

CHAPTER 8

Playing The Game

The previous rules have described the way a single play is run. A game is made up of many such plays, plus "special teams" plays: punts, kickoffs, field goal attempts, and extra point kicks. This chapter describes the procedures for combining these different plays into a game.

8.1 The game record:

A record is needed both to record the game for the sake of posterity and the media, and as a place where the offensive player records his plays. The record also allows easy tracking of down and distance, time, and the score. The record has several columns: the yard line of the ball at the start of each play, the offensive formation, the defensive formation, the play (with all of the needed information on who is blocking where), events which occur as the play is executed, yardage gained, and the time at the end of the play (when the next play begins). In games played in person, it is not necessary to write down the offensive and defensive formations, but some information, such as whether the defense is a 4-3 or 3-4, may be of interest when studying the films later. In by-mail games, the events recorded should include every event resolution, such as for contact "+2/3/+2" to indicate a net contact advantage of +2, a die roll of 3, resulting in a 2 yard gain into the zone. In games played in person this is not necessary unless one intends to study the game films in minute detail. It is necessary to indicate such things as injuries, fumbles, penalties, and such. If the particular ballcarrier is not identified by number as part of the play, he should be identified here to allow tiredness determination. If he carries frequently, it may be convenient to note his accumulated number of carries, adjusted for events that increase tiredness. An example game record was shown in Chapter 3.

Each play is started by the offensive player first recording the yardage, and selecting his offensive players. The defender then selects the players that will be on the field for the play. The offensive player then sets the offense, and records the offensive formation and the play. The defender then sets the defense, and the offensive player may record information about it. The offensive player then executes the play according to how it was written and the preceding rules describing how a play is executed. After the play, the offensive player notes the gain, time, and special occurrences such as first downs. Out of courtesy he should announce the down and distance for the next play, and must give that information should the defensive player ask. (It may also be convenient to maintain this information on a display visible to both players.)

Lines are drawn across the record to separate each team's possession. Dashed lines indicate the end of a quarter, and a double line (with the score between the two lines) indicates halftime. Other special marks, used after the gain to indicate certain events, are: "F": fumble (not lost), "FL": fumble lost, "P": punt, "KO": kickoff, "kr": kickoff return, "pr": punt return, "pen": penalty, "inj": injury, "*": first down, "Int": interception, ". Other events should be written out or unambiguously abbreviated. An example of a game record is given in Appendix D.

8.2 Executing the play

The general steps in executing the play are described in earlier chapters. The offensive player personnel are selected first, followed by the defensive personnel. The offensive player then sets up the offensive players in a formation appropriate to execute the play, the writes down the play that will be run. (In real life these last two steps are taken in the reverse order, but this method takes less time and does not reveal anything extra to the defense.) Once the play is written, neither side may change personnel unless a timeout is called or the play has been completed. After the offensive player announces that the play is written, the defensive player positions the defenders the offensive player may call a time out at this time, but once the defender announces or indicates man-to-man coverages and pass rush status it is too late, and the play must be executed as written. If the defender fails to mention a pass rush or blitz, the defensive line is assumed to be in the "normal" status. (In play-by-mail, both players must have provided a clear, unambiguous setup description, including coverages and options. This is described more fully in Chapter 10.) The play is then executed by the offensive player, except that the defensive player makes all movements associated with defensive reaction and pursuit, and handles events such as runbacks incident to a change of possession.

8.3 Writing the play

A written play must identify the ballcarrier, and specify into which zone he will run or in which he expects to receive a pass. On a run or screen pass, blockers (if any other than linemen blocking straight ahead) are specified by zone downfield along the ballcarrier's path. The ballcarrier may be identified by position (LH, FB, etc.) or by number (#36). The zone will be an entry point into the line of scrimmage for a run (WWL, WL, LE, LT, LC, RC, RT, RE, WR, or WWR) or, for the draw and all passes, a zone on the defensive side of the board. (Some runs allow a change of destination as the play executes – H to WR or WL, TB runs, and option are particular cases.) Passes to L, C, and R are assumed to be screen passes, those to other zones are assumed to be normal passes, unless otherwise indicated.

Blockers listed in the play follow the identified ballcarrier and destination, and are enclosed with parentheses for each zone downfield, starting with the zone immediately beyond the line of scrimmage. For example, the play: LH/RT (TE) (WR,C) would have the tight end and (implied) the tackle blocking in R and the center and right wide receiver blocking in SR, which is the next zone downfield for a ballcarrier entering R at RT. Of course, it is possible that the center will not be able to move to SR due to the number of defenders in the C zone. Like the ballcarrier, blockers can also be indicated by position or number. (For highest resolution analysis, both should be recorded. Usually position is given rather than number.) If no blockers are assigned to block in a zone or any other zone farther downfield, there is no need to list anything for those zones. If no blocker is to block in a zone but there is to be a blocker farther downfield, the parentheses must be included as a placeholder, but left empty. For example, the wide play: LH/WR (RT) () (RG) would have the right tackle pulling to block at the line of scrimmage (assuming he is fast enough) and the guard is to block in IR. No blocker is assigned to RS. A special case occurs if the play is a draw or a screen, since the ballcarrier may choose either of two paths downfield. The method for assigning blockers is described in rule 4.7.4.

For passes other than screens, the secondary receiver pass is separated from the primary pass by a double vertical bar as, for example: LW/DC || RE/SC . Here, the primary receiver is the left wide receiver in the Deep Center zone. If the play results in a throw to the secondary receiver, a pass is attempted to the right end (tight end if there is also a right wide receiver) in the Short Center zone. To indicate that the ball is to be thrown incomplete instead, "inc" would be substituted for the RE play.

If a play uses the "quick" , "+", "loft" or any other option, it is appended at the end of the written play. For passes it is necessary to show the option used for both possible plays.

8.4 Time:

Each play which does not stop the clock (run or pass completed in bounds and not scoring) is assumed to take 40 seconds, so :40 is deducted from "time remaining" in the quarter in the last column of the game record. The offensive coach may elect instead to deduct only 30 seconds. This will normally be true only if he is behind, and trying to preserve as much time on the clock as possible. Other plays take 10 seconds, including any where a penalty is called even if it is declined. Note that some penalties ("no play" types) take no time of the clock. When the time remaining reaches 0:00, the quarter is at an end. Kickoffs which are not returned and extra point attempts do not take any time off of the clock.

During the last two minutes of each half, plays ending in zones adjacent to the sidelines may go out of bounds, using up 10 seconds instead of 30 or 40. Details are described in rules 5.8.2 and 7.2.2. In most cases, a die roll is made and a roll of 1 to 3 stops the clock after only 10 seconds. A play followed by a timeout also consumes only 10 seconds.

When a play results in a gain to the yard line needed for a first down, a measurement is needed. That means the play is 20 seconds instead of 30 or 40 if the offensive team desires (that is, if they are trying to preserve clock time). Normally the full 40 seconds is taken. A play to "clock" the ball (throw incomplete into the ground) to save time takes only 10 seconds.

At the end of a quarter or prior to the 2 minute warning, if time for another play would occur as time expires, roll a die. If the roll is 1-3, that many seconds remain on the clock and another play can be run. Otherwise, time runs out.

8.4a: Optional rule for scripted plays:

As an option, during a timeout called during the last 2 minutes, the offensive player may write up to 4 plays to be executed in sequence with only 20 seconds per play if the ball remains in bounds. This sequence is continued until a play stops the clock or another timeout is called. (If a play stops the clock, the sequence may be resumed but not added to.) This optional rule is not currently being used in FOOL play.

8.4b: Random clock effect: (Optional, in use)

When time expires for a quarter or for the 2 minute warning exactly, it is possible that a few seconds may be left. Roll d6: if 1-3, then 1 to 3 seconds is left (allowing one more play). If 4-6, time has expired.

8.5 Special teams

Special teams plays do not use the game board, but are played using the special teams tables. In general, the offensive player writes announces the kicker or returner, then is informed of the returner (in the case of a punt). The offensive player then writes a tactic. Then the opponent announces his tactic, and the play is resolved as described in Chapter 9.

8.6 End of field conditions (See Appendix G)

When a play starts near the end zone, some of the deeper zones may be in or beyond the end zone. The general guideline is that if half of the zone would be beyond the far edge of the end zone, the zone is not available for play. The following table elaborates:

Ball position:	Zones not played:
30-	VDC
20-	Defenders in DC are +P. Defenders in SC cover DC too at -P.
15-	DC,LL,LR *
5-	MC,ML,MR * Defenders in IL, IR are +P. Defenders in LS, RS cover IL, IR respectively at -P.

*note: In by-mail play, any defenders who would have been in DC are positioned in SC instead, unless other provision is explicitly made. The game plan may also indicate movement from DC, or from SC, IL, and IR to take place when within 20 and 5 yards respectively. (Use an arrow labeled 5y or 20y; an unlabeled arrow applies only from DC at 15 yards.) Also, if a pass play to a zone not played is selected, a new selection is made by reroll unless specific guidance to the contrary is given. (One such option is to throw to the same part of the field but to a shorter zone, such as IR vice MR, and SC vice DC.)

Note that at 20 and 5 yards some zones in effect become parts of areas in front of them. Thus, inside 21 yards a defender playing zone in the SC area will cover DC as if it were in the same area as SC and MC, although that defender will be at -P against a pass thrown to DC. A defender placed in DC is +P, but has no effect on a pass thrown to SC or MC, as is usual. This reflects the much smaller area that the DC zone represents near the end zone.

8.7 Tiredness (Advanced Rules):

During a game. players who are on the field a lot or carry the ball many times may suffer from fatigue, reducing their effectiveness, especially late in the game. Tiredness is determined in two ways, one affecting only ballcarriers and the other affecting all players.

8.7.1 Ballcarriers and receivers (Advanced Rule):

Each play involving a ballcarrier or receiver affects the status of the player. When a certain number of plays (or their equivalents) have been accumulated in a series of downs, quarter, half or in the game, the ballcarrier suffers tiredness effects listed in the

tiredness table. Plays of more than 9 yards count as 2 plays, and those of 35 or more count as 3. A fumble adds 1 to the tiredness, and an injury roll adds 2. A quarterback who is sacked without using the "rb" table is battered for the equivalent of 3 carries, and one who uses the "rb" table is counted as the equivalent of 2 plus additional carries for yards as with other plays. An incompleteness caused by the rush counts 1 play for QB tiredness. Punt and kickoff returns are counted as normal plays (with yardage adjustments) for this purpose. Incomplete passes are one play equivalent unless the pass was thrown more than 35 yards, in which case it counts as 2. An incomplete of 9 or fewer yards does not count for backs.

Tiredness effects table for backs:

series	quarter half	game	effect	
8	12	20	28	S-1 for pursuit
10	16	24	32	S-1 for react, -P
12	18	28	36	C-1
14	22	30	40	S-1 for off move
16	24	32	44	C-1, S-1 pur,react
18	28	36	48	S-1 off move, -P
20	32	40	52	must leave field

The effects are cumulative, so a player with the equivalent of 18 carries in a series would be S-2 (for pursuit, reaction, and offensive movement), -2C, and -2P. If C falls below 0, the penalty is taken in S instead.)

Optional, not in use:

The numbers in the above table are adjusted for age as follows:
 Age: 30 to 34: -1 -2 -3 -4
 Age: 35 +: -2 -4 -8 -12

8.7.1a Tiredness after a long play (Optional Rule not in use):

A player who executes a play having a tiredness increment of 3 (e.g. 35 yards or more, or a 9+ yard play with a fumble) is automatically tired by one level on the following play. (If a suitable substitute is available, he may be inserted into the game.) A timeout cancels this. Note that a sacked QB will be affected, but normally this will not affect his pass value. A player with two successive 2 value plays is likewise affected. A player with a "4" tiredness play (or a 2 then a 3) will be tired for 2 plays, first at -2 tiredness levels, then at -1. Again, a timeout cancels the effect. This optional rule is currently on the books for FOOL play, but is difficult to use by mail and is not now used.

8.7.2 Tiredness for all players:

At the end of the third quarter, each player has a chance of being tired, with his chances depending on age and his degree of involvement in the game. A die is rolled using the following table:

End of third quarter tiredness:

	rookie	30-	30-34	35+
Played almost continuously (on all lines, defenses)	4	2	3	5

	rookie	30-	30-34	35+
Starter: played mostly (on 1st off set, 3/4 defenses)	2	1	2	3
Important substitute: played about half the time (on 1/2 + defenses, not starter)	1	0	1	1

If the applicable number in the table is rolled, the player is tired. The following adjustments are made to the die roll:

Played 2+ special teams: -1 (not counting FG units)

Hot day (games 1,2,preseason) -1

(Some players may have a conditioning bonus of +1 or -1).

If a player is tired, a second roll is made below:

Position	Die roll	1	2	3	4	5	6
lineman		-P	-C	-C	-S	-S	-S
LB,TE,B,S		-P	-P	-C	-C	-S	-S
QB,E,W,CB,DH		-P	-P	-P	-C	-S	-S

If a player has been reduced in S to a minimum given by position, a -S result is assessed as -C instead. The minimums are: DT,L: 1, DE: 2, TE,Q,F,LB:3 others:4. If a player has C of 0, a -C is assessed as -S. If a player with P=0 is -P, ignore the effect.

(Optional: use the table also at 7 minutes left in each half, with a +1 adjustment.

Tiredness results from the first half do not carry over into the second. This option is not in current use for FOOL play.)

8.8 Experience bonus (Advanced rule, for by-mail play only)

Players who start in the same position in same place within the offensive or defensive starting set for three straight games are eligible for an experience bonus. A die is rolled for each such player just before the beginning of each half. If a 6 is rolled, an experienced veteran receives a bonus (1/6 chance). For other players, a second die roll is needed: On the second roll, a rookie receives the bonus on a roll of 5 or 6 only (1/18). A veteran receives the bonus on a roll of 3-6.

If the player gets a bonus, roll again to see whether the bonus is +P or +C. A lineman is credited as +P on a roll of 1, +C on 2-6. For others a die is rolled, and on 1 to 4 for QB, W, E, CB, and DH players the bonus is +P, and a 5 or 6 +C. For others a 1 or 2 gives +P, and 3-6 +C. (This is somewhat changed from the previous rule.)

For purposes of this rule and 8.7.2 above, a starter should have an expected playing time of more than 1/2 of the time the offense or defense is in. For example, for by-mail play, perhaps he is on at least 3 defenses, of which 2 are entirely starters, or be on at least 2 offensive sets, one of which is used on first downs. In play in person, similar guidelines should apply in spirit.

8.8a Motivation problems (optional rule not currently in FOOL use):

A starter who is replaced after qualifying for the above bonus may have a motivational problem. Roll a die. A roll of 6 requires a reroll on the tiredness effect table to determine the player's ability adjustment, applicable for one game.

8.9 Booing the quarterback (optional rule, not currently in FOOL use)

On any interception during a home game, a roll for booing is made. A roll of 6 results in booing. A "good" QB gets a "free" interception or two – that is, no booing roll despite the interception. (A league MVP or all-pro gets 2 free interceptions, one of the top 3 QB's gets 1). [I think we would have to say a QB with no int in previous 1 or 2 games would be the criterion for "good" and not the other stuff.] Throwing a TD gives a credit of 1 (free interception), but the total credit cannot exceed 1. If there are two interceptions without a TD in between, always roll (for whoever). 6 incompletes in a row count as an interception. Three interceptions in a row (without a TD throw) give 2 chances in 6, etc. A Boo'd quarterback is -1 pass value until the team scores a TD.

8.10 Overtime:

Games which are tied at the end of four quarters go into overtime. An additional round of tiredness rolls is made before the overtime period begins. The criteria for the number of carries for tiredness for the game is increased by 4. A coin is tossed to determine which team has the first choice on whether to kick or receive. (Most choose to receive.) The overtime period is played as any other, except that it ends when either team scores. If the overtime period ends after 15 minutes with the score still tied, the game is a tie. If it is a playoff game, the tied overtime period is followed by another until one team finally wins. [Are we going to follow current NFL rule that the second team gets a possession if the first team scores a FG on 1st possession?]

8.11 (rule deleted)

8.12 Wind:

Wind affects primarily the kicking game. A die roll is made just before the coin flip for initial possession / field end choice to determine the wind, in accordance with the tables given in Chapter 9. [For by-mail: roll the wind when the away game plan is sent.] The effects of wind are then taken into account on all kicks.

Optional: Perhaps there should be a new wind roll at the half, with the wind not being different by more than 2 levels (die roll values). Or perhaps a new roll each quarter, to either add or subtract 1 from the wind category.) [Not in use currently.]

Also unused optional: When the wind is strong enough to affect the kick accuracy as well as distance, there will also be an effect on the passing game. For "crosswind" = 1, passes to DC, DL, DR, VD and all loft passes are -1. If "crosswind" = 2, passes which are both lofted and to one of the deep zones are -2. (This optional rule should not be used for by-mail play unless the wind is known when the game plans are made.)

8.13 "Smear the <politically correct perjorative>" defense (optional, not in use):

(Or "New Orleans type Defense") In a play on the series after a TD, the team burned for the TD may designate a "Smear the _____" defense. Only 9 defenders are positioned, the other 2 are designated to cause bodily harm to a selected offensive player (who must be on the field, but need not be the ballcarrier). At the end of the play, a die roll is made for the effect:

- 1 Offensive player is "spooked": -P, -C, -S for the rest of the game
- 2 Offensive player refuses to carry ball: Auto incomplete if thrown

to, falls down at -3 yards +d3 if given a handoff. A QB throws inc instead of to secondary receivers, or on any route not having +12 pass rush modification value.

3-5 Injury roll for the designated offensive player

6 Offensive player "spooked" (as 1 above)

7+ No effect

Add 1 to the die roll for a veteran victim, 2 if 30 years old or more.

One of the designated goons is automatically suspended for the remainder of the game. (Roll randomly for which.) A 15 yard unsportsmanlike penalty is automatically awarded to the team using this defensive variation. (The clock is stopped.) A disciplinary committee (made up of general managers from the other teams in the league) may impose further sanctions against the players involved, including suspension for the remainder of the season, with suspended players counting against roster limits. The team victimized by this defense is subsequently allowed to use it on offensive plays in like manner, and a cycle may be started. Note that this defense counts against the limit of 6 or 7 defenses in Play-By-Mail.

This rule has not yet been approved by the commissioner for FOOL play.

8.14 Statistics issues:

8.14.1 TNG (Tackle for no gain) credits:

No credit is awarded on QB kneel plays or losses resulting from a fumbled snap. (No defender gets credit for causing a fumble on a fumbled snap or pitchout either, while we are on the subject.)

8.15 Other weather (proposed some time in the past, not in use now)

The home team may make a die roll for the weather in an upcoming game. the weather report is sent with the offensive sets and starting defenders to the visiting team. The visiting team makes the count toss (it's their call) and also makes the roll for weather if the home team has not before making up the visiting game plan. These are sent along with the game plan to the home team. (If due to oversight neither team has resolved the weather, it is assumed to be "normal".) This means that we can reasonably incorporate weather without it being a problem for play-by mail play selection. Possibilities include:

1. Pass distances are affected by strong wind (kicks are + or - 3 or more?): -1 to p=3 zones, -2 yards to p=2 zones, -3 to p=1 zones, and -4 to VDC. These penalties are reduced by 1 for a bullet, and are doubled for a loft. These apply going into the wind. There is no change for going downwind.

2. Pass completion is affected by wind "control" value (as defined as -1 for kickers), -1 on pass table.

3. In "rain" pass completion is -1, "bobble" probability is doubled, and all ballcarriers are treated as "f" (fumble prone)

4. Snow: Passes are -1 for purposes of completion and secondary receivers, but not for interceptions. Kick distances are -2.

5. Unusually cold day (possible in games 9 and 10 and playoffs): Pass value is -1 except for interceptions (like snow) and kick distances are -4 yards. "~" rolls become "#".

The weather tables for each stadium need to be determined if we are to use this.
(Robert, can you do that if we agree that we want to?)

Here's a proposed addition:

8.12.2 Heavy Rain (PROPOSED)

~ / # Fumble +1/6 Other effects not changed.

Pass -1 ML/MC/MR/DL/DC/DR

Pass -2 VDC (Completions only, not for interceptions)

KO -3 yards FGA -5 yards Pt -5 yards, control +2 (returns)