

# **RETHINKING 3 MAN MECHANICS**

By Barry Sousa

MOST VETERAN OFFICIALS WERE TRAINED TO USE THE **TRIANGLE** METHOD OF 3 MAN OFFICIATING. ABOUT 18 YEARS AGO, THE CALIFORNIA FOOTBALL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION DECIDED TO SCRAP THE TRIANGLE AND GO TO A **LINEAR** METHOD. THUS, FOR THE PAST 18 YEARS OR SO, **ALL** NEW OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED ON THE LINEAR METHOD AND HAVE RECEIVED NO OR LITTLE TRAINING REGARDING THE TRIANGLE METHOD.

THIS HAS CAUSED CONFLICTS BECAUSE SOME VETERAN OFFICIALS, ACTING AS REFEREES IN THE 3 MAN SYSTEM, HAVE EXPECTED NEWER OFFICIALS TO OPERATE UNDER THE TRIANGLE METHOD AND HAVE OFTEN CRITICIZED THESE OFFICIALS BECAUSE THEY FUNCTIONED IMPROPERLY.

CONVERSELY, THE NEWER OFFICIALS HAVE BECOME CONFUSED AS TO THE PROPER MECHANICS DUE TO THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO DO AND WHAT THEY ARE BEING TOLD TO DO BY THE VETERAN OFFICIALS.

THIS TUTORIAL IS TO ENABLE EVERYONE, **BOTH VETERANS AND NEWER OFFICIALS**, TO REVIEW 3 MAN MECHANICS UTILIZING THE **LINEAR METHOD** AS OPPOSED TO THE OLD TRIANGLE METHOD. OLDER OFFICIALS WILL BE HAPPY TO KNOW THAT THE AMOUNT OF AREA TO BE COVERED IS GREATLY REDUCED.

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**THE PROPER WAY TO OPERATE THE 3 MAN LINEAR METHOD IS TO DIVIDE THE FIELD INTO 3 SEGMENTS.** THE HEADLINESMAN COVERS FROM HIS SIDELINE TO HIS HASH; THE REFEREE COVERS FROM HASH TO HASH; AND THE LINE JUDGE COVERS FROM HIS SIDELINE TO HIS HASH. EACH FLANK OFFICIAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS SIDELINE ON **ALL PLAYS**.

## **THE REFEREE:**

**THE REFEREE NO LONGER HAS TO RUN FROM SIDELINE TO SIDELINE.** BEFORE THE SNAP, THE REFEREE ALWAYS TRIES TO SET HIMSELF UP AS CLOSE TO THE CENTER OF THE FIELD AS POSSIBLE. THIS MEANS HE WILL ALWAYS TRY TO BE TO THE WIDE SIDE OF THE BALL. THIS ALLOWS HIM TO BE ALMOST EQUIDISTANT TO EACH HASH AT THE START OF EACH PLAY. HE ALSO WILL CALL THE BULK OF THE HOLDING CALLS AT THE LINE.

**ON RUNS TOWARD EITHER SIDELINE**, HE WILL ONLY HAVE 9 YARDS TO RUN TO REACH EITHER HASH. THE REFEREE STOPS AT THE HASH AND TRIES TO PICK UP THE SPOT FROM THE FLANK OFFICIAL. THE FLANK OFFICIAL MARKS PROGRESS, RETRIEVES THE BALL AND UNDERHANDS IT TO THE REFEREE AT THE HASH. THE FLANK MAY HAVE TO BEAN BAG THE SPOT IN ORDER TO DO SO. THE REFEREE CAN MIRROR THE FLANKS SPOT OR WATCH THE BAG IN CASE IT GETS MOVED. THE REFEREE PLACES THE BALL AT HIS FEET AND PROCEEDS TO GIVE ALL THE PROPER SIGNALS BEFITTING A REFEREE. THE REFEREE ONLY GOES TO THE SIDELINE WHEN AN ALTERCATION OCCURS OR SOME OTHER UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE DEMANDS HIS PRESENCE.

**ON RUNS WITHIN THE HASH MARKS**, THE REFEREE ADVANCES TO THE BALL AND PLACES IT WHERE THE NEAREST FLANK OFFICIAL HAS MARKED PROGRESS. THE FLANK OFFICIALS NEED NOT COME BARRELING IN TO THE BALL UNLESS ALTERCATIONS ARE OCCURRING. A SPOT HALF WAY BETWEEN THE SIDELINE AND THE HASH IS SUFFICIENT (TOP OF THE NUMBERS). SAVE YOUR ENERGY FOR THOSE LONG PASSES.

**ON INCOMPLETE PASSES**, THE REFEREE WILL PICK UP THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE AND WAITS FOR THE FLANK OFFICIAL TO RELAY THE BALL TO HIM FOR PLACEMENT, OR HE CAN MOVE TOWARD THE FLANK FOR A RELAY AND THEN RELAY TO THE OTHER FLANK WHO HAS COME TO THE L-O-S WHEN HE SEES THE REFEREE GO OUT.

## **FLANK OFFICIALS:**

FLANK OFFICIALS SET UP **AT THE SIDELINE** PARALLEL TO THE BALL. IF THE BALL IS AT THE FAR HASH, YOU **MAY** SET UP HALF WAY BETWEEN THE SIDELINE AND THE HASH (TOP OF THE NUMBERS), BUT NEVER BEYOND A WIDE OUT.

**ON RUNS TOWARD THE OPPOSITE SIDELINE**, ALWAYS RUN PARALLEL TO THE SIDELINE; NEVER ON AN ANGLE. WHEN MARKING PROGRESS AWAY FROM YOUR THIRD OF THE FIELD, ONLY COME IN HALF WAY TO THE HASH. THERE IS NO NEED FOR FALSE HUSTLE. DO NOT RUN FROM THE SIDELINE TO THE MIDDLE OF THE FIELD (27 YDS) AND BACK TO THE SIDELINE (ANOTHER 27 YDS - 54 YDS TOTAL). AFTER 3 PLAYS, YOUR TONGUE WILL BE HANGING OUT AND YOU WON'T LEAVE THE SIDELINE FOR THE REST OF THE GAME BECAUSE YOU WILL BE EXHAUSTED. YOUR JOB FROM THAT POSITION IS TO TAKE THE "BIG VIEW" WHILE THE OTHER 2 OFFICIALS HANDLE THE DETAILS OF THE PLAY. IF THE REFEREE GOES TO THE OPPOSITE SIDELINE, ONLY THEN DOES THE FLANK NEED TO COME IN TO THE FAR HASH TO SPOT THE BALL WHILE MAINTAINING THE "BIG VIEW".

**ON RUNS INTO YOUR SIDE ZONE**, RUN PARALLEL TO THE SIDELINE AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED AND MARK PROGRESS. WAIT FOR THE REFEREE TO PICK UP YOUR SPOT AT THE HASH OR DROP YOUR BEAN BAG AT THE SPOT AND RETRIEVE THE BALL. UNDERHAND IT TO THE REFEREE FOR PLACEMENT. IF THE RUNNER GOES OUT-OF-BOUNDS, THE FLANK WILL DROP THE BEAN BAG AT THE OUT-OF-BOUNDS SPOT AND CONTINUE OUT-OF-BOUNDS TO PROTECT THE PLAYER. THE REFEREE WILL WATCH PLAYERS AND PICK UP THE SPOT OF THE BEAN BAG FROM HIS POSITION AT THE HASH. AGAIN, THE REFEREE ONLY GOES TO THE SIDELINE WHEN AN ALTERCATION OCCURS OR SOME OTHER UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE DEMANDS HIS PRESENCE.

**PLACING THE BALL AT THE HASH YOURSELF:** IF A TACKLE IS MADE WITHIN A FEW STEPS OF THE HASH, RETRIEVE THE BALL AND PLACE IT AT THE HASH SO THAT THE REFEREE MAY START THE CLOCK QUICKLY. ON LONG GAINS, PICK UP THE BALL AND MOVE IT TO THE HASH. BY THE TIME THE REFEREE ARRIVES, THE BALL WILL BE READY FOR HIS WHISTLE AND IF YOU ARE WORKING THE CHAINS YOU WILL HAVE RETURNED TO THE SIDELINE TO DIRECT THEM.

#### **PASSES:**

WHEN **FLANKS** READ PASS (LINEMEN RISING UP TO BLOCK INSTEAD OF FLARING OUT), THEY MUST MOVE DOWN THE SIDELINES, KEEPING THE RECEIVERS ON THEIR SIDE IN VIEW AND LOOK FOR INFRACTIONS. WHILE MOVING, THEY SHOULD SCAN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIELD FOR INELIGIBLES.

IF A PASSER MAY HAVE GONE OVER THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE, THE REFEREE SHOULD DROP HIS BEAN BAG AT THE SPOT OF THE THROW. WHEN THE BALL BECOMES DEAD, THE OFFICIALS BACKTRACK TO SEE IF THE BAG IS BEHIND OR BEYOND THE L-O-S AND RULE ACCORDINGLY.

**OFF MECHANICS:** ON OBVIOUS PASSING DOWNS, AT THE START OF THE PLAY, THE LINE JUDGE SHOULD POSITION HIMSELF 10-20 YDS DOWNFIELD AT THE SIDELINE OR, IF THE BALL IS ON THE FAR HASH, NO FARTHER IN THAN THE NUMBERS OR THE WIDEST RECEIVER. UNLIKE THE TRIANGLE SYSTEM, **THE LINE JUDGE DOES NOT ENTER THE FIELD TO ASSUME A NORMAL 5-MAN UMPIRE POSITION.** THIS CANNOT BE STRESSED ENOUGH! FROM THIS SIDELINE POSITION, RECEIVERS STAY IN HIS VIEW AND HE NEED NOT HAVE TO SCRAMBLE BACKWARDS TO AVOID PLAYERS. AT TIMES, THE REFEREE MAY SEND BOTH FLANKS OFF WHILE HE ASSUMES THE SHORT SIDE OF THE FIELD AT THE SCRIMMAGE LINE (e.g.; CLOSE SCORE, LAST SERIES OF HALF OR GAME, QB THROWING 40 YD. BOMBS).

**IF THE PASS IS COMPLETE TO YOUR SIDE**, RUN IT TO THE HASH SO THAT THE REFEREE, WHEN HE ARRIVES, CAN START THE CLOCK ASAP.

**IF THE PASS IS INCOMPLETE**, WHOEVER'S SIDE IT IS THROWN RETRIEVES THE BALL. THE OTHER FLANK OFFICIAL MAY CUT ACROSS THE FIELD TO HANDLE A RELAY AND GETS IT TO THE REFEREE AT THE L-O-S. IF THE PASS IS DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIELD, WHOEVER IS CLOSEST RETRIEVES AND THE OTHER RELAYS.

#### **FIELD GOALS AND TRYS:**

THE REFEREE HAS THE PREFERRED OPTION OF CALLING KICKS. IF HE DOES, HE MUST ALSO WATCH ACTION ON THE CENTER AT THE SNAP. THIS LEAVES BOTH FLANKS ON THE LINE. THE LINE JUDGE THEN TAKES KICKER/HOLDER ROUGHING CALLS. THE HEADLINESMAN CAN HELP ON KICKS NEAR THE CROSSBAR BY GIVING A THUMBS UP OR DOWN. THIS ALLOWS FOR BETTER COVERAGE AT THE GOAL LINE ON BUSTED PLAYS THAT FREQUENTLY OCCUR AT THE NON-VARSITY LEVEL. DON'T BE A PERFECTIONIST AT THE NON-VARSITY LEVEL. IF THE KICK IS VERY CLOSE, CALL IT GOOD FROM YOUR NON-PERFECT POSITION.

#### **PENALTIES:**

THE FLAGGING OFFICIAL WILL APPROACH THE REFEREE AND EXPLAIN THE TYPE OF FOUL, THE PLAYER'S NUMBER AND OFFENSE OR DEFENSE. THE REFEREE MAY GIVE A PRELIMINARY SIGNAL.

THE LJ WILL RUN OFF THE PENALTY IF THE SPOT IS WITHIN HIS 2/3'S OF THE FIELD. THE HL WILL RUN OFF PENALTIES WITHIN HIS 1/3 OF THE FIELD. WHICHEVER FLANK IS RUNNING OFF THE PENALTY WILL OBTAIN THE BALL AND, IF NECESSARY, CALL THE CAPTAIN TO HIMSELF. IF THE REFEREE NEEDS TO APPROACH AND GIVE OPTIONS, LISTEN FOR A POSSIBLE ERROR. AFTER THE TEAM REPLIES, THE FLANK WILL PLACE THE BALL WHERE NECESSARY. THIS KEEPS THE BALL OUT OF THE REFEREE'S HANDS AND ALLOWS HIM TO QUICKLY GIVE A POSSIBLE FINAL SIGNAL AND/OR ADMINISTER THE CLOCK WITH THE APPROPRIATE SIGNAL.

THE NON-ADMINISTERING FLANK WILL GO TO THE END OF THE FOUL SPOT OBSERVING THE CORRECTNESS OF THE YARDAGE STEP-OFF, PLAYERS, AND ANY INCORRECT MOVEMENT OF DOWN MARKER OR CHAINS.

IF THE PENALTY IS AGAINST THE TEAM ON YOUR SIDELINE, ASK THE REFEREE WHAT THE INFRACTION WAS & THE PLAYER'S NUMBER. RELAY IT TO YOUR COACH AFTER ADMINISTERING THE PENALTY. HE WILL APPRECIATE THAT HE DIDN'T HAVE TO ASK FOR THE INFORMATION, SINCE IT ALLOWS HIM TO COACH BETTER.