

Football Chain Crew Instructions

The typical line-to-gain crew consists of at least three individuals – a down-box operator and two to hold the rods. Unless otherwise possible by use of a fourth crew member, the down-box operator will attach the clip as specified. The crew should be dressed uniformly in readily identifiable attire.

PREGAME DUTIES

1. The line-to-gain crew shall meet the LINESMAN on the sideline opposite the press box at least 15 minutes before game time and also five minutes prior to the second-half kickoff. If an auxiliary down marker is used, operator shall meet the LINE JUDGE on press-box side at the same time.
2. The LINESMAN shall make certain that the chain and the official down box have been placed opposite the press box or the designated sideline and that all are in good working order and conform to the rules. The LINE JUDGE shall then make certain that the auxiliary box is in good working order and is placed on the opposite side of the field from the line-to-gain crew (crew).
3. The complete concentration of the crew is absolutely necessary if it is to discharge its duties efficiently. The crew must refrain from showing any partisan reaction to the events taking place on the playing field. The crew must be prepared to act immediately on the instructions from the LINESMAN so that teams and all concerned will know the exact situation concerning the down and yards to be gained. The crew shall not move or change the number of the down until signaled to do so by the LINESMAN. Auxiliary down-marker operator shall act only on instructions of the LINE JUDGE.

GAME PROCEDURES

1. On the LINESMAN'S signal, the crew must move as quickly as possible to the next position.
2. When a runner or pass receiver is going out of bounds in the immediate vicinity, the involved crew member is to quickly and carefully drop the marker down and move away from the sideline keeping his eye on the spot of the marker. The crew member away from the play should hold his position if possible.
3. The LINESMAN will set the spot of all first downs by going to the sidelines and marking, while facing the field, the exact spot where the rear stake will be set. The front crew member will then be sure the chain is fully extended before setting his stake.
4. The DOWN-BOX OPERATOR, on every new series of downs, will set the box at the spot marked by the linesman. When the line-to-gain equipment is moved, the rear rod is to be set behind the down box and then the clip shall be placed at the back edge of the 5-yard line nearest the rear rod. The box must be held at all times in an upright position with the down correctly shown.
5. The DOWN-BOX OPERATOR is to show the number of the down just completed and shall not indicate the new down until so notified by the LINESMAN. On instruction from the LINESMAN, the DOWN-BOX OPERATOR will move the down marker to a new position with the marker placed at the forward point of the ball and change the marker to the correct down.
6. On all measurements for first down when the chain is moved onto the field, the DOWN-BOX OPERATOR is to place his box at/off the spot of the front rod until a new series of downs is declared or the chain is returned to its previous position.
7. The DOWN-BOX OPERATOR should be aware of any penalty markers. The box must not be moved nor the down changed until so notified by the LINESMAN.
8. The chain is not extended if it is a first-and-goal situation. After the chain is clipped, remove it from the sideline.
9. The DOWN-BOX OPERATOR should place the marker on the line of scrimmage on all try situations. This will aid players and officials in determining the line of scrimmage on all plays toward the sideline. The chain will not be placed on a try.
10. If the sidelines become crowded and the crew does not have room to efficiently discharge its duties, the crew is to notify the LINESMAN immediately so that a time-out may be called and the sidelines cleared before the game will be allowed to proceed.
11. If the game is delayed for any reason, the crew will stay with the officials.
12. Operating the equipment outside and within 6 feet of the sideline is for the protection of players, coaches and all persons who are part of the game.