



Upward Flag Football Referee Handbook



©2009 Upward Unlimited.

Upward® and Upward Flag Football™ are registered trademarks of Upward Unlimited. Upward Soccer,™ Upward Cheerleading,™ Upward Unlimited,™ Upward Basketball®, Upward Soccer Camp,™ Upward Basketball Camp,™ Upward Cheerleading Camp,™ and the Upward Star Logo are trademarks of Upward Unlimited. All rights reserved.



Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Mission and Values of Upward	4

Section One:

Rules Unique to Upward Flag Football

Field Diagram and Format	6
Offensive Basics	13
Defensive Basics.....	16

Section Two:

Upward Refereeing

Becoming an Upward Referee.....	20
Communicating with Coaches and Players.....	21
Controlling the Game.....	22

Section Three: Calling the Game

How to Make a Call	26
What to Watch For	27
Positioning and Responsibilities	30
Hand Signals	32



Table of Contents



Introduction

Welcome to Upward Flag Football! This handbook is designed to provide you, a volunteer referee, with what you need to be successful in the Upward Flag Football Ministry. The information on the following pages is designed to guide you through the season and includes the Rules Unique to Upward Flag Football.

For all Upward refereeing needs, visit www.upward.org/upwardreferee.

This page has been created to equip you as an Upward referee and is only accessible through this URL. You will find the rules unique to Upward Flag Football, frequently asked questions and much more.





MISSION STATEMENT

To introduce children to Jesus Christ
by creating opportunities to serve through sports.

VALUES

The Expectation of God Moments

We believe that God is at work all around us.

The Life of Integrity

We believe that how we live is more important than what we say.

The Discipline of Excellence

We believe in serving that exceeds expectations.

The Priority of Children

We believe that Every Child Is A Winner.



Section One:

Rules Unique to Upward Flag Football





Section One: Rules Unique to Upward Flag Football

The rules unique to Upward Flag Football are designed to recognize that Every Child Is a Winner by promoting the following:

- › *Character*
- › *Self-esteem*

Field Diagram and Format

- › The offensive team is awarded a first down when it crosses the midfield line. Based on the field size, one first down is sufficient to advance the football for a score.
- › The lines 5 yards from each end zone and on both sides of the midfield line are no-run zones. No-run zones do not apply to the K5 division. The no run zones are designed to take away power-running plays. If an offensive team picks up a first down but is then pushed back into the no-run zone, the no-run rule will not apply, as the offensive team cannot pick up another first down.
- › The offensive team begins the game and second half by taking possession of the ball at its 5-yard line. With the no contact rule, this also means no blocking in Upward Flag Football. With kick-offs, the goal is to block and clear the way for the return, which is not a part of Upward Flag Football.







Down Format

K5 and 1st-2nd Grades

- › The offensive team has four plays to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown.
- › If the team fails to cross midfield in four downs or score a touchdown, the other team takes possession on its own 5-yard line. There will be no punts for this division. All four downs will be used without the concern of giving up field position.

3rd-6th Grades

- › The offensive team has four plays to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown.
- › On fourth down, a team has two options.
 - A team may attempt to gain a first down or a touchdown. If a team fails to convert on fourth down, either by scoring or picking up a first down, the ball changes possession at the no-run zone going into the first down.
 - A team may “punt” as its fourth-down play by notifying the referee. In this case, the ball will be placed on the opposing team’s 5-yard line, and there will be a change of possession. For the older divisions, defensive stands will be awarded. This also teaches the field possession aspect of football.



Offensive starting points

(K5-2nd grades)

SITUATION	STARTING FIELD POSITION AFTER CHANGE OF POSSESSION
AFTER A TOUCHDOWN AND EXTRA POINT(S) ATTEMPT	OFFENSE'S 5-YARD LINE
AFTER A TURNOVER ON DOWNS	OFFENSE'S 5-YARD LINE
AFTER AN INTERCEPTION	AT THE SPOT OF THE INTERCEPTION

(3rd-6th grades)

SITUATION	STARTING FIELD POSITION AFTER CHANGE OF POSSESSION
AFTER A TOUCHDOWN AND EXTRA POINT(S) ATTEMPT	OFFENSE'S 5-YARD LINE
AFTER A "PUNT"	OFFENSE'S 5-YARD LINE
AFTER A TURNOVER ON DOWNS	NO-RUN ZONE GOING INTO THE FIRST DOWN (MIDFIELD LINE)
AFTER AN INTERCEPTION	AT THE SPOT OF THE INTERCEPTION



Clock Format

- › Games consist of four 9-minute quarters with an 8-minute halftime.
- › The game clock stops briefly at the end of every quarter for predetermined substitutions.
- › Each team has one 30-second timeout per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over to the second half. The clock will stop during the timeout.
- › A 30-second play clock begins after the referee spots the ball as ready for play.
- › The clock will stop in the final minute of the first half and in the final minute of the game for the following situations:
 - After an incomplete pass
 - After the ball carrier goes out of bounds
 - After a touchdown
 - During an extra-point attempt
 - For an official's timeout
 - After an interception
 - During a called timeout until the ball is snapped
 - On a change of possession



Game Format

Upward Flag Football leagues feature a unique game format.

- › Referees lead both teams in prayer at midfield before every game. This is a good time to give reminders about the game and to check that flags are on hips, jerseys are tucked in, jewelry has been removed, and coaches have their substitution cards prepared.
- › The visiting team (wearing the lighter-colored jerseys) calls the coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss may choose to play offense or defense first or choose which goal to defend. The other team has the choice (possession or end to defend) not made by the team winning the toss. The team that plays defense first will play offense first to start the second half.
- › Because the end of a quarter does not signal a change of possession, the team with possession at the end of the quarter will retain possession after substitutions take place.
- › Teams will switch ends of the field at the half, not after each quarter.
- › Score will not be kept in the K5 or 1st-2nd grade divisions.
- › Standings are not kept in any division. Such standings add unnecessary pressure and intensity. In Upward Flag Football, there will not be a playoff system, championship tournament or a division champion thus eliminating the need for any standings.
- › Each team will have six players on the field at a time. This equips the offense with an appropriate amount of players without crowding the field.
- › Coaches are allowed to walk the sidelines and encourage their players without stepping in the playing area.
- › In the 3rd-6th grade divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle for the first two games of the season. In the K5 and 1st-2nd grade divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle throughout the season.
- › Teams will use substitution rules, as detailed on the next page.



Substitutions

Upward's substitution system is designed to provide each player equal opportunity for improvement. The system ensures that:

- › No child sits out more than one possession at a time.
- › Every child plays offense and defense in every game.
- › Every child will start on either offense or defense in each game.
- › In most cases, each child will play against someone of equal ability.
- › Coaches are not able to make unfair substitutions or to be accused of doing so.
- › Coaches do not have to monitor playing time for each player.
- › Playing time for all players is virtually even over the course of the season.

Scoring

- › ***Touchdown:*** 6 points
- › ***Extra point:*** 1 point (played from the 5-yard line with a pass) or 2 points (played from the 10-yard line with a run or pass) The 5-yard attempt is from the no-run zone.
- › ***Safety:*** 2 points. The scoring team will also receive possession on its own 5-yard line. No physical kicks will occur in Upward Flag Football.



Offensive Basics

- › A minimum of three players must be on the line of scrimmage at every snap. Traditional football format requires seven players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. The three players on the line for Upward Flag Football will consist of a center and then two receivers positioned anywhere along the line of scrimmage. This adds some structure to offensive sets.
- › Only one player can be in motion when the ball is snapped. This is intact to keep the integrity of the game.
- › In the 3rd-6th grade division, the ball must be snapped between the legs to begin play. K5 and 1st-2nd grade players may use the side snap. The traditional snap can be difficult for the younger players with small hands.
- › Before handing off or passing, the quarterback must have complete possession of the ball. This helps clarify the center sneak play. A possession change between the center and quarterback must occur in order to run the play.
- › A low-profile field cone or beanbag may be used to mark the line of scrimmage.



Section One: Rules Unique to Upward Flag Football

Running the Football

- › The quarterback cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage. This is in place to include others in each offensive play. Without this rule, a quarterback could dominate each play by advancing the football.
- › The person who receives the snap from the center (under-center or shot-gun) is considered the quarterback and cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage.
- › The option play, where the quarterback runs the ball down the line of scrimmage before pitching the ball is allowed, keeping in mind that he/she cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage.
- › The quarterback is the only player who can make the pitch. The pitch can occur at anytime while behind the line of scrimmage.
- › Once the pitch is received, the ball carrier can run the ball, hand-off the ball or pass the ball.
- › Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Multiple handoffs may be used. After the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, handoffs and laterals are not permitted. This rule exists for safety reasons and to discourage the multiple laterals that would occur to avoid a flag pull.
- › The 5 yards leading toward the goal line and the 5 yards leading to the midfield first-down line are no-run zones. The no-run zones do not apply to the K5 division.
- › A player receiving a handoff or immediate pitch can pass the ball (halfback pass) from behind the line of scrimmage.





- › A ball carrier may not dive. A dive will result in a penalty. This is for safety and abides with the no contact rule. Diving for advancement of the football can bring on injury or contact.
- › The ball carrier's feet determine the spot of the football when a flag is pulled, not the location of the football. This is to discourage a dive for advancement.

Receiving the Football

- › All six players are eligible to receive passes. (The quarterback becomes eligible after a handoff or immediate pitch.) With the no contact rule, no blockers can be used thus allowing all offensive players to be eligible.
- › A completion consists of a receiver gaining control of the football while having at least one foot in bounds. This rule is to keep the integrity of the game.
- › If a player catches a pass with his knee(s) on the ground, the play is dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the completion. This rule helps to keep the no contact rule intact.

Passing the Football

- › All forward passes can be completed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the defender can make a play on the ball. The defender must avoid contact with the receiver.
- › The quarterback has 7 seconds to throw a pass. If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, it is treated as an incomplete pass (loss of down). A handoff or pitch will end the 7-second pass count. This rule keeps a scrambling quarterback from taking too much time with each possession.



Section One: Rules Unique to Upward Flag Football

Dead Balls

Play is ruled dead when one of the following occurs:

- › The ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls out.
- › The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- › The ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- › A touchdown or safety is scored.
- › A pass falls incomplete.
- › At the point of an interception.
- › The ball hits the ground as a fumble. The ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble. One exception to this rule is with the center/quarterback exchange. If a snap is mishandled, the quarterback and only the quarterback may pick up the ball and continue play. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble (treated like a sack).

Defensive Basics

- › Teams may run man-to-man, zone defenses or a combination of both. This rule allows for defensive schemes and helps equal ability match-ups. Players can have an easier time covering a zone vs. a receiver man-to-man in the open field.
- › Interceptions may not be returned. Change of possession will be awarded at the point of the interception. This rule will force a substitution so players will not sit out more than one possession at a time.
- › Interceptions made in the end zone will result in a touchback and the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line. Interceptions cannot be returned, so the touchback is used for all endzone picks.





Rushing the Passer

- › All players who are rushing the quarterback must begin 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the 7-yard rush line. With no blocking allowed, this gives the quarterback enough time to make a play or escape a rush.
- › With the 3rd through 6th grade division, any number of players may rush the quarterback. The 1st and 2nd grade division may only rush one defender.
- › Defenders not rushing the quarterback may line up on or off the line of scrimmage. In the K5 division, three defenders must line up 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Having three players line-up 7 yards from the line of scrimmage for the K5 group keeps the congestion from forming along the line of scrimmage. This is key since majority of K5 plays are running plays. This also helps the defense disguise the rush, since it could be anyone of the three players lined up at the rush line.
- › Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to pursue the ball carrier. This allows the defense to react quickly to a play behind the line of scrimmage.





Section Two: Upward Refereeing





Section Two: Upward Refereeing

Becoming an Upward Referee

Upward has redefined “winning” as teaching and learning lessons in the game of life. Investing your time in the life of a child is one of the most rewarding activities you will ever do. As an Upward Flag Football Referee, you have an incredible opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child and his or her family. Referees should be committed to promoting salvation, character, and self-esteem. Remember that Upward Flag Football is not just another flag football league. It is a ministry! This ministry is distinguished by the role of the referee. Upward Flag Football referees represent the highest form of authority on the field. This authority is demonstrated as these servant leaders assume the responsibility of communicating right and wrong to players.

As an Upward Flag Football referee, you have a tremendous opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of players and their families. For this reason, it is important that you understand your responsibilities as a referee.

1. Share the love of Jesus Christ with each player.
2. Recognize the “winner” in every child.
3. Prepare for games.
4. Understand the fundamentals of flag football.
5. Promote the Circle of Affirmation. The Circle of Criticism and the Circle of Affirmation are found on page....

Before the game begins, it is important to communicate with your referee partner. Talk about positioning, and review the responsibilities for each of you. Basic communication before the game begins will make a positive difference during the game.





Communicating With Coaches and Players

Communicating with Coaches

As teams are warming up, take time to introduce yourself to the coaches. Ask if there's anything in particular that you need to know about. A heads-up on trick plays or certain strategies may help you make the right calls during game play.

During the game, coaches want to know which penalties are being called. Referees should communicate clearly with the coaches and give proper hand signals to avoid confusion.

Going into halftime is a good opportunity to set the tone for the second half. Based on the play in the first half, let coaches know what things you'll be looking for in the second half.

Communicating with Players

The referee sets the tone for the game by gathering both teams and their coaches at midfield for a brief word of encouragement and prayer. This also serves as a time to remind players what potential penalties to be aware of throughout the game. Through words of encouragement and warning, referees are often able to prevent a penalty from occurring.

Here are a few things to cover during this pregame meeting:

- › Be sure all players have their flags on their hips and their jerseys tucked in.
- › Be sure to encourage players
- › Have players remove all hats, jewelry, and watches.
- › Give reminders for game play (three offensive players on the line of scrimmage before the snap; unless in motion, all offensive players must be set on the snap of the ball; etc.)
- › Remind players and coaches the reasons to play Upward Flag Football: to have fun and to honor God with their actions and attitudes.





Section Two: Upward Refereeing

Be sure to encourage players. This will go a long way toward building players' self-esteem. Since referees are out on the field with the players, they have the perfect opportunity to encourage them.

Controlling the game

The referee must keep the game under control. The best way to do this is to blow the whistle to end play and to call penalties when they occur. Anytime a play ends, both referees should blow their whistles and spot the ball. Any rough play should be penalized first and warned second. If rough play is not stopped quickly, it will escalate and undermine the purpose of this league. Keeping the game under control will create a safe environment for which both coaches and parents will be grateful.

Clock Management

Managing the clock is an important function for the referees. You'll monitor two clocks throughout the game: the game clock and the play clock.

Game-Clock Management

The game clock is managed by referee 2. Upward Flag Football has four 9-minute quarters. The game clock stops in the following instances with less than one minute before halftime or one minute before the end of the game:

- › After an incomplete pass
- › After the ball carrier goes out of bounds
- › After a touchdown
- › During an extra-point attempt
- › During an official's timeout
- › After an interception
- › During a called timeout, until the ball is snapped to begin play
- › On a change of possession



Section Two: Upward Refereeing



Note: A half or game cannot end on a defensive penalty. After the penalty is applied, the offense will be awarded one untimed down.

Each team will have one 30-second timeout per half.

Play-Clock Management

The play clock is managed by referee 2. An offensive team has 30 seconds to snap the ball after the referee has declared it ready for play. The offensive team should be warned when only 10 seconds remain on the play clock. If the ball is not snapped by the expiration of the play clock, the whistle should be blown and a penalty administered.

Penalties

Referees will call all penalties.

If a penalty happens near the end zone, where the penalty yardage would place the ball in the end zone, then the penalty will be half the distance to the goal.

For a complete list of penalties, see back cover of this handbook.

Managing Substitutions

Substitutions take place on two occasions: at the beginning of each quarter and each time the ball changes possession.

1. At the beginning of each quarter, coaches will communicate to players the offensive and defensive groups for that quarter. This should take no more than 30 seconds.
2. After each possession change, the player group on the field will change. This should take only a few seconds, as all it requires is some players being replaced on the field (players running off and on the field).

It's important to keep these substitutions moving as quickly as possible. Remind coaches that this is not a coaching opportunity. Substitution time is not a time when coaches should be talking to players about strategy.





Section Three: Calling the Game





Section Three: Calling the Game

How to Make a Call

When a penalty is committed, the referee should throw a penalty flag in the direction of the penalty. Don't blow the whistle! Only blow the whistle when the penalty is a dead-ball penalty. Dead-ball penalties include illegal motion and delay of game.

If the penalty was committed during play, the referee should throw the flag to mark where the penalty was committed and let the play continue. After the play has ended, the referee should treat the penalty as follows:

1. Quickly explain the penalty to players by telling them how it can be avoided and the result of the penalty. The extent of the explanation will vary according to the age and understanding of the players and will decrease as the season progresses.
2. Ask the non-offending team if they wish to accept the penalty or decline the penalty and keep the result of the previous play.
3. Let the coach and fans know the reason for and consequence of the penalty.

Hand signals should be used when calling a penalty. Using the correct hand signal to inform players, coaches, and spectators of a penalty (see page 32). To make the game more enjoyable for everyone, briefly explain the hand signal being used. Referees may also use informative gestures to communicate the nature of an offense. For a pushing foul, the arms should be extended forward, slightly bent, with the palms facing outward. Informative gestures are not mandatory, but they help players, coaches, and spectators understand the referee's call.

Section Three: Calling the Game



What to Watch For

Upward Flag Football is governed by a set of unique rules intended to promote character and self-esteem. As a referee, it is your responsibility to know and uphold these rules. For a complete list of rules unique to Upward Flag Football, see pages 6-17 in this book.

Although you must watch for every penalty and be sure every rule is being upheld, this section will point out specific rules and situations for which you should watch.

Illegal Rushing

Illegal rushing occurs when a defensive player begins the pass rush in front of the 7-yard rush line. All players rushing the quarterback must begin the play behind the 7-yard rush line.

Illegal Contact

Illegal contact can be called on offensive or defensive players. Any intentional contact, such as blocking, tackling, holding, pushing, or jersey-pulling, will result in an illegal-contact penalty.

Pass Interference

Pass interference is called when a player physically impedes another player from having the full opportunity to catch a pass. This penalty can be called on an offensive or defensive player.

Illegal Run

An illegal run occurs when an offensive player runs the ball across the line of scrimmage while in the no-run zone. When the ball is snapped in the no-run zone, the offense must advance the ball with a completed forward pass. An illegal run also occurs when the quarterback runs across the line of scrimmage with the ball.





Section Three: Calling the Game

Illegal Pass

An illegal pass should also be called when a runner passes the ball after crossing the line of scrimmage.

Flag Guarding

Flag guarding is when a ball carrier's arm or hand is used to prevent his flag from being pulled. This may be intentional or unintentional. Either way, it should result in a penalty.

Illegal Motion

An illegal motion is when an offensive player is moving forward before the snap. Unless in motion across the field, all players must be set when the ball is snapped. An illegal motion should also be called when more than one player is in motion and running parallel to the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Only one player may be in motion when the ball is snapped.

Delay of Game

A delay-of-game penalty occurs when the offense does not snap the ball before the 30-second play clock runs out. Referees should warn the offense when the play clock reaches 10 seconds before expiration.

Lining Up Properly

Referees are to help players line up properly. The offense should have three players on the line of scrimmage at the snap. Remind players of this as they line up. The line of scrimmage for each team is a vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest the team's goal line. Each player at the line of scrimmage should break the plane through the snapper's waist to the line of scrimmage with either their head or foot.



Section Three: Calling the Game



Center-Quarterback Exchange

Upward Flag Football does not recognize fumbles. Any ball that hits the ground like a fumble is called dead. The play is over at that spot, just as if the player's flag had been pulled. The exception to this rule is the center-quarterback exchange. If a snap is mishandled, the quarterback may pick up the ball and continue play. If any other player picks up the ball, the play is dead at that point. Only the quarterback may pick up the ball to continue play. This applies to an under-center snap and a shotgun snap. The only defensive player who can cross the line of scrimmage is the defender who started behind the 7-yard rush line. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is dead at that point. The offense takes a loss of down and retains possession, just as if the quarterback's flag had been pulled.

Flags on Hips/Jerseys Tucked In

In Upward Flag Football, all players are required to have their flags on their hips and their jerseys tucked in. Players should monitor that after each play. An offensive ball carrier who is not in compliance with this gains an unfair advantage against the defense. Out-of-position flags and untucked jerseys give an unfair advantage because they impede a defender from pulling the flag. As a referee, you need to be aware of this situation. When this occurs, the play should be blown dead at the first attempt at a flag pull. Assume that the defender would have been successful in pulling the flag if not impeded.





Section Three: Calling the Game

Positioning and Responsibility

One of the most important elements of being a referee is being in the right position to best see your area of responsibility. Upward suggests having no fewer than two referees on the field of each game. Each referee will be assigned a number and a set of responsibilities. Referee 1 will be positioned on the line of scrimmage and will watch the offensive line and backfield. Referee 2 will be positioned at the defensive 7-yard rush line and will watch the defensive backfield. Referees must also be able to see the sidelines. This can best be accomplished by lining up diagonally from each other so each sideline will be covered by a referee. On the snap, referees should move based on the direction of the play. Don't stay in your starting position.

Primary Responsibilities of Referee 1

- › Watch for penalties behind the line of scrimmage—things like illegal motion and illegal passes.
- › Mark the line of scrimmage with a low-profile cone after each play.
- › Keep the 7-second pass count.
- › Begin the 30-second play clock after ball has been spotted.
- › Keep track of 30-second timeouts.

Primary Responsibilities of Referee 2

- › Mark the rush line by standing 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.
- › Watch eligible pass rushers.
- › Watch for penalties beyond the line of scrimmage.
- › Keep the game clock.

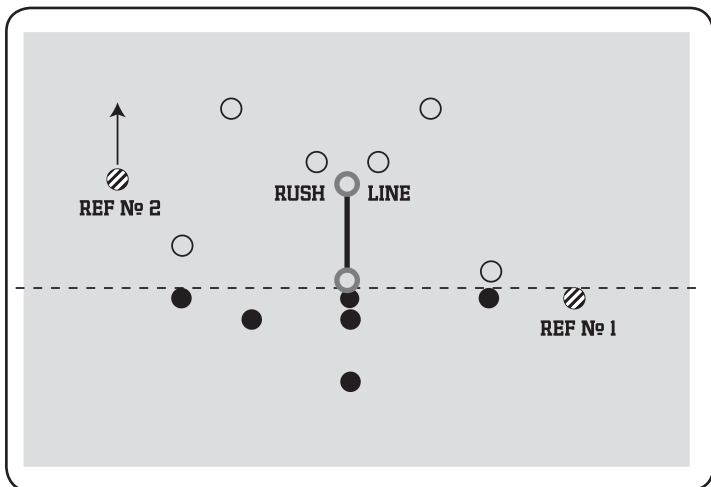


Section Three: Calling the Game



Responsibilities of Both Referees

- › Keep track of downs.
- › Watch for penalties.
- › Watch the sidelines.
- › Spot the ball.
- › Move the cones or markers that mark the line of scrimmage and rush line.
- › Blow the whistle to end play. When one referee blows the whistle, the other should as well.
- › Monitor players to be sure flags are on hips and jerseys are tucked in.





Hand Signals

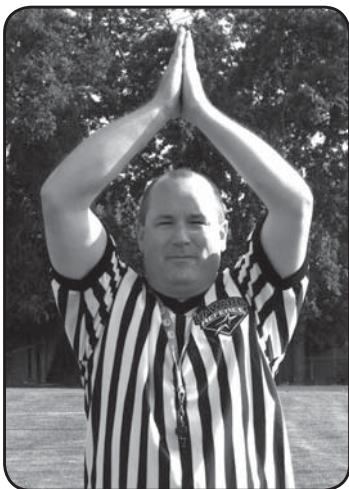
Touchdown or Extra Point

Extend arms straight above head to signify that a touchdown was scored or an extra-point attempt was successful.



Safety

Put palms together above head to show that the defense scored a safety.



Section Three: Calling the Game



First Down

When the offensive team gains enough yardage for a first down, point with right arm at shoulder length toward the defensive team's goal.

Fourth Down

Raise one arm above head with hand in a closed fist to show that the offense is facing fourth down.



Section Three: Calling the Game



Completed Pass

Place hands in front of face, elbows bent. Pulling elbows down, clench the hands to form fists.



Delay of Game

Fold arms in front of chest.



Section Three: Calling the Game



False Start or Illegal Formation

Rotate forearms repeatedly
in front of body.



Illegal Use of Hands

Grab one wrist and extend
the open hand of that arm
forward in front of chest.



Section Three: Calling the Game



Incomplete Pass

Shift arms in a horizontal fashion in front of body.



Interference

With open hands vertical to the ground, extend arms forward from shoulders.



Section Three: Calling the Game



Illegal Motion

Flatten out hand and make a horizontal arc with it.



