



HOW TO USE YOUR BEANBAG & HAT MECHANICS



One of the mysteries in football officiating involves when to use a beanbag. Almost nothing of its use is mentioned in the rulebook. But it has a definite purpose and, when used correctly, is an aid to officiating.

The beanbag is an official's administrative game tool used to mark specific spots on a football field where certain player or game actions occur. An official shall use a beanbag to mark the spot:

- Where a **fumble** occurs.
- Where a **scrimmage kick ends**.
- Where the kicking team **first touches a kick** in certain situations (to be discussed in detail later in this document).
- Where the ball is caught or recovered when the **Momentum Exception** applies.
- Where the ball is located when an **Inadvertent Whistle** occurs.

NOTE: A beanbag is not needed to indicate the spot where a free kick ends or where or where a pass is intercepted. Those spots will never be used for penalty enforcement. It is also not to be used as a substitute for hustle. When working as a Wing official, if a runner goes out of bounds several yards downfield from your position, do not throw the beanbag, and then run to the spot. Hustle to the spot as you would for any other play.

All officials should carry at least one beanbag, usually folded over the belt opposite your flag. Beanbags should be either, white, blue or black, depending on crew or assigner preference. The official (usually the Back Judge) that rules on action on and by the punt receivers must have two beanbags. One to mark the end of the kick and the other to indicate the spot of first or illegal touching. At times, both of those spots must be covered. Other officials may never need a second beanbag, but it doesn't hurt to have two.

Let's break down the situations in which an official needs to have a beanbag down:

Fumbles. The spot where a ball is fumbled is important because it identifies where the run ends. For fouls during the interval between the fumble and the recovery (while the ball is loose), we need to know the basic spot for penalty enforcement.

Play 1: First down and 10 for team A at its 20 yardline. A1 runs to team B's 35 yardline, where he fumbles. While the ball is loose, A2 holds at team B's 40 yardline. A3 falls on the ball at team B's 45 yardline.

Ruling 1: The basic enforcement spot for the penalty is team B's 35 yardline, where the fumble occurred. The covering official must drop a beanbag to mark the fumble spot. Since the spot of the foul is in advance of the fumble, enforcement is from the spot of the fumble. Thus, it is team A's ball, first down and five at team A's 25 yardline.

Scrimmage Kick. A beanbag should be dropped where a scrimmage kick ends. That is the Post Scrimmage Kick (PSK) spot. If a PSK foul occurs during the kick, the PSK spot is the basic spot for penalty enforcement (NCAA R10-2-2e Exception 3).

Play 2: R1 muffs a punt at his 35 yardline. The ball rolls forward to team R's 40 yardline. R1 picks up the ball there and runs to midfield, where he is tackled. While the ball was loose from R1's muff, R2 clipped K1 at team R's 45 yardline.

Ruling 2: The kick ended where R1 possessed the kick, not where he muffed the ball. A beanbag should be dropped at team R's 40 yardline (the PSK spot), which is the spot for penalty enforcement. The result is team R's ball, first and 10 from its 25 yardline.

First or illegal touching. A beanbag should be dropped when the kicking team first touches a kick in certain situations. For Free Kicks, team K cannot be first to touch the ball unless it has gone 10 yards beyond the restraining line. For Scrimmage Kicks, team K cannot first touch the ball beyond the neutral zone. NCAA uses the term "illegal touching" (R6-1-3, R6-3-2a).

Play 3: Team K attempts an onside kick. The ball hits the ground, touches K1's leg before it travels 10 yards, then rolls several more yards, where K2 falls on it.

Ruling 3: A beanbag should have been dropped where K1 was contacted by the ball. That is the location of the illegal touching. Team will likely choose to start a new series, first and 10 at the spot of K1's touching.

Play 4: K1's punt beyond the neutral zone is rolling when K2 touches it at team R's 20 yardline. The ball rolls to team R's 5 yardline, where K3 falls on it.

Ruling 4: A beanbag should be dropped at team R's 20 yardline because that is the spot of K1's touching. It is team R's ball, first and 10 at its 20 yardline.

Do not blow your whistle when the kicking team is guilty of first or illegal touching. Drop your beanbag (not your Flag) and allow the play to continue to its end.

It is a violation in NCAA if an untouched scrimmage kick is batted backward by team K while the ball is in the air after breaking the goalline plane (R6-3-11). When that happens, drop a beanbag in the end zone where the bat took place and allow the play to continue. One of the team R's options is to accept a touchback when the play ends.

Momentum. NCAA has a momentum exception (NCAA R8-5-1b; Exc. 1 & 2). If a team B or team R player catches or recovers a loose ball inside his own five-yard line and his original momentum takes him into his end zone where the ball subsequently becomes dead in his team's possession, team B or R gets the ball at the spot where possession was gained. Drop a beanbag where the ball is caught, intercepted or recovered.

Play 5: B1 intercepts a pass, recovers a team A fumble or catches a kick at his own 4 yardline. His momentum carries him into his end zone, where he is tackled.

Ruling 5: An official should drop a beanbag at team B's 4 yardline. That is where B1 possessed the ball. Since the momentum rule applies, the beanbag marks the spot at which team B will get the ball. The result is first and 10 for team B from its 4 yardline.

Inadvertent Whistle: If the ball is in possession of a player when an inadvertent whistle is sounded, the location of the ball is important because it will determine whether the team in possession takes the result of the play or if the down is to be replayed (NCAA R4-1-2).

Play 6: First and 10 for team A from its 20 yardline. A1 has the ball on a running play when an official sounds an inadvertent whistle. When the whistle is sounded, A1 is at team A's (a) 12 yardline, or (b) 35 yardline.

Ruling 6: In (a), team A will obviously ask for a replay of the down rather than accept an 8-yard loss. In (b), team A will likely accept the result of the play and begin a new series at its own 35 yardline.

MECHANICS: A beanbag should be dropped and not thrown. It does not have to land on the specific blade of grass where the fumble, touching or possession took place; it only needs to be on the appropriate yardline. Do not launch your beanbag overhand to attempt to hit the exact spot on the other side of the field. You will probably be off by a yard or two. An underhanded throw of the beanbag is desirable since it is more passive than the use of a penalty flag. Have a beanbag in hand before the kickoff of an onside kick is anticipated.

If you are in doubt whether to drop a beanbag or not, go ahead and use it. There is no such thing as an "*inadvertent beanbag*". Nothing has to be explained to players or coaches.

HAT MECHANICS



HAT Play 7: A1 steps out of bounds while running a pass pattern. He catches pass inbounds after it (a) was first touched by B1, (b) was touched by A2, or (c) was untouched by any other player.

Ruling 7: In all three cases, a **HAT** should be dropped where A1 went out of bounds. There is no foul in (a) because a team B player first touched the ball (R7-3-4). It is illegal touching in (b) and (c). The penalty is loss of down at the previous spot (R7-3-4). There is no foul if the receiver returns and does not touch the pass.

HAT Play 8: A1 is forced out of bounds by B1 before a pass is thrown. A1 (a) comes right back onto the field or (b) continues to run 20 yards while in team A's team area before coming back onto the field. In both cases, A1 catches the pass inbounds.

Ruling 8: An official's **HAT** should be dropped where A1 went out of bounds. In (a), because A1 returned to the field immediately, there is no penalty; the pass is complete and the play stands. (R7-3-4 Exc.). In (b), A1 is guilty of illegal touching because he did not try to return immediately. The penalty is loss of down from the previous spot.

HAT Play 9: During a kick off or punt K1 runs around R1 at team R's 40 yardline to avoid being blocked. That causes K1 to be off the field for several steps. K1 then comes back inbounds to tackle R2.

Ruling 9: An official should drop his **HAT** at team R's 40 yardline. When K1 comes back onto the field, a penalty flag should be thrown (R6-1-2f; R6-3-12). That results in a 5-yard penalty from the previous spot.