

# NFHS Football 2026

## Use The Right Words

Written by Darrick Puffer, GCCOA Trainer

# Use the Right Words #2 – Fumble / Muff

2-18-1 – To fumble the ball is to lose player possession by any act other than passing, kicking or successful handing. The status of the ball is a fumble.

NOTE 1 – You cannot fumble what you have not possessed.

NOTE 2 – Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble by the last player in possession.

2-27 – To muff the ball is to touch the ball in an unsuccessful attempt to catch or recover it. Muffing the ball does not change its status.

# Use the Right Words #2 – Fumble / Muff

2-18-1 – To fumble the ball is to lose player possession by any act other than passing, kicking or successful handing. The status of the ball is a fumble.

2-27 – To muff the ball is to touch the ball in an unsuccessful attempt to catch or recover it. Muffling the ball does not change its status.

FACTUAL STATEMENT: "The kicking team can never, ever, ever advance a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone ..."

UNFORTUNATE EXTENSION: "... unless it's fumbled."

You can't fumble until you have possessed ... and once the kick has been possessed, it is no longer a kick.

If the kick is muffed, it is still a kick and therefore cannot be advanced by the kicking team.

If the kick is possessed and then fumbled, the kicking team may recover and advance.

# Use the Right Words #2 – Fumble / Muff

4/10 @ 40. K2's punt is caught by R31 at the R-10 and carried to the R-20 where he is tackled.  
Bean bag at the R-10 (spot where kick ended)

4/10 @ 40. K2's punt is caught by R31 at the R-10 and carried to the R-20 where he fumbles.  
Bean bag at the R-10 (spot where kick ended)  
Bean bag at the R-20 (spot of the fumble)

4/10 @ 40. K2's punt is touched by K86 at the R-15, then recovered by R31 at the R-10 and carried to the R-20 where he is tackled.  
Bean bag at the R-15 (spot of first touching)  
Bean bag at the R-10 (spot where kick ended)

4/10 @ 40. K2's punt is touched by K86 at the R-15, then recovered by R31 at the R-10 and carried to the R-20 where he fumbles.  
Bean bag at the R-15 (spot of first touching)  
Bean bag at the R-10 (spot where kick ended)  
Bean bag at the R-20 (spot of the fumble)

# Use the Right Words #2 – Fumble / Muff

4/10 @ 40. K2's punt is muffed by R31 at the R-10, then recovered by K86 while grounded at the R-15.

Wrong to have a bean bag at the R-10 (not the spot of a fumble, and not the end of the kick).

OK to have a bean bag at the R-15 (spot where kick ended).

K86 cannot advance the ball. The ball is dead. If he tries to advance, kill the play.

NOTE: PSK does not apply, so the R-15 has no significance. (R will not next put the ball in play.)

4/10 @ 40. K2's punt is muffed by R31 at the R-10, then recovered by R31 while grounded at the R-15.

Wrong to have a bean bag at the R-10 (not the spot of a fumble, and not the end of the kick).

OK to have a bean bag at the R-15 (spot where kick ended).

NOTE: PSK would apply, so the R-15 could be significant, but that is the dead ball spot.

4/10 @ 40. K2's punt is muffed by R31 at the R-10, then recovered by R31 at the R-15 and carried to the R-25 where he is tackled.

Wrong to have a bean bag at the R-10 (not the spot of a fumble, and not the end of the kick).

Bean bag required at the R-15 (spot where kick ended).

# Use the Right Words #2 – Fumble / Muff

2/5 @ A-30. From the A-28, A4 passes backward to A17 at the A-27. A17 catches the pass and runs to the A-34 where he fumbles. The loose ball rolls out of bounds at the A-36.

Bean bag at the A-34 (spot of the fumble). The ball is returned to the spot of the fumble.

2/5 @ A-30. From the A-28, A4 passes backward to A17 at the A-27. A17 muffs the pass and the loose ball rolls out of bounds at the A-36.

Wrong to have a bean bag at the A-27 (not the spot of a fumble). It's a backward pass that is OOB.

Could have a bean bag at the A-28 (spot of the backward pass), but it won't be an enforcement spot

2/5 @ A-30. From the A-32, A4 pitches back to A17 at the A-31. A17 catches the pass and runs to the A-34 where he fumbles. The loose ball rolls out of bounds at the A-36.

Bean bag at the A-34 (spot of the fumble). The ball is returned to the spot of the fumble.

2/5 @ A-30. From the A-32, A4 passes back to A17 at the A-31. A17 muffs the pass and the loose ball rolls out of bounds at the A-36.

Wrong to have a bean bag at the A-31 (not the spot of a fumble). NOT a forward fumble OOB.

Should have a bean bag at the A-32 (spot of the backward pass) because it might be an enforcement spot.

# NFHS Football 2026 Free Kicks

Written by Darrick Puffer, GCCOA Trainer  
Original Templates by David Almand, NCAA Replay Official

# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. K2's kick ...

(1) strikes the ground in the end zone, untouched by any player.

R - 1/10 @ R-20 - Snap. Touchback. The ball is dead once it crosses the goal line.

(2) is caught by R21 in R's end zone, and carried to the R-10 where he is tackled.

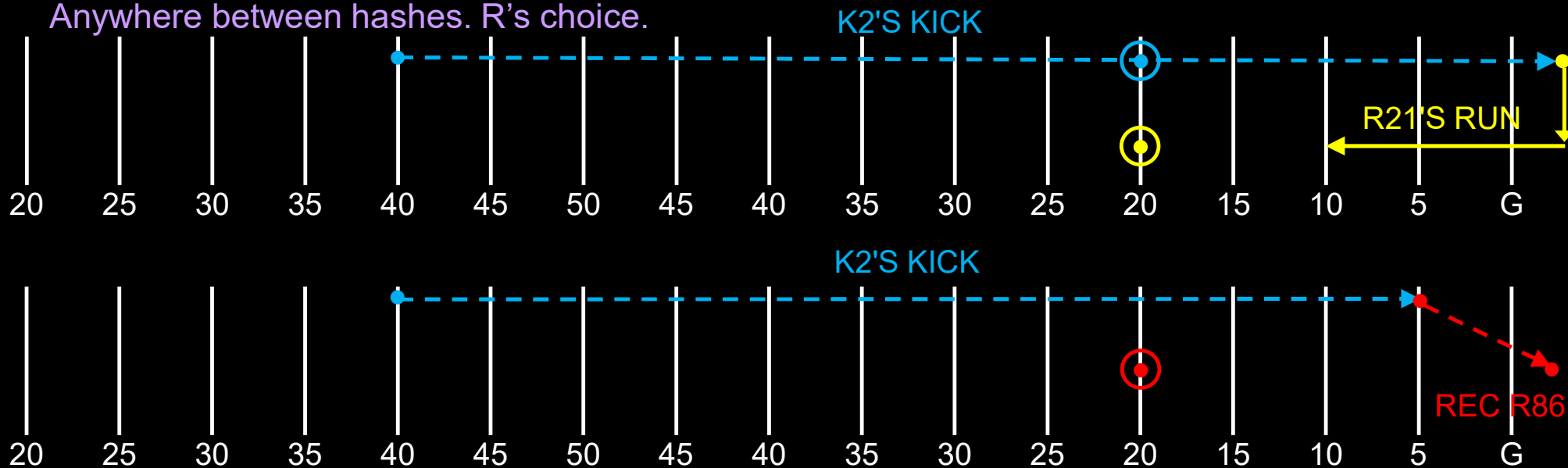
R - 1/10 @ R-20. Touchback. The ball is dead once it crosses the goal line. Kill the play.

(3) is muffed by R21 at the R-5, then recovered by grounded R86 in R's end zone.

R - 1/10 @ R-20. Touchback. The ball, which is still a kick, is dead once it crosses the goal line.

In all cases, what is the lateral position on the 20-yard line?

Anywhere between hashes. R's choice.





# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. K2's kick is muffed by R21 at the R-5 ...

(4) K90 then recovers the ball in R's end zone.

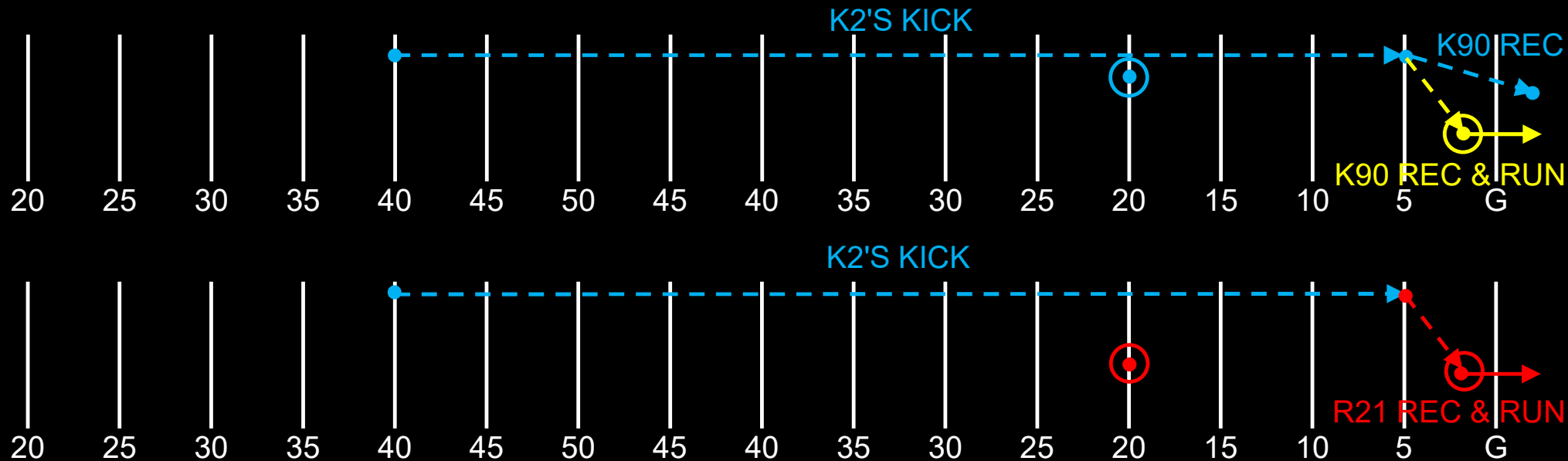
R - 1/10 @ R-20 - Snap. Touchback. The ball is dead. K fell on a dead ball.

(5) K90 scoops up the ball at the R-2 and carries it across the goal line.

K - 1/G @ R-2. Once K possesses the kick after being touched by R, it is dead. Kill the play.

(6) R21 recovers the ball at the R-2, carries it into R's end zone, and takes a knee.

Safety. R/FK @ R-20. R put the ball into the end zone after recovering it.



# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. While K2's kick is in flight, R24 gives a fair catch signal ...

(7) Signal is valid. R24 catches the kick at the R-35, Far Hash. R wants the ball on the Near Hash.

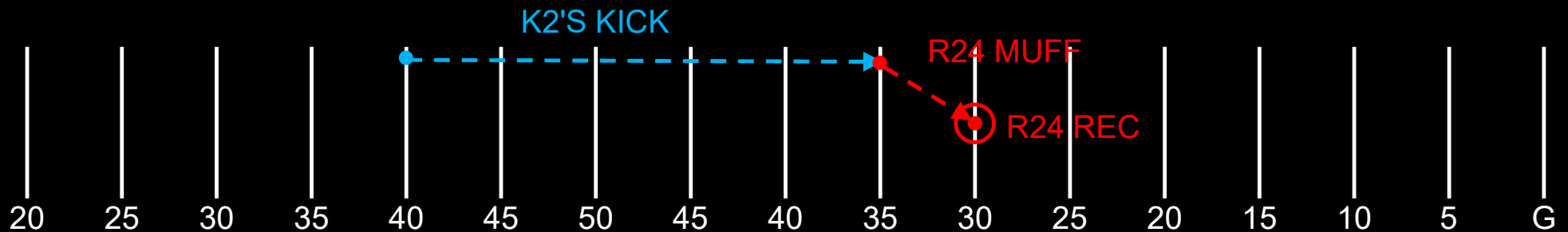
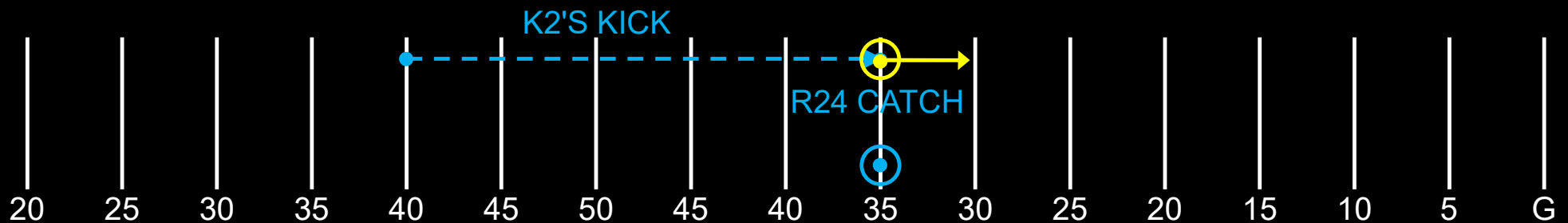
R - 1/10 @ R-35 - Snap. Fair Catch. Request for lateral ball placement is granted. (See 6-5-4.)

(8) Signal is invalid. R24 catches the kick at the R-35, Far Hash. R wants the ball on the Near Hash.

R - 1/10 @ R-30 - Snap. Not a Fair Catch. Request for lateral ball placement is denied.

(9) Signal is valid. R24 muffs the kick, recovers the grounded loose ball at the R-30, middle of the field. R wants the ball on the Near Hash.

R - 1/10 @ R-30 - Snap. Not a Fair Catch. Request denied.



# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. While K2's kick is in flight, R24 gives a fair catch signal ...

(10) Signal is valid. But R80 catches the kick at the R-35, Far Hash. R wants the Near Hash.

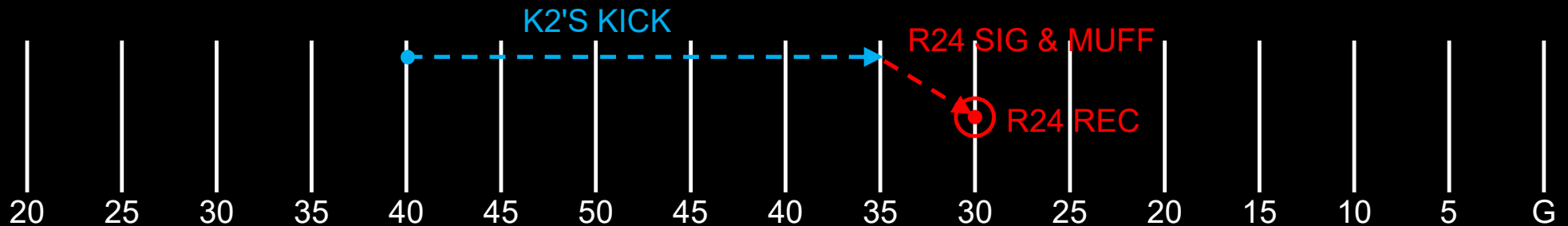
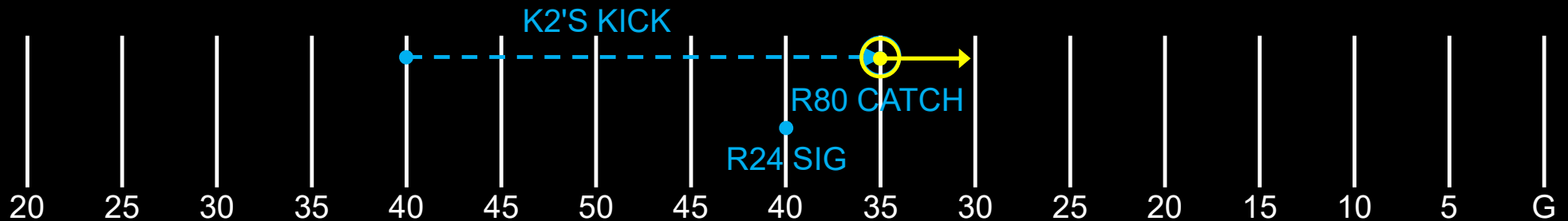
R - 1/10 @ R-35 - Snap. Not a Fair Catch. Ball is dead when caught. Request denied.

(11) Signal is invalid. But R80 catches the kick at the R-35, Far Hash. R wants the Near Hash.

R - 1/10 @ R-30 - Snap. Not a Fair Catch. Ball is dead when caught. Request denied.

(12) Signal is valid. R24 muffs the kick into the air at the R-35, catching it at the R-30.

R - 1/10 @ R-30 - Snap. Fair Catch. The succeeding spot is on the R-30. Rules book (6-5-1,4) says Team R has choice of lateral position. Case book (6.5.2. SIT. A (a)) says spot is where caught.



# Free Kicks

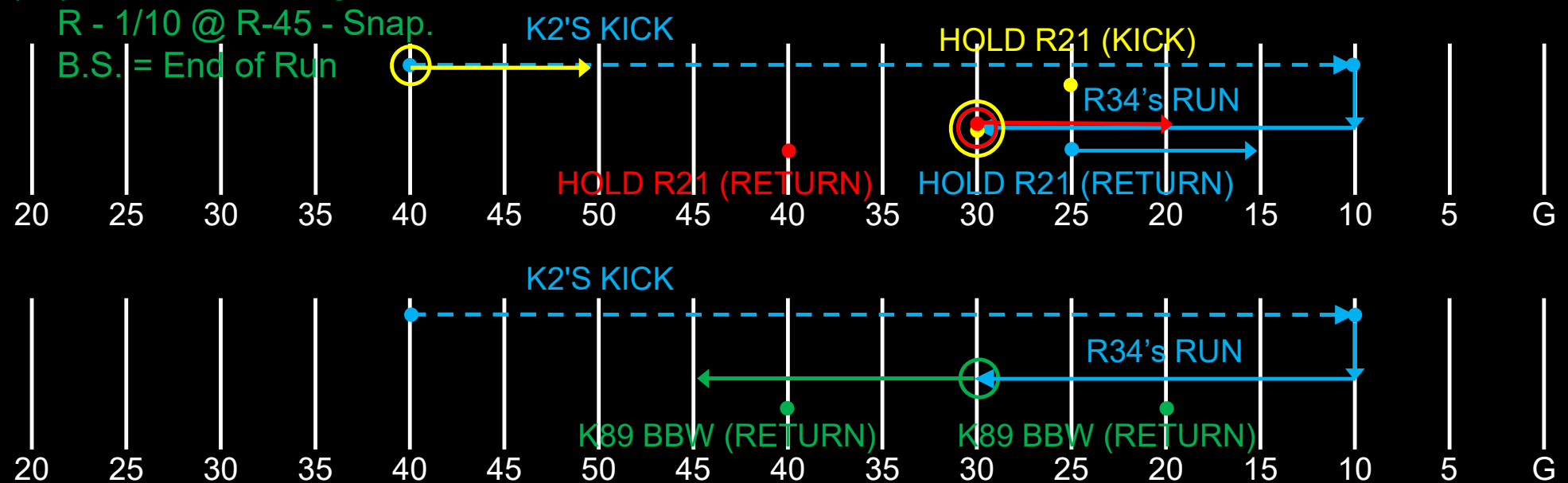
F/K @ K-40. K2's kick is fielded by R34 at the R-10. He carries to the R30 where he ...

(13) is tackled. During the return, R21 held at the R-25.

R - 1/10 @ R-15 - Snap. Basic Spot = End of Run. Foul behind Basic Spot. Use Spot of Foul.  
(14) is tackled. During the kick, R21 held at the R-25.

F/K @ 50 or R - 1/10 @ R-30 - Snap. Foul occurred during a loose ball, NOT during a run play.  
(15) is tackled. During the return, R21 held at the B-40.

R - 1/10 @ R-20 - Snap. Basic Spot = End of Run. Foul beyond Basic Spot. Use Basic Spot.  
(16) is tackled. During the return, K89 blocked below the waist at the R-40 or the R-20.



# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. K2's kick is fielded by R34 at the R-10. He carries to the R30 where he ...

(17) fumbles. R90 recovers at the R-35. During the return, R21 clipped at the R-20.

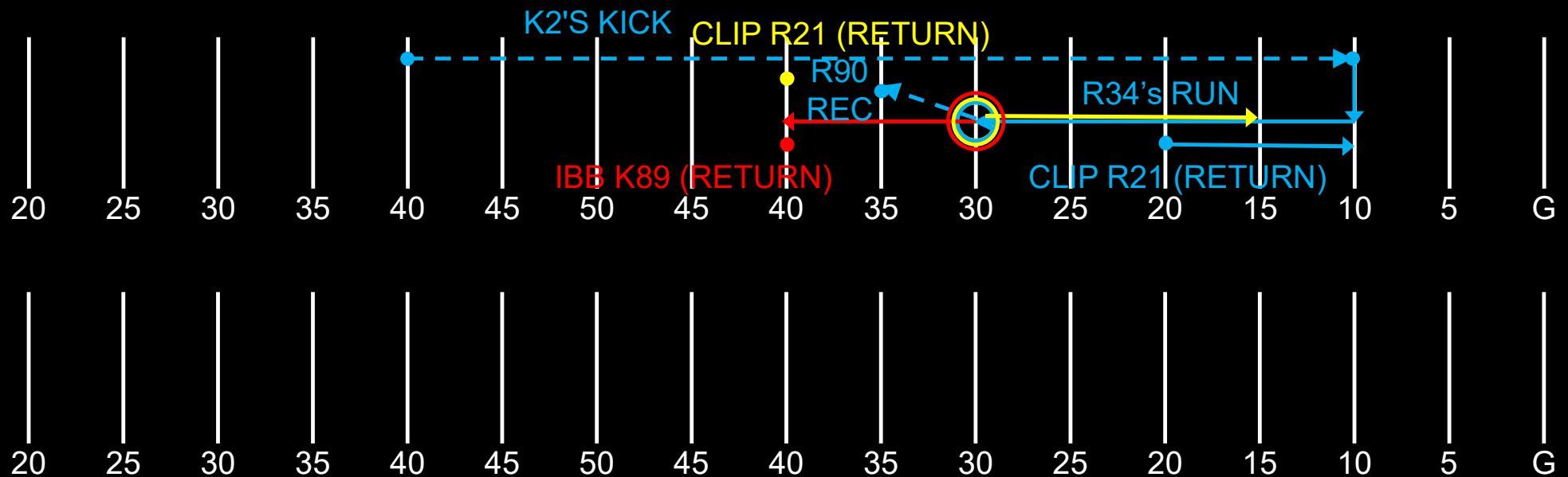
R - 1/10 @ R-10 - Snap. Basic Spot = End of Related Run. Foul behind B.S. Use Spot of Foul.

(18) fumbles. R90 recovers at the R-35. During the return, R21 clipped at the R-40.

R - 1/10 @ R-15 - Snap. Basic Spot = End of Related Run. Foul beyond B.S. Use Basic Spot.

(19) fumbles. R90 recovers at the R-35. During the return, K89 blocked in the back at the R-40.

R - 1/10 @ R-40 - Snap. B.S.= End of Related Run. Foul not by team in possession. Use B.S.



# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. K2's kick is fielded by R13 at the R-20 and returned to the 50 where he fumbles ...

(20) R82 fell on the ball at the K-45. During the kick, K96 blocked below the waist at the R-45.

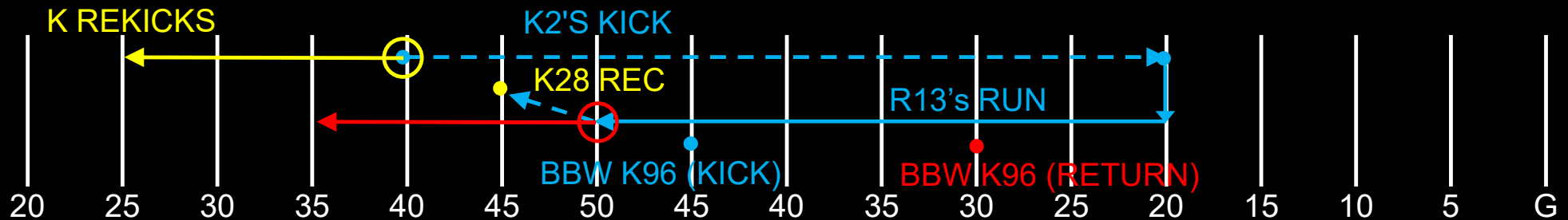
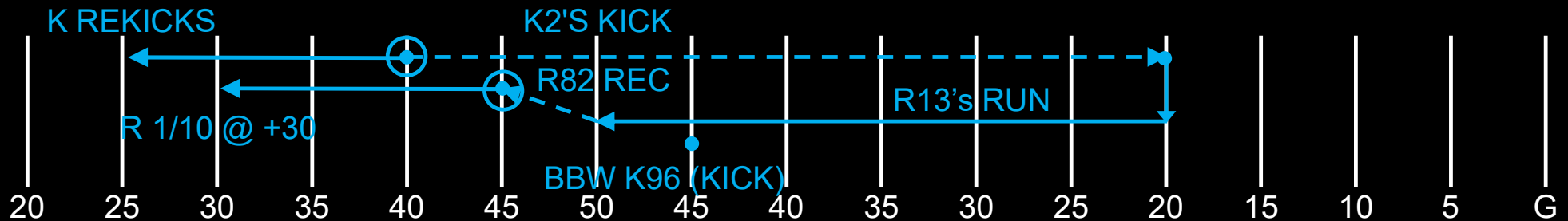
R - 1/10 @ K-30 - Snap. Basic Spot = *Succeeding Spot or Previous Spot.* (10-4-2-EXC.)

(21) K28 fell on the ball at the K-45. During the kick, K96 blocked below the waist at the R-45

F/K @ K-25. Basic Spot = Previous Spot. (K ended up with the ball, not R.)

(22) K28 fell on the ball at the K-45. During the return, K96 blocked below the waist at the R-30

R - 1/10 @ K-35 - Snap. Basic Spot = End of Related Run which is the Spot of the Fumble.



# End of Part I 2026 Free Kicks

Written by Darrick Puffer, GCCOA Trainer  
Original Templates by David Almand, NCAA Replay Official

# Beginning of Part II 2026 Free Kicks

Written by Darrick Puffer, GCCOA Trainer  
Original Templates by David Almand, NCAA Replay Official



# Free Kicks

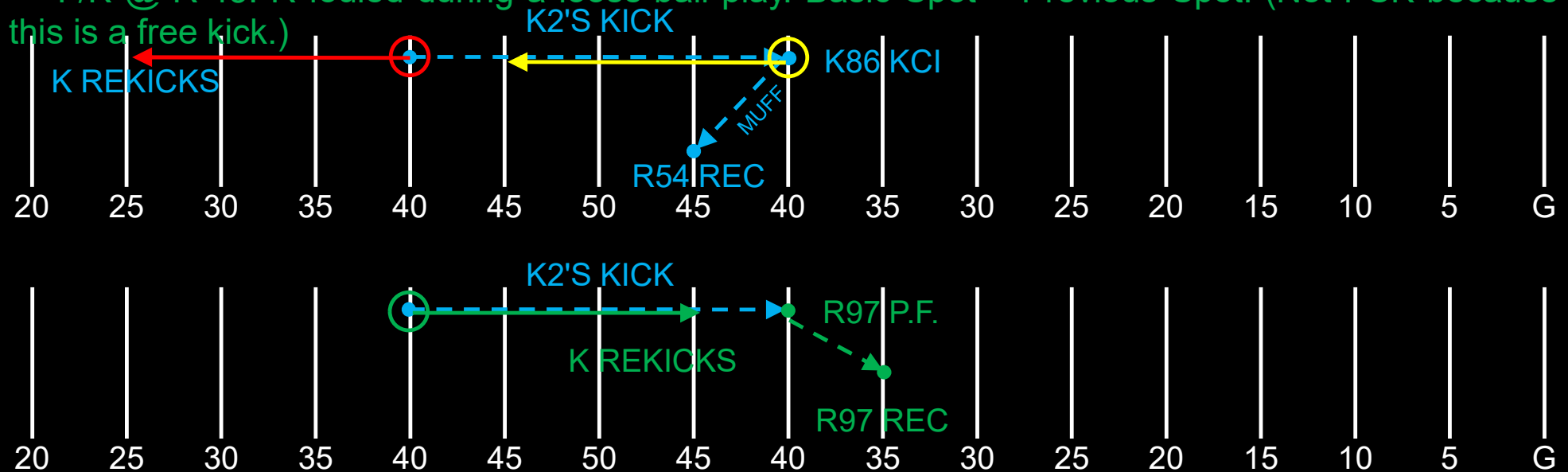
F/K @ K-40. A2's kick is high, and R97 signals for a fair catch ...

(23) K86 interferes with R97's catch, causing him to muff the kick at the R-40 with R54 recovering the loose ball while grounded at the R-45.

R - 1/10 @ R-45 OR 1/10 @ K-45 OR F/K @ K-25. Result of the Play, 15 from Foul, or Previous Spot and Re-kick. (7-1-6-PENALTY)

(24) R97 misjudges the ball, and it strikes the ground at the R-40. R97 blocks K86 at the R-40, and then recovers the loose ball at the R-35.

F/K @ R-45. R fouled during a loose-ball play. Basic Spot = Previous Spot. (Not PSK because this is a free kick.)



# Free Kicks

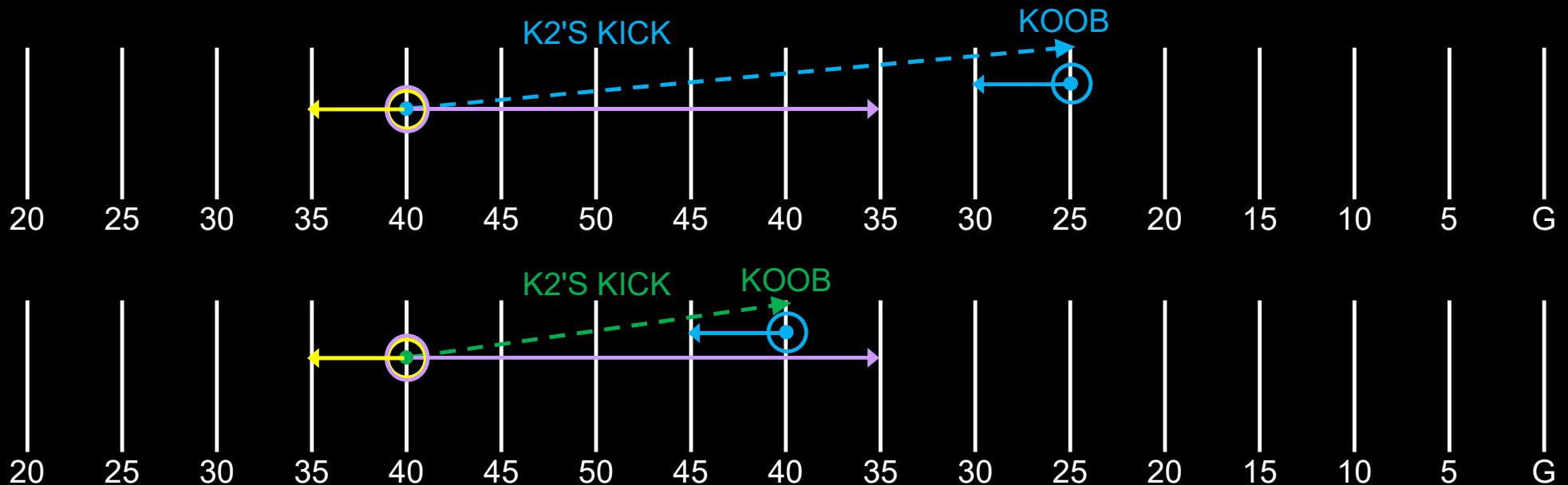
F/K @ K-40. K2's kick goes out of bounds, untouched, at the ...

(25) OOB @ R-25

5-yards Succeeding Spot, 5-yards Previous Spot / Re-kick, or 25-yards from Previous Spot. R - 1/10 @ R-35.

(26) OOB @ R-40

5-yards Succeeding Spot, 5-yards Previous Spot / Re-kick, or 25-yards from Previous Spot. R - 1/10 @ R-35.



# Free Kicks

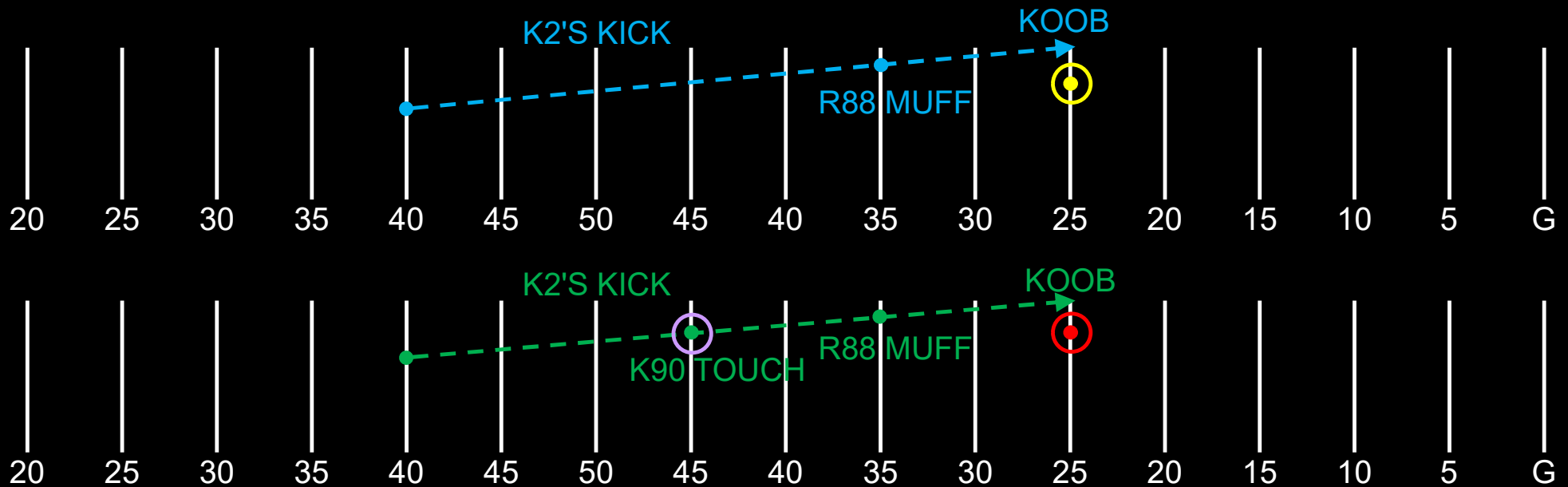
F/K @ K-40. K2's kick goes out of bounds, ...

(27) @ R-25 after R88 muffed the kick @ R-35.

Succeeding Spot, R-25. R touched the kick. No foul. R - 1/10 @ R-25.

(28) @ R-25 after K90 touched the kick @ R-45 and R88 muffed it @ R-35.

Spot of First Touching by K, R-45. OR Succeeding Spot, R-25. R touched the kick. No foul.



# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. K2's onside kick is touched by ...

(29) K87 at the K-49 and goes out of bounds at the R-49.

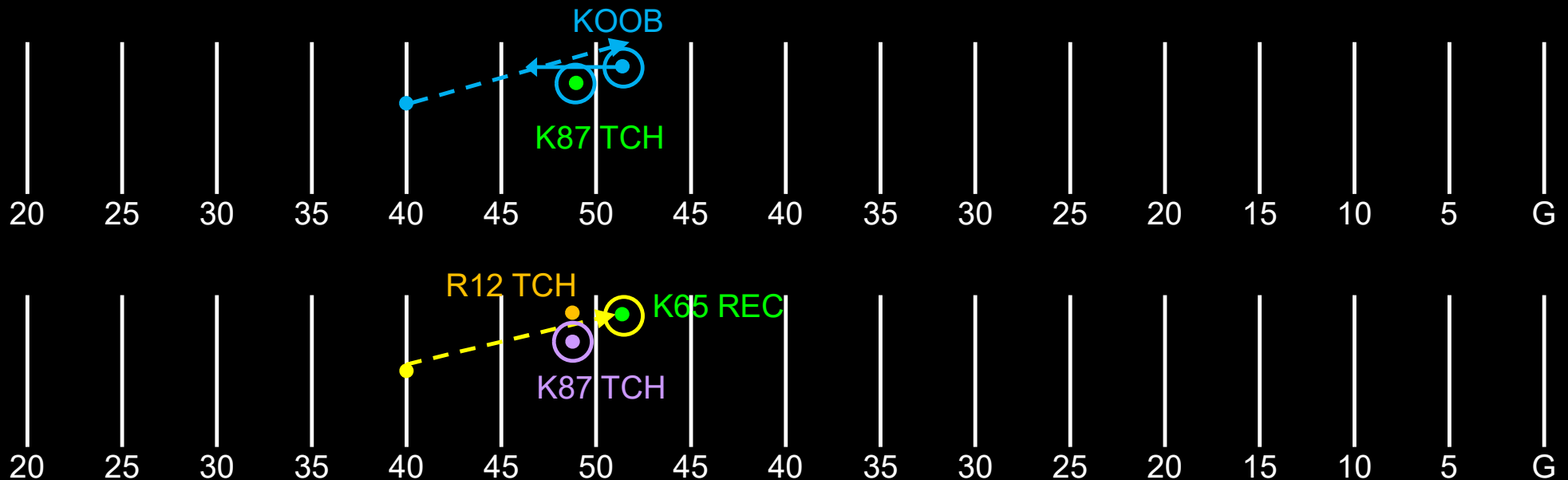
R - 1/10 @ K-49 OR R - 1/10 @ K-46.

(30) R12 at the K-49 and recovered by K65 at the R-49.

K - 1/10 @ R-49 - Snap. K is in legal possession since R touched the kick first.

(31) K87 at the K-49 and recovered by K65 at the R-49.

R - 1/10 @ K-49 - Snap. R will choose Spot of First Touching.



# Free Kicks

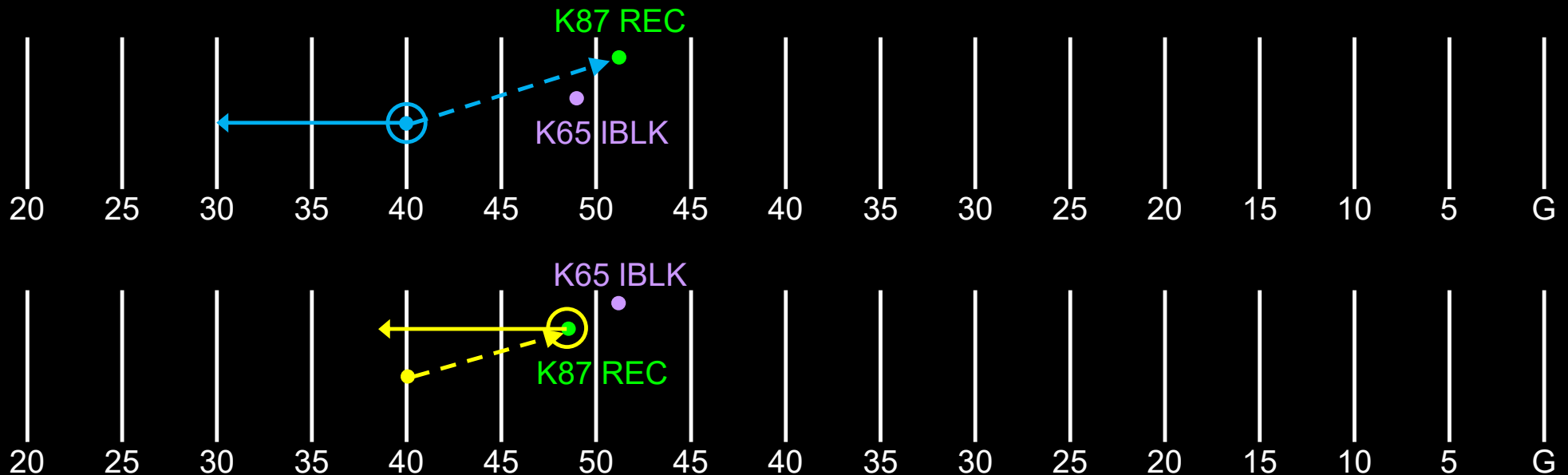
F/K @ K-40. K2's onside kick is untouched until ...

(32) it is recovered by K87 while grounded at the R-49. K65 blocked R12 at the K-49 before the ball traveled ten yards.

F/K @ R-30. K87 was in legal possession. The only option is the Previous Spot.

(33) it is recovered by K87 while grounded at the K-49. K65 blocked R12 at the R-49 before the ball traveled ten yards.

Best Option: R - 1/10 @ R-39 - Snap. Because K was not in legal possession (the ball did not travel ten yards), the subsequent dead ball belongs to R at that spot.



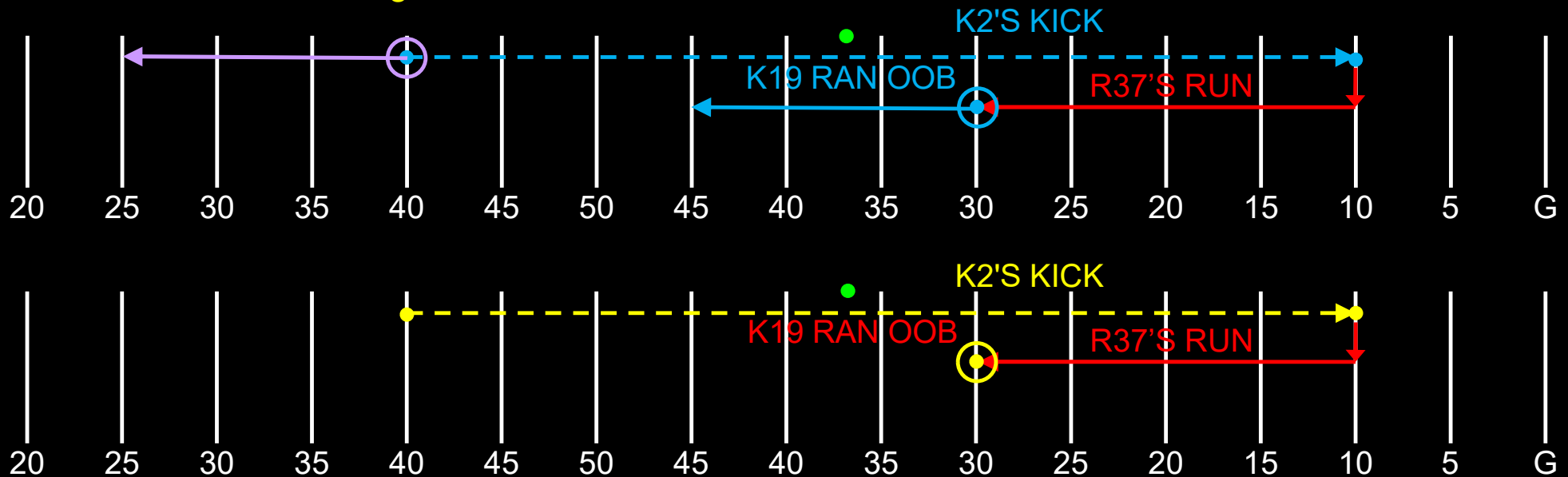
# Free Kicks

F/K @ A-40. K2's kick ...

(34) is fielded by R37 at the R-10 and returned to the R-30 where he is tackled. During the kick, K19 ran out of bounds on his own and came back inbounds to make the tackle.

R - 1/10 @ R-45 - Snap. Illegal Participation is from End of Run OR F/K @ K-25. Previous Spot. (35) is fielded by R37 at the R-10 and returned to the R-30 where he is tackled. During the return, K19 ran out of bounds on his own and came back inbounds to make the tackle.

R - 1/10 @ R-30 - Snap. No foul. K cannot go OOB prior to a change of possession. (See 6-1). When K went OOB during the return, the kick was over.



# Free Kicks

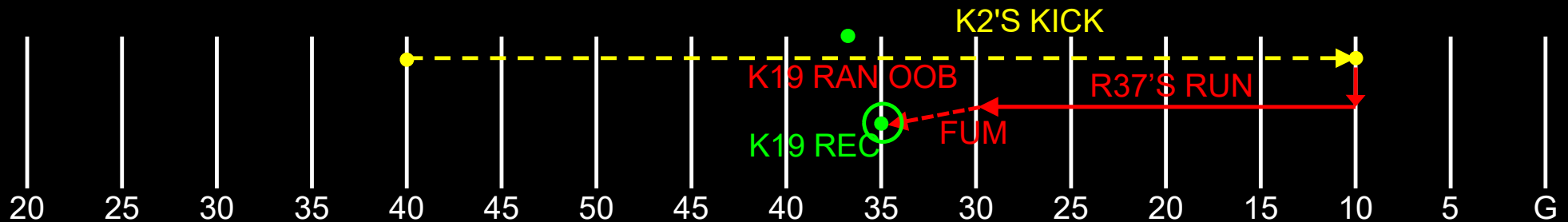
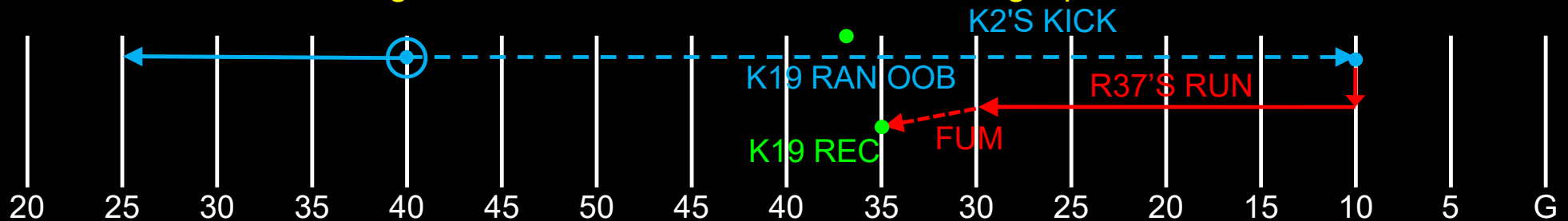
F/K @ A-40. K2's kick ...

(36) is fielded by R37 at the R-10 and returned to the R-30 where he fumbles. During the kick, K19 ran out of bounds on his own and came back inbounds, recovering the fumble at the R-35.

F/K @ K-25. Previous Spot. K is in legal possession. The Basic Spot is the Previous Spot.

(37) is fielded by R37 at the R-10 and returned to the R-30 where he fumbles. During the return, K19 ran out of bounds on his own and came back inbounds, recovering the fumble at the R-35.

K - 1/10 @ R-35 - Snap. No foul. K cannot go OOB prior to a change of possession. (See 6-1). When K went OOB during the return, the kick was over. K is in legal possession of the ball.



# Free Kicks

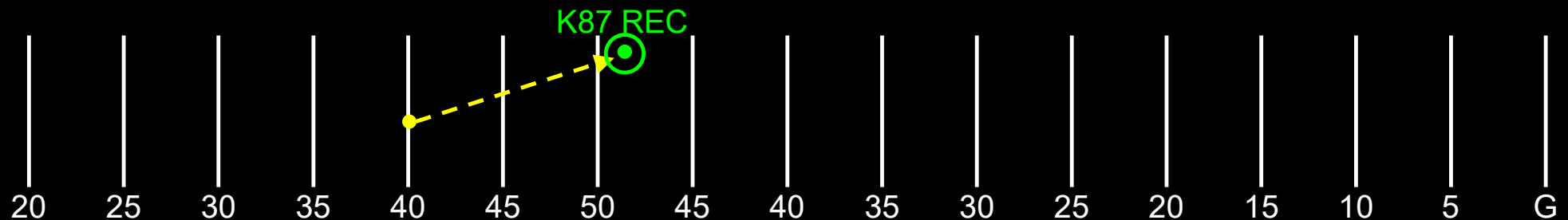
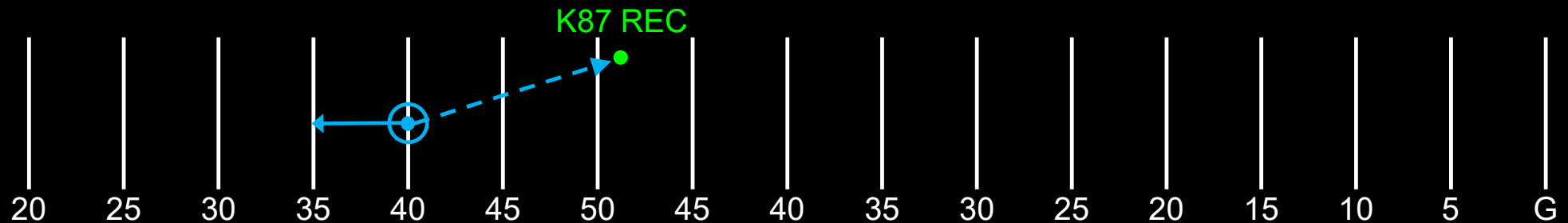
F/K @ K-40. K2's onside kick is driven immediately into the ground, ...

(38) the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air high enough to make receivers raise their heads to see the ball. The ball lands at the R-49 and K87 falls on it.

F/K @ R-35. This is a pop-up kick. It is a dead-ball foul. Officials shall kill the play immediately.

(39) the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air no higher than the receivers' waists. The ball lands at the K-46, rolls to the R-49, and K87 falls on it.

K - 1/10 @ R-49 - Snap. No foul. Not a pop-up kick. The ball (1) touched the ground and (2) traveled 10 yards. K is in legal possession.





# Free Kicks

F/K @ K-40. K2's onside kick goes high off the tee, crosses the 50-yard line, and ...

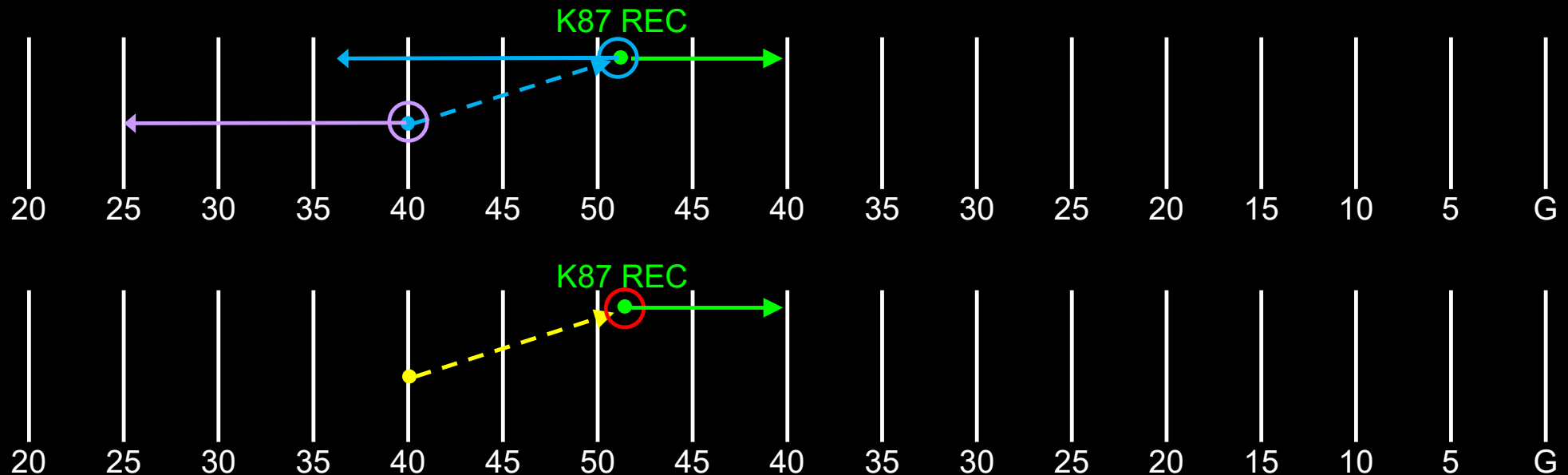
(40) K87 catches it at the R-49, runs to the R-40 and is tackled.

R - 1/10 @ K-36 - Snap. OR F/K @ R-25. This is KCI. Officials shall kill the play when K catches the ball. K's return was after the play ended.

(41) strikes the ground at the R-49. The ball bounces into the air, K87 catches it on the run, runs to the R-40, and is tackled.

K - 1/10 @ R-49 - Snap. Not KCI. The ball (1) touched the ground and (2) traveled 10 yards.

K is in legal possession. But K cannot advance a free kick.



# GCCOA Football, 8/3/26

*Written by Darrick Puffer, GCCOA Trainer*

## Meeting #1's Quiz Questions Scores:

1- 70%

2- 62%

3- 93%

4- 58%

5- 89%

**OVERALL- 266 / 363 for 73%.**

Our goal is to reach at least 80 percent as a group. Let's get better. Let's continue to read the rules book.

# GCCOA Football, 8/3/26

*Written by Darrick Puffer, GCCOA Trainer*

We have  
seven  
questions.

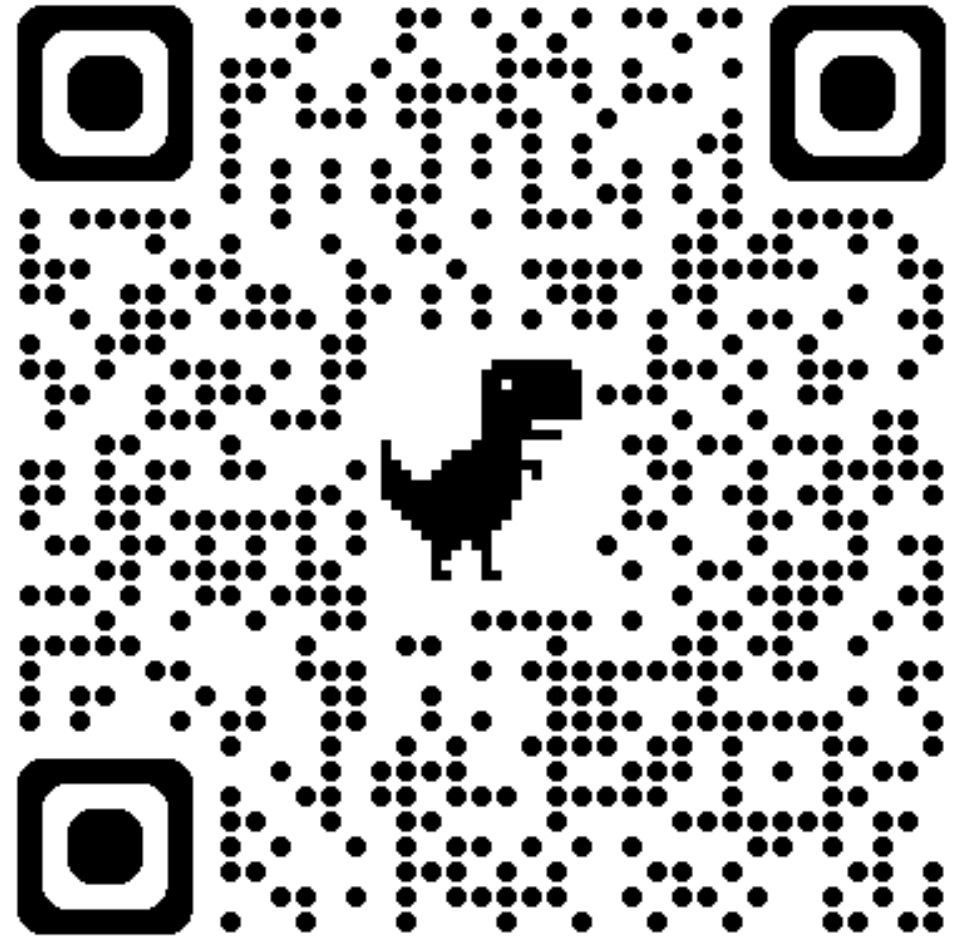
Each  
question  
has a  
separate  
QR code.



Back Judge Mike McLaughlin makes the call during a quarterfinal matchup in 2025.

The focus is on passing plays, and we will discuss after each question.

## (8/3/26) Question 1



## (8/3/26) Question 1

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-40, runs to the 50 and is tackled. During the pass, A65 held behind the LOS at the A-25.

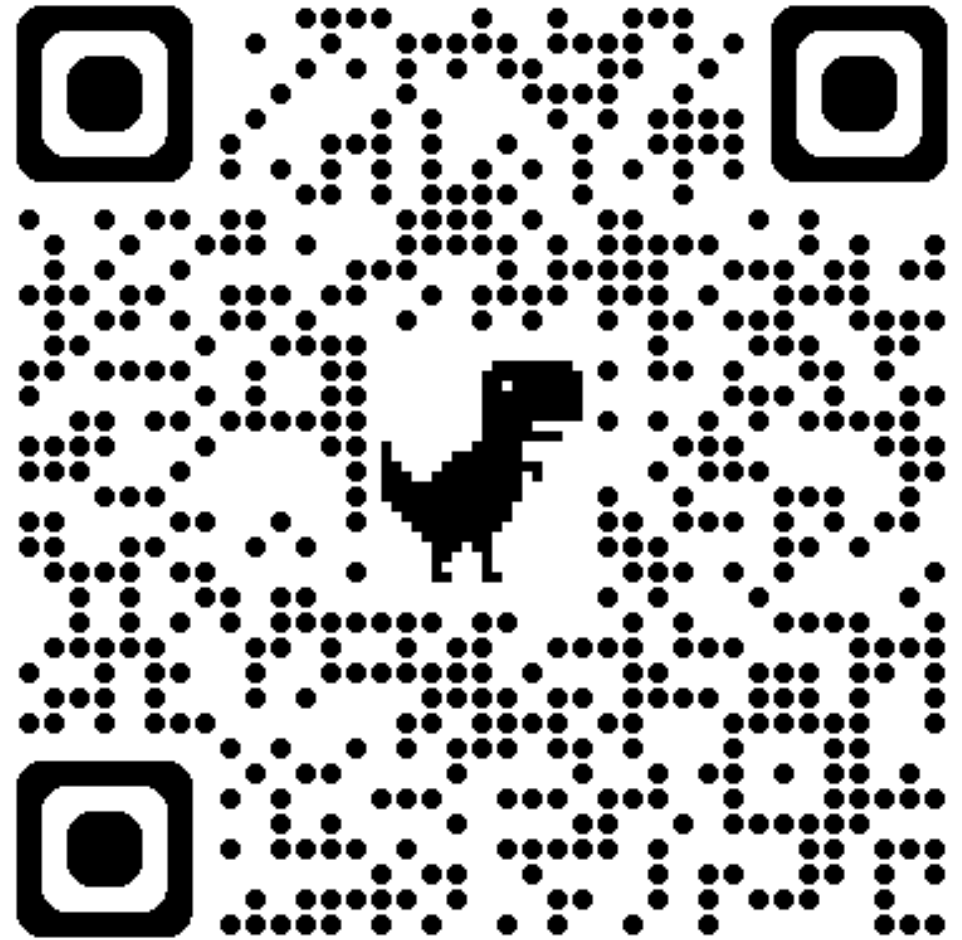
## (8/3/26) Question 1

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-40, runs to the 50 and is tackled. During the pass, A65 held behind the LOS at the A-25.

A, 2/20 @ A-20, Ready.

See 10-3-1, 10-4-2. The foul occurred during a loose-ball play, a pass, so the Basic Spot is the Previous Spot.

## (8/3/26) Question 2



## (8/3/26) Question 2

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-40, runs to the 50 and is tackled. During the pass, A65 held beyond the LOS at the A-35.



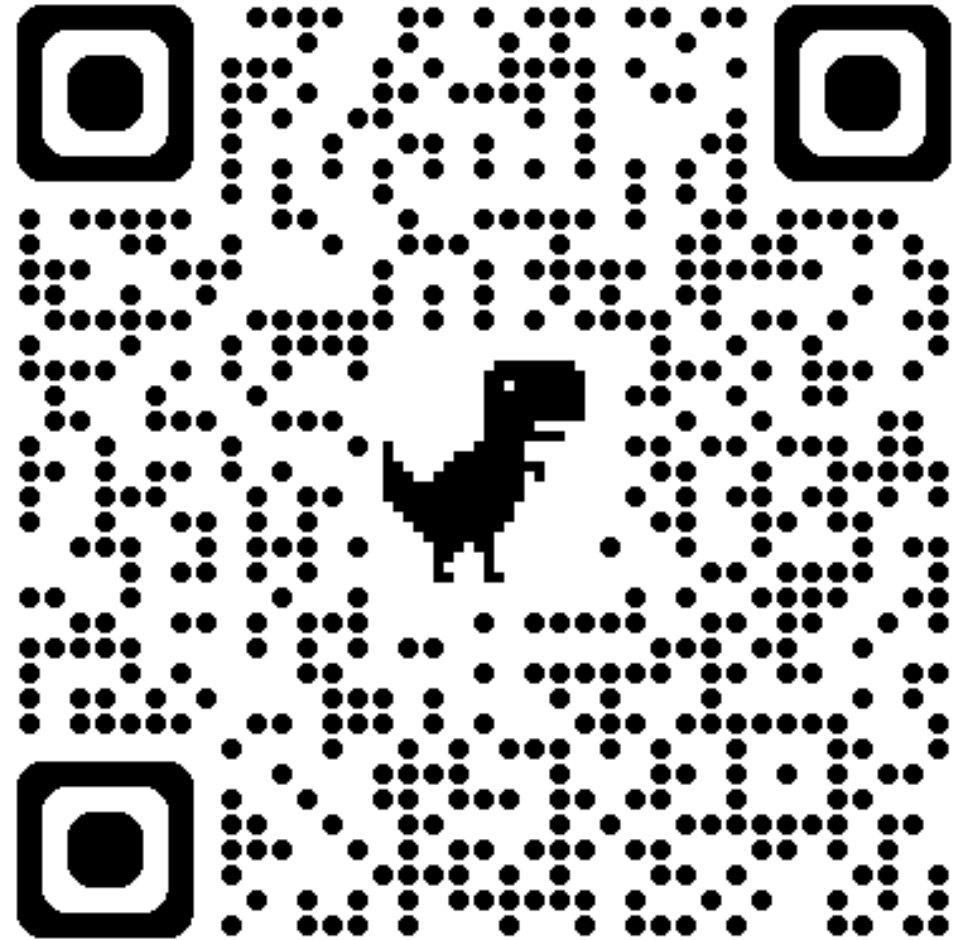
## (8/3/26) Question 2

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-40, runs to the 50 and is tackled. During the pass, A65 held beyond the LOS at the A-35.

A, 2/20 @ A-20, Ready.

See 10-3-1, 10-4-2. The foul occurred during a loose-ball play, a pass, so the Basic Spot is the Previous Spot.

## (8/3/26) Question 3



## (8/3/26) Question 3

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-40, runs to the 50 and is tackled. After the catch, during A88's run, A90 held beyond the LOS at the A-45.

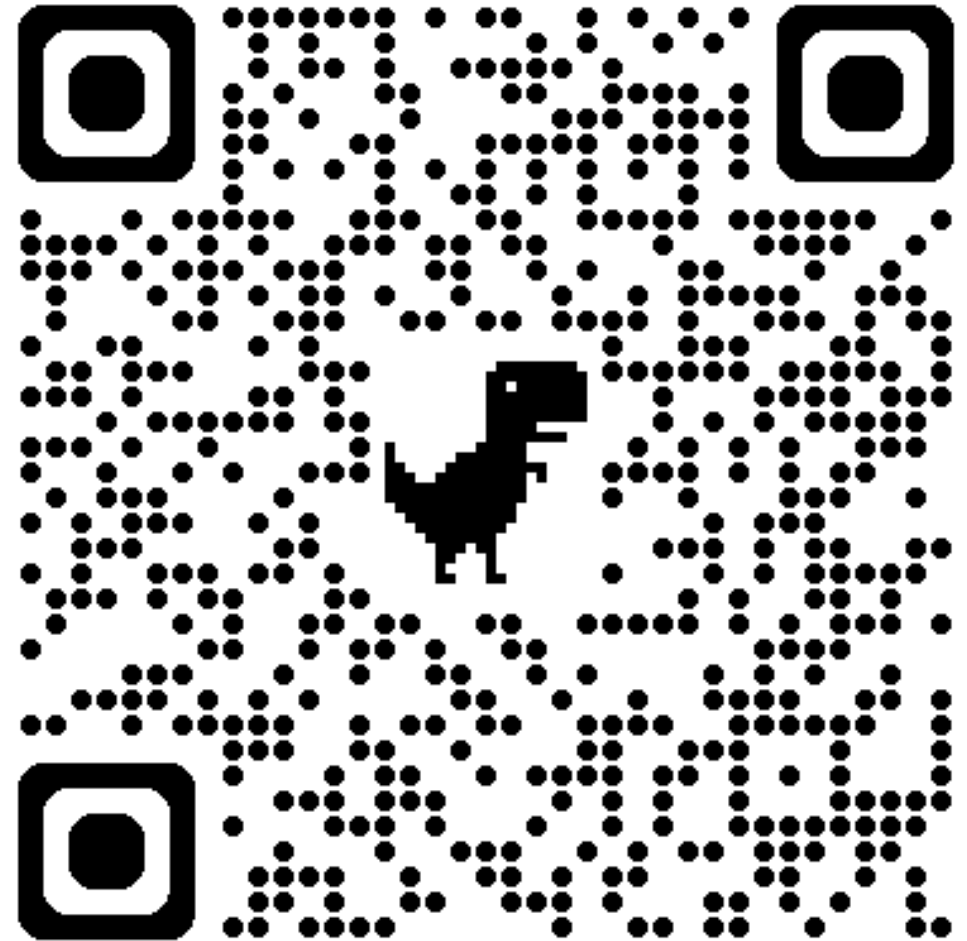
## (8/3/26) Question 3

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-40, runs to the 50 and is tackled. After the catch, during A88's run, A90 held beyond the LOS at the A-45.

A, 2/5 @ A-35, Ready.

See 10-4-4-e. The foul occurred during a running play where the foul and the end of the run were beyond the LOS. Since the foul was behind the end of the run, the Basic Spot is the Spot of the Foul.

## (8/3/26) Question 4



## (8/3/26) Question 4

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-35 and is tackled there. B72 was flagged for defensive holding at the A-33 beyond the LOS.

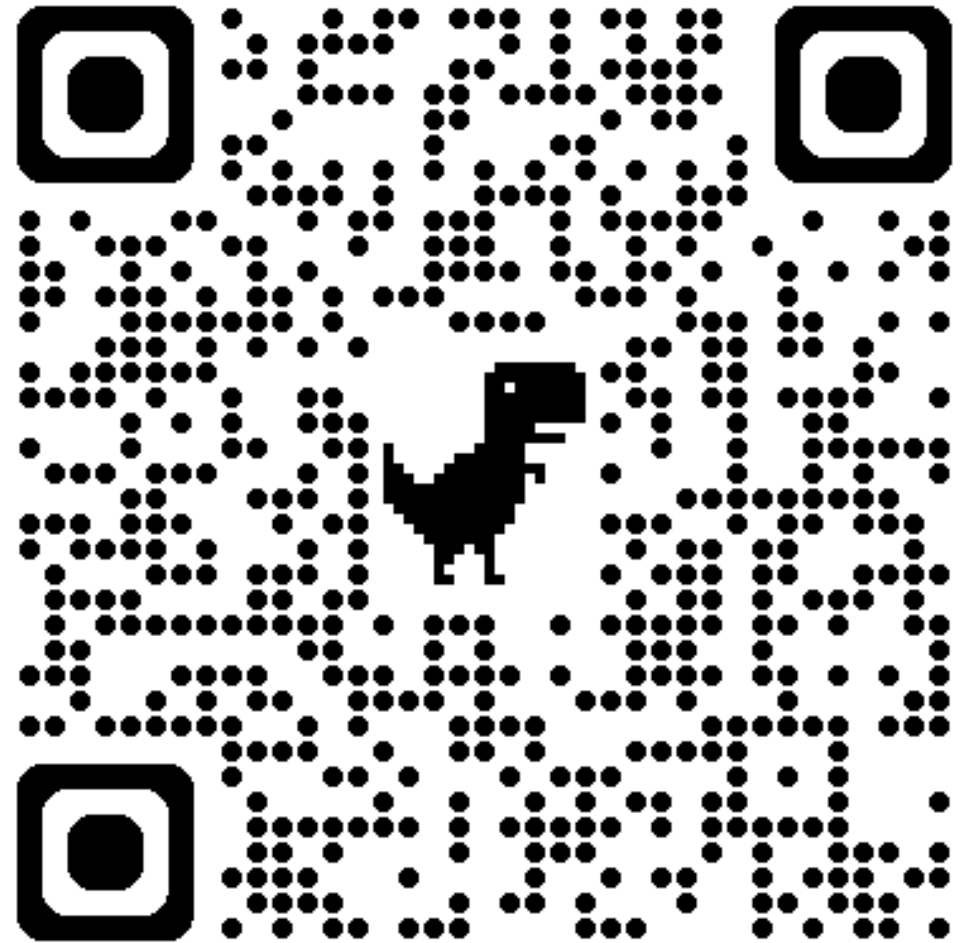
## (8/3/26) Question 4

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-35 and is tackled there. B72 was flagged for defensive holding at the A-33 beyond the LOS.

A, 1/10 @ A-40, Ready.

See 10-3-1, 10-4-2. Taking the 10-yard penalty from the Previous Spot is better than declining the penalty and taking the result of the play.

## (8/3/26) Question 5





## (8/3/26) Question 5

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-35, runs to the 50 and is tackled. B72 was flagged for defensive holding at the A-33 beyond the LOS.

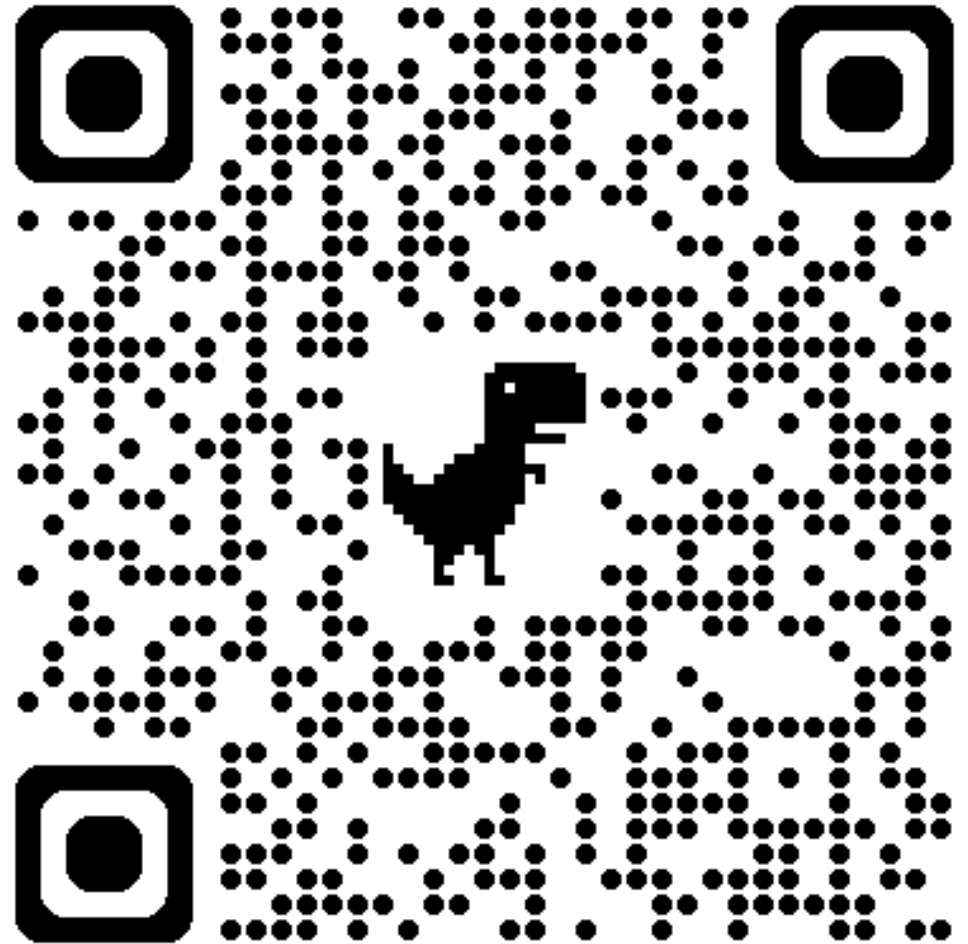
## (8/3/26) Question 5

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass. A88 catches the pass at the A-35, runs to the 50 and is tackled. B72 was flagged for defensive holding at the A-33 beyond the LOS.

A, 1/10 @ 50, Ready.

See 10-3-1, 10-4-2. Taking the 10-yard penalty from the Previous Spot is worse than declining the penalty. Taking the result of the play is the best option for Team A.

## (7/29/26) Question 6



## (8/3/26) Question 6

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass from the A-20, where B55 hits the quarterback, knocking him to the ground, well after the pass was released. A88 drops the pass at the A-35.

## (8/3/26) Question 6

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass from the A-20, where B55 hits the quarterback, knocking him to the ground, well after the pass was released. A88 drops the pass at the A-35.

A, 1/10 @ A-45, Snap.

See 10-3-1, 10-4-2. The Basic Spot is the Previous Spot on Roughing the Passer when the result of the play is an incomplete pass. In addition, RPS is an automatic first down.

## (8/3/26) Question 7



## (8/3/26) Question 7

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass from the A-20, where B55 hits the quarterback, knocking him to the ground, well after the pass was released. A88 catches the pass at the A-35 and runs to the 50 where he is tackled.

## (8/3/26) Question 7

A, 2/10 @ A-30. A12 throws a pass from the A-20, where B55 hits the quarterback, knocking him to the ground, well after the pass was released. A88 catches the pass at the A-35 and runs to the 50 where he is tackled.

A, 1/10 @ B-35, Ready.

See 10-3-1, 10-4-2-b, 9-4-4-PENALTY. Enforcement for Roughing the Passer is from the Previous Spot unless the dead-ball spot is beyond the neutral zone. In that case, the dead-ball spot is the Basic Spot. In addition, RPS is an automatic first down.



To get credit for attending tonight's meeting, scan the QR code, complete the document, and submit it tonight.

Meeting #3 –  
Aug. 11 from 6-8 p.m.

Meeting #4 –  
**NEW:** Aug. 18 from 6-8 p.m.

Meeting #5 –  
Aug. 25 from 6-8 p.m.