employed must be set up to stop the pass first. With any of the following defenses, a few adjustments will control any running attack.

There are three key factors for a successful defensive team:

- A strong pass rush: The pass rush is not typically the primary focus of a defense. Mistakenly, teams put slower, weaker players in this position. However, just like all levels of football, pass rushing is the most important aspect of defending the pass. Nothing helps the defensive backfield more than a quarterback who is under tremendous pressure. The more time a quarterback has, the more difficult it is to cover the receivers.
- Team speed: Rarely will an offensive team be completely stopped. Therefore, overall team speed allows maximum pursuit of the ball in all situations. Three vital positions where team speed and ability are needed most are pass rusher, linebacker, and safety. The three best athletes on the team should play in these positions. Team speed is also more vital if the defense runs a player-to-player defense.
- Communication and cohesion: No matter what the skill level, if players are not communicating, there will be missed assignments and lack of unity in the defense. Therefore, players may line up incorrectly and, by mere position alone, set themselves up to be beaten by an offensive player. For example, the defense is in a two-deep rotational zone that ends up in three-deep coverage if the quarterback rolls out. If the corner who is supposed to drop back as a safety does not, then one third of the deep zone is uncovered. Therefore, the defense must never line up in a position where it cannot cover.

**Player-to-player pass coverage**

Eligible receivers are covered by a single defensive player who follows the receiver wherever he or she goes.

**Coverage rules**

- Concentrate on the receiver, not the quarterback.
- Concentrate on the receiver's midsection, not the head.
- Never let a receiver get behind you. Therefore, the initial distance between a receiver and a defensive back should be determined by the receiver's speed.
- Never leave your player unless you see the ball has been thrown.

**General strengths**

- Allows tighter coverage, especially in short-yardage situations.
- Makes the receiver work harder to get open and catch a pass.

**General weaknesses**

- Requires more-skilled, faster athletes to perform properly than do other defenses.
- Requires more physical effort than the zone, so fatigue may become a factor. This is especially true if players are playing both offense and defense.
- Overloads by receivers (three to one side) make it difficult to cover.
- Crossing patterns by multiple receivers may cause a defender to be screened and not be able to pursue the receiver.
- One new offensive innovation, lines up without any blockers and two or more receivers lined up on each side. A player-to-player defense would have a difficult time defending this offense, especially if the receivers run crossing patterns.

**Player-to-player formations and strategies**

The following illustrations are for seven-player teams. For eight- or nine-player teams, use the additional player(s) to cover players where needed. For example, if the offense uses another wide receiver, cover this player with another defensive back. If the player lines up as a blocker or in the backfield, the extra defensive player may rush, take the back one-on-one, or play a rover and help where needed.

**Two rushers, one free safety, one linebacker (Fig. 36-9)****Player responsibilities**

- Rushers only have rushing responsibilities. They attempt to sack or pressure the quarterback.
- The linebacker takes center or first blocker to release for a pass. If no release, linebacker reads the quarterback and plays a shallow (8 to 10 yards; 7 to 9 m) middle-zone coverage.

3. The free safety typically lines up in the middle of the field, favoring the strong receiver side (side with two or more receivers). The free safety plays like a center fielder, reading the quarterback's eyes, and breaks on the ball when it is released. The free safety has no one-on-one responsibilities, so he or she must alert the other defensive backs if there is a run.
4. The remainder of the backs each pick a receiver and run with him or her wherever he or she goes. These players cannot concern themselves with the run or other receivers. They must focus on the receiver and not the quarterback. Defenders should attempt to stay between their player and the end zone and never get beat deep. They should line up with enough distance between the receiver and defender to enable deep coverage.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

1. Excellent for short-yardage plays. Allows tight coverage on receivers.
2. Allows free safety to help out on deep patterns or speedy receivers.
3. Allows maximum pressure on the quarterback.

4. If the quarterback gets outside of the rushers, the free safety must come up and make the play. Because of the distance the safety must travel, this usually results in a substantial gain.
5. If the center releases and is picked up by the linebacker and a second blocker releases, the free safety is again responsible for the play.
6. If both blockers and center release, one of the players will be uncovered.

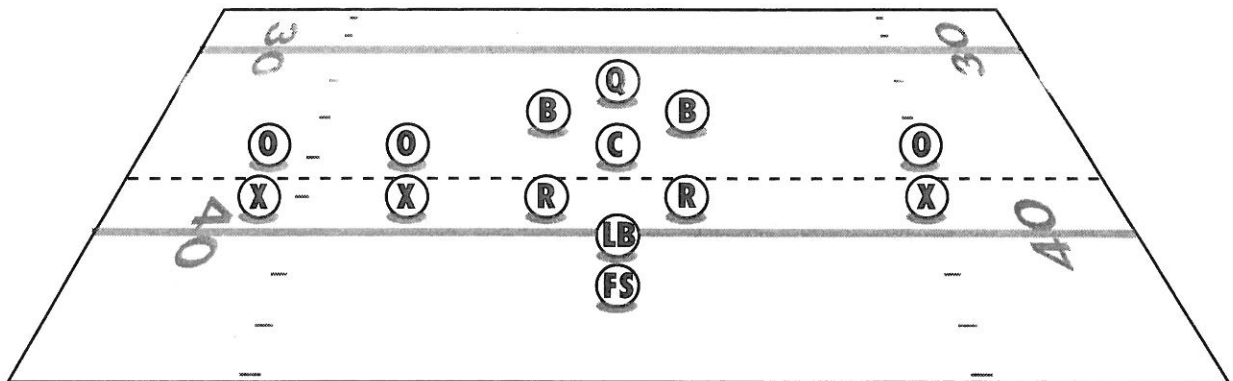
#### Strategies

1. Have rushers line up wide and rush from the outside and keep the quarterback in the pocket to stop the quarterback from running.
2. Not much can be done about multiple blockers releasing in this defense. Switching to a single-rusher defense would be the best tactic.

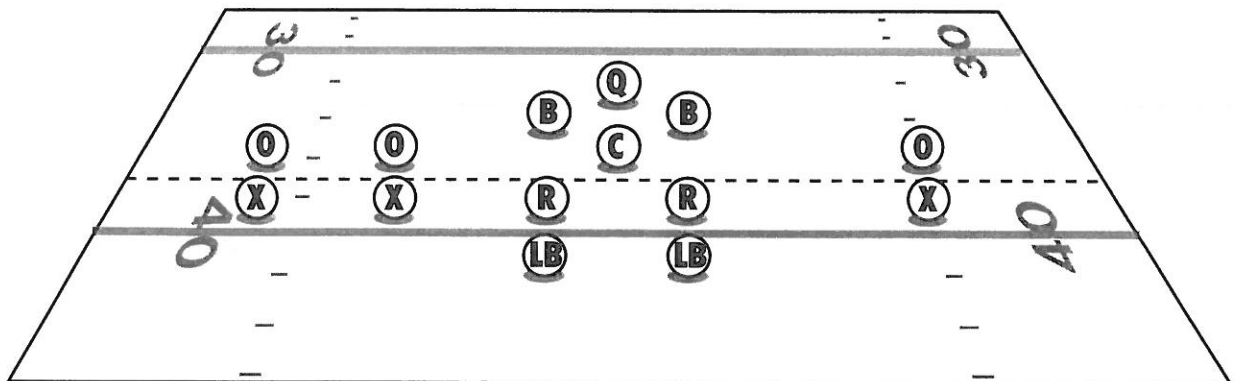
#### Two linebackers, two rushers, no free safety (Fig. 36-10)

##### Responsibilities

1. Rushers and pass-coverage backs are the same.
2. With two linebackers, one is designated to take the first blocker to release. If another blocker releases, the



**Fig. 36-9.** Two rushers, one free safety, one linebacker (player to player no. 1). (B: blocker; C: center; FS: free safety; LB: linebacker; O: receiver; Q: quarterback; R: rusher; X: secondary defender)



**Fig. 36-10.** Two linebackers, two rushers, no free safety (player to player no. 2). (B: blocker; C: center; LB: linebacker; O: receiver; Q: quarterback; R: rusher; X: secondary defense)

second linebacker covers this player. If another blocker does not release, the linebacker plays a shallow middle zone and takes the quarterback if he or she runs.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

1. Allows maximum pressure on the quarterback.
2. Excellent for short-yardage plays. Allows tight coverage on receivers.
3. Reduces the success of the quarterback running.
4. Reduces the success of short passes to the second blocker releasing.
5. There is no free safety to help cover deep. Therefore, if a defensive back is beaten deep, it usually results in a long gain or a touchdown.

#### Strategies

1. Defensive backs must play a little softer and not be fooled by a short fake, allowing the receiver to get behind the defender.
2. Rushers can take an inside or outside path to the quarterback, allowing more pressure.

#### One rusher, two linebackers, one free safety (Fig. 36-11)

##### Responsibilities

1. Defensive backs and two linebackers play the same as the defense above.
2. Free safety plays the same as in the first player-to-player defense.

##### Strengths and weaknesses

1. This defense has all the strengths of the aforementioned defenses save one: Because there's only one rusher, the quarterback will have additional time to throw and the receivers will have additional time to get open.

##### Strategies

1. Defensive backs can play tighter.
2. Have one of the linebackers line up like a rusher and drop back into position on the snap of the ball. This will keep the lone rusher from being double-teamed by the blockers.

3. In this defense, the lone pass rusher *must* be an aggressive, fast player to pressure the quarterback.

#### Zone coverage

With the exception of pass rushers, each defensive player is assigned an area (zone) to be responsible for covering. Receivers entering their zone should be guarded by release as the receiver enters another zone.

#### Coverage rules

1. Stay at home. Never follow a receiver into another zone.
2. Keep the receiver in front of you.
3. Safeties must stay as deep as the deepest player in the zone and wide as the widest player.
4. When the ball is released, all defensive backs attempt to break on the ball and/or pursue.

#### General strengths

1. Does not require exceptionally gifted athletes.
2. Is not as fatiguing as player-to-player defense.
3. Good at preventing the deep pass.
4. Has more players breaking on the ball than player-to-player defenses.

#### General weaknesses

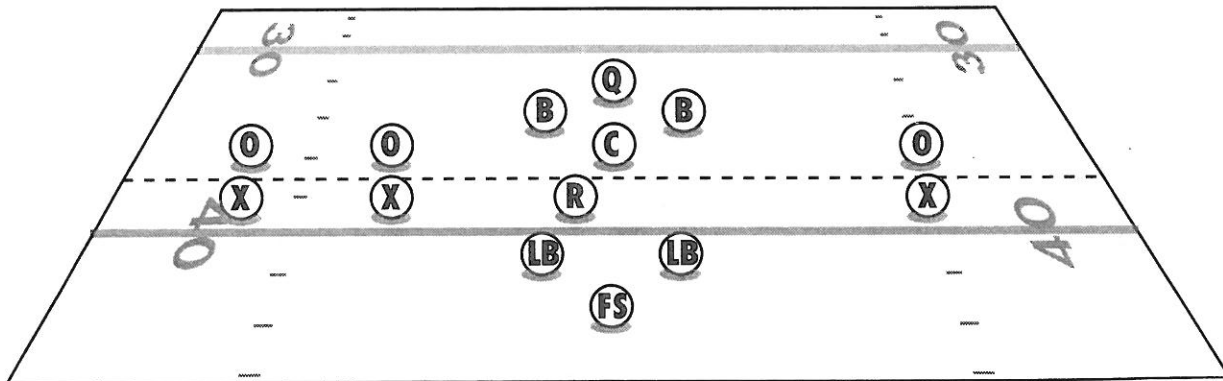
1. Does not allow tight coverage in short-yardage plays.
2. Is weak in the seams between zones.
3. Is susceptible to the zone being flooded by multiple receivers.
4. Is typically weak in the flat area.

#### Zone formations and strategies

##### Two safeties, corners, rushers; one linebacker (Fig. 36-12)

##### Player responsibilities

1. Rushers pursue quarterback.
2. Corners have the flat area on their side. The flat area is approximately 10 to 12 yards (9 to 11 m) deep, from the near sideline to the linebackers' hook/curl zone.



**Fig. 36-11.** One rusher, two linebackers, one free safety (player to player no. 3). (B: blocker; C: center; FS: free safety; LB: linebacker; O: receiver; Q: quarterback; R: rusher; X: secondary defense)

3. Linebacker has the hook/curl zone. This zone is about 10 to 12 yards deep and approximately 10 yards on either side of the linebacker.
4. Each safety has one half of the field, behind all of the other zones.

**Strengths and weaknesses**

1. Allows maximum pressure on the quarterback.
2. Excellent against the run.
3. Can be hurt in the seams between zones.
4. Flooding the zones makes it difficult to cover.

**Strategy.** Have defenders line up with a player-to-player look and on the snap of the ball go into their zones. This may confuse the quarterback and not tip off the weak areas of this defense.

**Two safeties, linebackers, corners; one rusher (Fig. 36-13)**

**Player responsibilities**

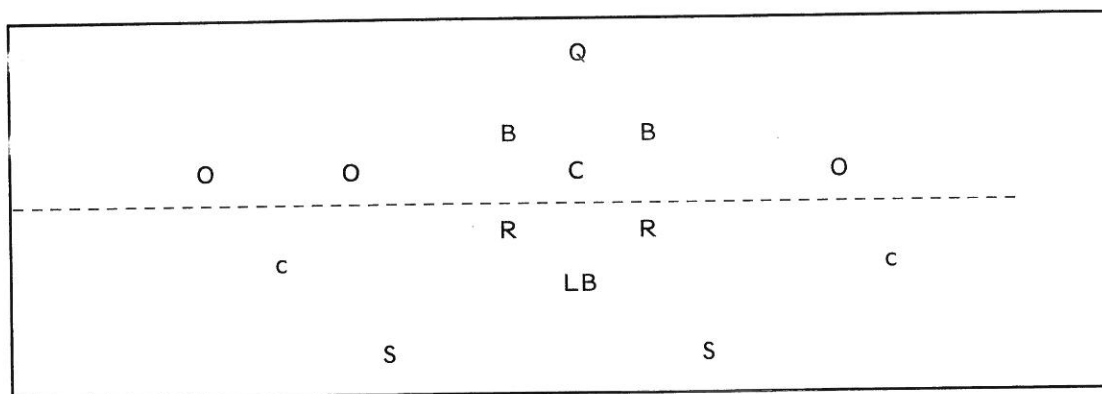
1. Strong-side rusher pursues the quarterback.
2. Weak-side rusher drops into linebacker position and plays the hook/curl zone on his or her side.

3. The linebackers widen to the strong side and play the hook/curl zone. Having two linebackers cover this zone helps the corners by decreasing their flat coverage.
4. Corners have flats. The flats will not be as wide due to the two-linebacker set.
5. Safeties play halves.

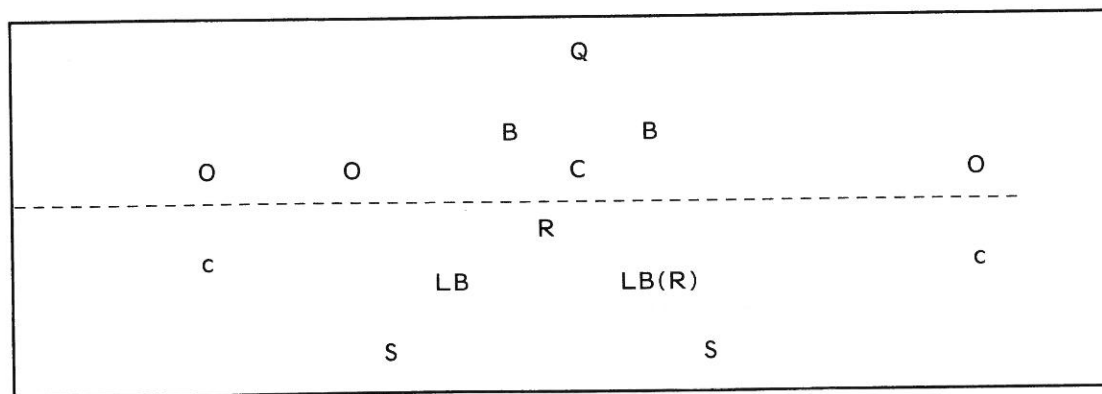
**Strengths and weaknesses**

1. Excellent short-pass coverage, which allows more players to break on short passes.
2. Deep passes are more difficult to throw because the ball typically has to pass over one of the shallow defenders to a receiver. This helps the safeties because the ball is in the air longer and allows them additional time to pursue a pass.
3. Excellent against the run.
4. With only one rusher, the quarterback will have additional time to find a receiver, especially one on a deep route.

**Strategy.** Have the weak-side rusher move to the linebacker position on that side on the snap of the ball. This will help the single rusher from being double-teamed.



**Fig. 36-12.** Two safeties, corners, and rushers; one linebacker (zone no. 1).  
(B: blocker; C: center; c: corner; LB: linebacker; O: receiver; Q: quarterback;  
R: rusher; S: safety)



**Fig. 36-13.** Two safeties, linebackers, and corners; one rusher (zone no. 2).  
(B: blocker; C: center; c: corner; LB: linebacker; O: receiver; Q: quarterback;  
R: rusher; S: safety)



**Three safeties, one corner, one linebacker, two rushers (Fig. 36-14)****Player responsibilities**

1. Rushers pursue quarterback.
2. Linebacker covers hook/curl zone.
3. Strong-side corner (corner on the two-receiver side) plays the flat.
4. Weak-side corner (corner on the one-receiver side) lines up in the flat zone and sprints to the deep, outside one third of the field on that side.
5. Both safeties line up in halves and rotate toward the offense's strong side and play thirds. Therefore, in the above illustration, the right corner plays the right outside one third; the right safety plays the middle one third; and the left safety plays the left outside one third.

**Strengths and weaknesses**

1. Excellent against the deep throw.
2. Puts maximum pressure on the quarterback.
3. Weak-side flat is uncovered.

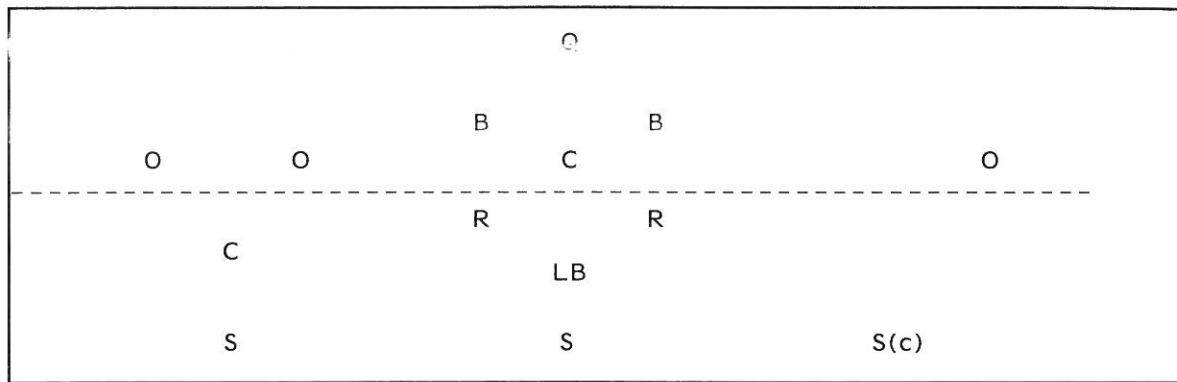
**Strategy.** Have safeties and corners line up in Cover I prior to the snap and move to the new coverage on the snap of the ball. This will prevent the opponents from identifying an uncovered area. It may also lure the quarterback into throwing deep.

**Three safeties, two corners, one linebacker, one rusher (Fig. 36-15)****Player responsibilities**

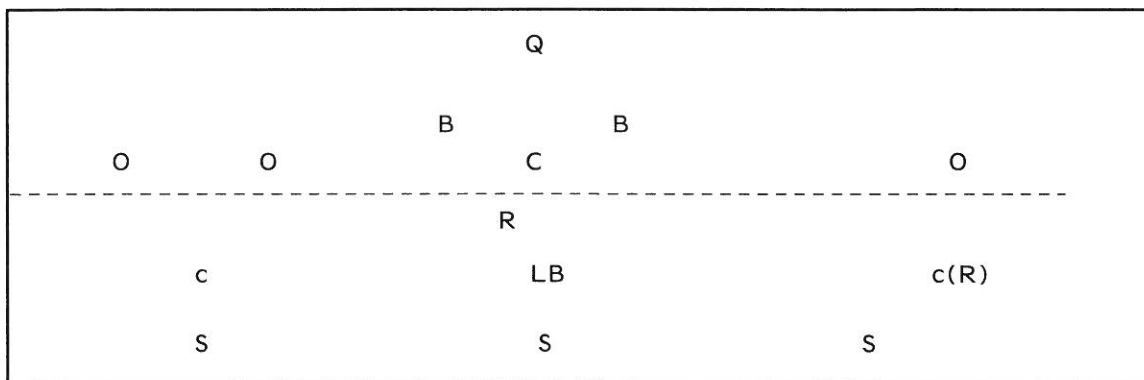
1. Strong-side rusher pursues quarterback.
2. Weak-side rusher lines up to rush and drops into the corner position on the snap of the ball and plays the flat.
3. Linebacker covers hook/curl zone.
4. Corners and safeties rotate toward the offensive strong side and play thirds, as in zone 3A (Fig. 36-14).

**Strengths and weaknesses**

1. Only one rusher allows the quarterback additional throwing time.
2. Excellent against the deep pass.



**Fig. 36-14.** Three safeties, one corner, one linebacker, two rushers (zone no. 3A).  
(B: blocker; C: center; c: corner; LB: linebacker; O: receiver; Q: quarterback;  
R: rusher; S: safety)



**Fig. 36-15.** Three safeties, two corners, one linebacker, one rusher (zone no. 3B).  
(B: blocker; C: center; c: corner; LB: linebacker; O: receiver; Q: quarterback;  
R: rusher; S: safety)

3. Does not give up the weak-side flat, as does zone 3A.

**Strategies.** As in zone 3A, line up in zone 1 and switch on the snap of the ball.

### OFFENSE

Even though speed is an asset for an offensive team, it is not as important as for the defense. A team can have a very productive offense with receivers who run good routes and are excellent possession receivers.

There are two major factors for an effective offense:

1. A good quarterback is the most important individual in the offense.
2. Everyone on the offensive unit should have decent quickness and must be able to catch the ball.

### Offensive considerations

1. Types of offense:
  - a. Drop back: Quarterback stays in the pocket to throw.
    - (1) Quarterback needs a strong arm.
    - (2) Must be excellent blockers for maximum protection.
    - (3) Receivers must be fast to allow the deep pass.
  - b. Sprint out: Quarterback rolls to one side of the field to throw.
    - (1) Quarterback must be mobile and have decent throwing ability.
    - (2) Do not need strong blockers.
  - c. Option: Quarterback sprints out to one side of the field and throws or pitches to the option back. Option back may run or throw.
    - (1) Must have a quarterback with excellent mobility, and would be very effective if he or she can throw on the run.
    - (2) Option back needs good speed, lateral movement, and throwing ability.
    - (3) Need quick blockers to slow the rush.
  - d. One- or no-blocker set.
    - (1) Quarterback must be quick and have a strong arm.
    - (2) Receivers need to run hard, quick routes and move with the quarterback if he or she scrambles.
2. Personnel: Dictates what style of offense will be utilized. This is especially true with the quarterback.
  - a. Quarterback:
    - (1) If the quarterback is not very mobile but has a good arm, he or she should stay in the pocket formed by the blockers to throw.
    - (2) If the quarterback is very mobile but does not have a strong arm, an option or sprintout attack may be preferred.
    - (3) If the quarterback has both mobility and throwing ability, the offense may utilize any attack.
  - b. Receivers:

- (1) If they are not very fast, the offense must rely on short, quick passes and attempt to have a ball-control type offense.
- (2) If they have excellent speed, they can be used in all offenses.

#### c. Blockers:

- (1) If they are slow, they would be better suited for the straight drop-back pass.
- (2) If they are quick, they can work in any offense, but would be excellent for the option and sprintout style.

### Offensive formations

The following formations are composed of seven-person teams. If additional players are used, they may be lined up as receivers or blockers depending on the style of offense and the defense played against.

#### Option sets (Fig. 36-16)

##### Strengths and weaknesses

1. This is a good ball-control offense.
2. There are fewer chances for interceptions.
3. Forces the defense to commit to cover the run, which opens up passing lanes.
4. It is excellent for running out the clock.
5. It is difficult to catch up when down by several points.
6. Limits the amount of field the offense can attack. Because the quarterback is running in one direction, it makes it very difficult to throw back to the other side of the field. This enables the defense to give up an area and use that player to help stop the run.

##### Strategies

1. Do not always line up the running back in the back-field, but have him or her line up as a receiver and go in motion to start the option.
2. Do not always run the option. Mix the running plays with some passing plays to keep the defense from stacking up to stop the run.

*Note:* Sprint-out and drop-back formations may use motion with receivers and/or an option for formation.

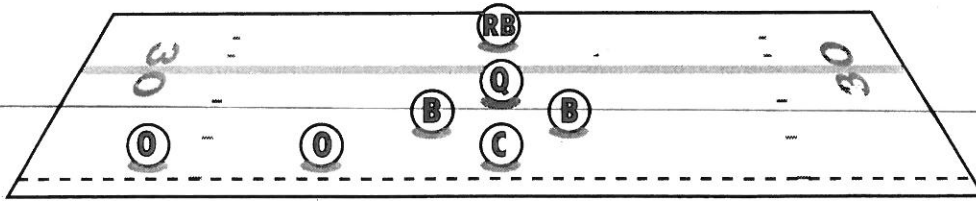
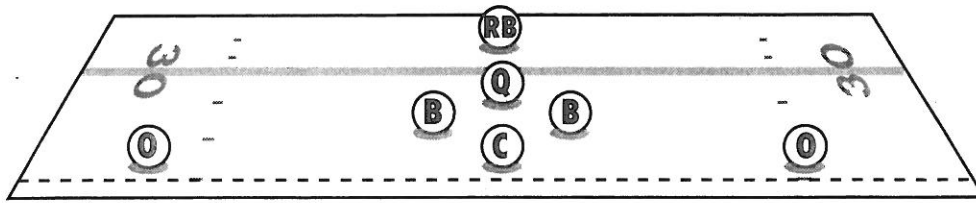
#### Sprint-out and drop-back pass formations (Fig. 36-17)

##### Strengths and weaknesses

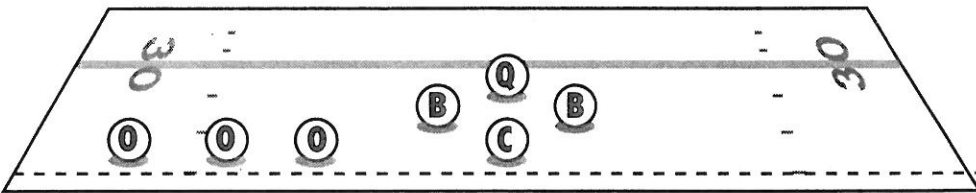
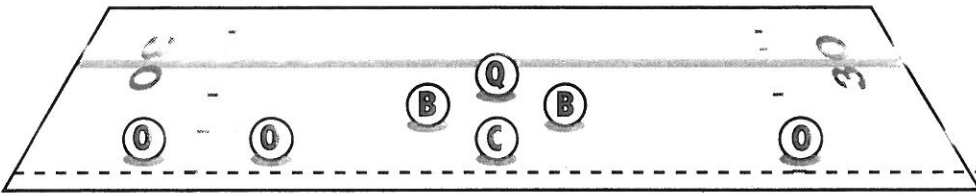
1. Provides more opportunities for interceptions.
2. May not provide as much ball control unless many short passes are thrown.
3. It is easier to catch up from a large deficit.

##### Strategies

1. Alternate formations to confuse the defense.
2. Alternate the side receivers line up on, to confuse the defense by showing it something different almost every play.
3. Use motion to identify player-to-player coverage and to flood a zone.



**Fig. 36-16. I.** Option sets. (B: blocker; C: center; O: receiver; Q: quarterback; RB: running back)



**Fig. 36-17. II.** Sprint-out and drop-back pass formations. (B: blocker; C: center; O: receiver; Q: quarterback)

#### One- or no-blocker formations (Fig. 36-18)

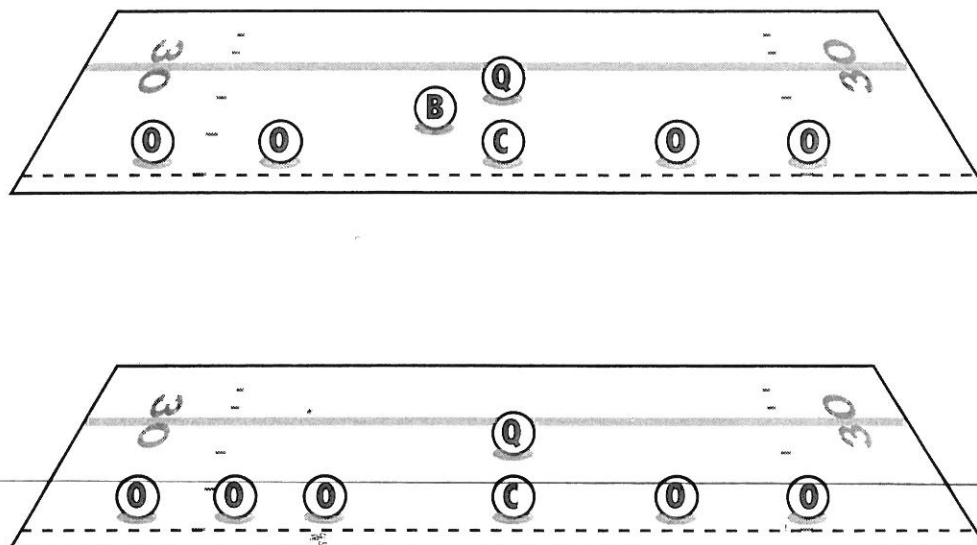
##### Strengths and weaknesses

1. Allows maximum number of receivers into the pass pattern, which puts a tremendous strain on the coverage.
2. Excellent against player-to-player defense because so many receivers are releasing and many receivers are lined up on the same side.
3. Excellent for short-yardage passes.
4. Hard to make a long pass unless the quarterback can avoid the rush.

5. If the defense is in player-to-player coverage and the quarterback avoids the rush, there is no player left to guard the quarterback and the run becomes a viable option.

##### General offensive strategies

1. Take what the defense gives you.
  - a. Player-to-player defense.
    - (1) Have many crossing patterns.
    - (2) Put many receivers on the same side. This makes it very hard to cover if the receivers cross.



**Fig. 36-18. III. One- or no-blocker formations.** (B: blocker; C: center; O: receiver; Q: quarterback)

- (3) Find the weakest defender and let the receiver he or she is covering line up alone to allow more room to get open.
- (4) Use the one- or no-blocker offense.
- (5) Clear out an area with the receivers, release a blocker there, and throw to him or her.
- (6) Quarterback should run if the rush can be avoided.
- b. Two-deep zone with two corners, one linebacker, and one rusher.
  - (1) Flood zones with several receivers.
  - (2) Throw passes between the seams of the zones.
  - (3) Quick-outs and quick-ins with the wide receivers are difficult to stop if done correctly.
  - (4) If the quarterback has time, flood the deep areas with receivers because each safety has to cover half the field.
- c. Two-deep zone with one rusher, two corners, and two linebackers.
  - (1) Short patterns are going to be very difficult to defend.
  - (2) Any medium-distance pattern that is between the linebackers is good.
  - (3) Flood the deep safeties.
- d. Three-deep zone with two corners, one linebacker, and one rusher.
  - (1) Throwing deep will be difficult, so concentrate on short patterns.
  - (2) Flood the short patterns with several receivers.
  - (3) Because there is only one rusher in this formation, the quarterback should have more time to throw and may run if the rush can be avoided.
2. Give the defense a different look as often as possible.
3. Build plays on one another—in other words, set the defense up. Throw to one area with a pattern of two or

more receivers. On the next play, run the same pattern but throw to a different receiver.

4. All receivers must run their routes as if they were the primary receiver.
5. The quarterback should attempt to throw to as many receivers, including the lineman, as possible. This keeps the defense from keying on any one player.

#### **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

1. Inspect all equipment to ensure safety and minimize injuries.
2. Provide competent officials.
3. Inspect the field and clear it of all obstacles that might cause injuries.
4. Give immediate medical attention to injured players.

#### **TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Use a modified ball (smaller, lighter) for young learners and women. Consider using a foam or plastic ball to establish skills.
2. In most school programs, contact blocking or tackling of any sort should not be permitted for safety reasons. Flag football is an acceptable substitute.
3. Passing and receiving skills should be taught first. Partner work can be used, first with stationary receivers at short distances and then with moving receivers at longer distances.
4. Two-on-one play can begin a player's introduction to defense. Encourage players to break up passing plays by staying with the receiver between the goal and receiver.
5. All players should practice kicking skills. This can be done in partners, with one partner kicking and the other receiving the ball.



6. When passing, kicking, and receiving skills have become somewhat consistent, modified games can be played, beginning with two-on-two and moving toward more players on each side. Having six players is adequate for the game and encourages more participation. Teach a few basic offensive and defensive plays and then encourage students to design their own plays.
7. Increase the size of the playing field as the number of players increases. Add centering and specific positioning as students begin to understand, through their play, the need for differentiated positioning. Keep rules at a minimum. Enforce no-contact rules consistently.

## GLOSSARY

**backfield** The players behind the line, who usually handle the ball.

**backward pass** A pass that travels toward the goal line a team is defending; may be made by any player.

**balanced line** Same number of players on each side of the center.

**block** Using the shoulder, but not the arms, to intercept a defensive player or to stop a defensive player from touching the ball carrier.

**bootleg play** Faking a handoff or a pass to another player, then running with the ball shielded with the body from the defensive team's view.

**button hook** A pass route in which the receiver turns and runs back to catch the ball.

**centering** The act by the center of putting the ball in play from the ground by handing or passing the ball between the legs to a backfield player.

**clipping** Landing on the back of the leg(s) of a player not carrying the ball.

**cross-back** An offensive play in which two backs cross, one of them taking a handoff from the quarterback.

**cut back** To change direction; usually done by the receiver or ball carrier.

**disqualifying foul** Unnecessary roughness, for which a player is removed from the game.

**double wingback** An offensive formation: two backs are placed about 1 yard (0.9 m) outside of their ends, one back is placed

either to the right or left behind a guard, and the tailback is about 5 yards (4.5 m) behind the center.

**down** A unit of the game that starts with the entering of the ball and ends when the ball is declared dead.

**end zone** The 10-yard (9 m) area between the goal line and endline.

**fair catch** A catch designated by the player receiving a kicked ball by raising the hand.

**flag guarding** Using the hands, arms, or clothing or spinning more than once to prevent another player from pulling the flag. Penalty: 15 yards (13.7 m) and loss of down.

**flanker** An offensive player lining up closer to the sideline than the team.

**handoff** A play in which one back hands the ball to another back.

**lateral pass** Passing the ball backward or sideways.

**line of scrimmage** An imaginary line marking the position of the ball at the start of each play.

**offsides** Advancement of a player beyond the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.

**safety** A score made when a free ball, or one possessed by a player defending his or her own goal, becomes dead behind the goal, provided the impetus that caused the ball to cross the goal was supplied by the defending team.

**shotgun offense** A formation, used primarily for passing, in which the quarterback lines up 5 to 6 yards (5 m) behind the center.

## SUGGESTED READING

The United States Flag and Touch Football League: *The United States flag and touch football rules*, Mentor, Ohio, 1992, USFT Football League.

## VIDEOS

*NIRSA: Flag and touch football rules* and *First and twenty* are both available from NIRSA, 850 SW 15th St, Corvallis, OR 97333.

*Soccer-style placekicking: techniques and fundamentals* and *All-pro punting techniques* are both available from Cambridge Physical Education and Health, P.O. Box 2153, Charleston WV 25328.