

2023 Overview of Center Judge Mechanics



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Free Kicks

- Administer kick-off

- Confirm crew is ready to officiate, especially those in the box.
- Hand kicker the ball.
- Signal R to start play clock.
- Move to position is 3-5 yards deeper than the kicker, between the hashes, directly behind the ball where the kick is visible.
- Observe Team A's formation:
 - No player, beside the kicker, more than 5 yards deeper than Team A's restraining line,
 - Minimum of 4 Team A players on each side at time of kick.

Free Kicks

- Cover kick-off

- Observe the kick, know the status of the ball.
- Protect the kicker for 5 yards during advance beyond Team A's restraining line.
- Be prepared to rule on 'early' Team A blocks, especially for onside kicks.
- May be secondary to observe Fair Catch Signal on short Pooch Kicks.
- Move downfield slightly behind U/BJ, between the hashes, keying on the Team A players in "position 5" observing action moving toward and around the ball/returner as play develops.
- Responsible for Team A's goal line on returns.

- B & U no longer need to come as far onto the field after the kick

- B & U midway between numbers & hashes (discuss during pregame)
- Same depth of coverage downfield.

Scrimmage Plays

- At the snap
 - Initial Position:
 - Always on left side of formation in Team A's backfield (R always on right, regardless of QB's passing arm).
 - 12-15 yards deep of the LOS
 - 3+ yards wide of the left tackle's outside shoulder.
 - Note the tackle box and "free" blocking zone (low-blocking zone is no longer referenced in the rule book)
- Key(s):
 - Primary on left tackle, with left guard in view, to read run/pass
 - Be ready to call obvious (make sure you're 110% sure) FST on LT/LG, (only when the movement by the defensive player(s) in that area is clearly visible), and possibly on the back that may be in line of vision.

Scrimmage Plays

- Pass plays

- Initial position should allow for coverage of action on/by left tackle without too much movement. If need to retreat, move backwards at an angle (~45 degrees) that will allow for best view on Left Tackle. Be prepared to rule on OH, DH, ILH, CHB, etc.
- If QB is threatened, immediately transition from left tackle to QB. Must observe all hits on QB. Be aware of blitzes and be prepared to go from tackle to blitzer to rule on hits to QB.
- Be prepared to provide input to R on any of R's primary responsibilities related to QB. This includes informing the R if QB is inside/outside of tackle box on possible Intentional Grounding.
- If QB scrambles beyond the CJ to the left outside the numbers, primary responsibility of QB transitions from the R to the CJ.
- After pass, continue to off-ball officiate by watching action around the LOS and possibly the QB

Scrimmage Plays

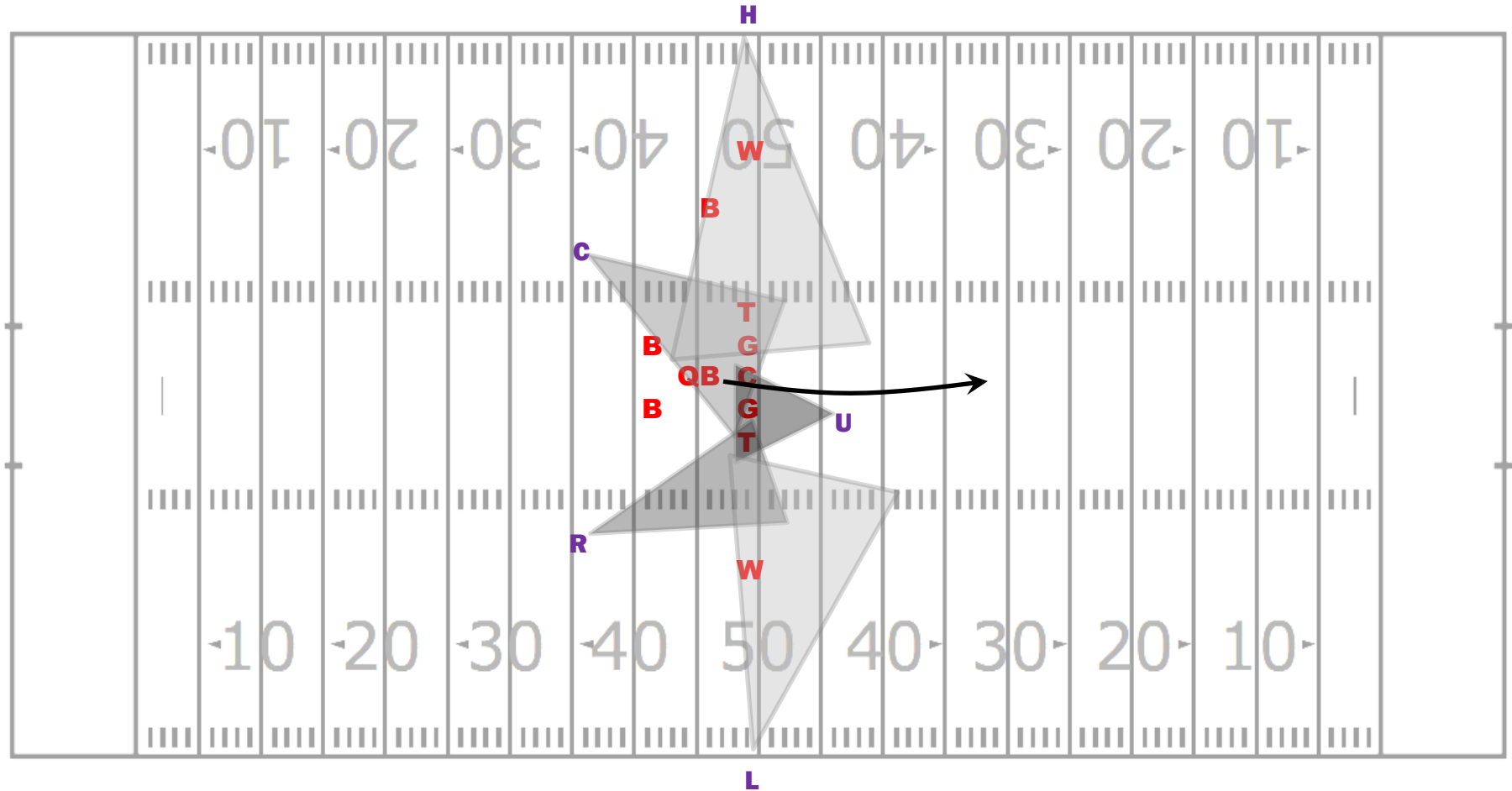
- Run plays

- Coverage:

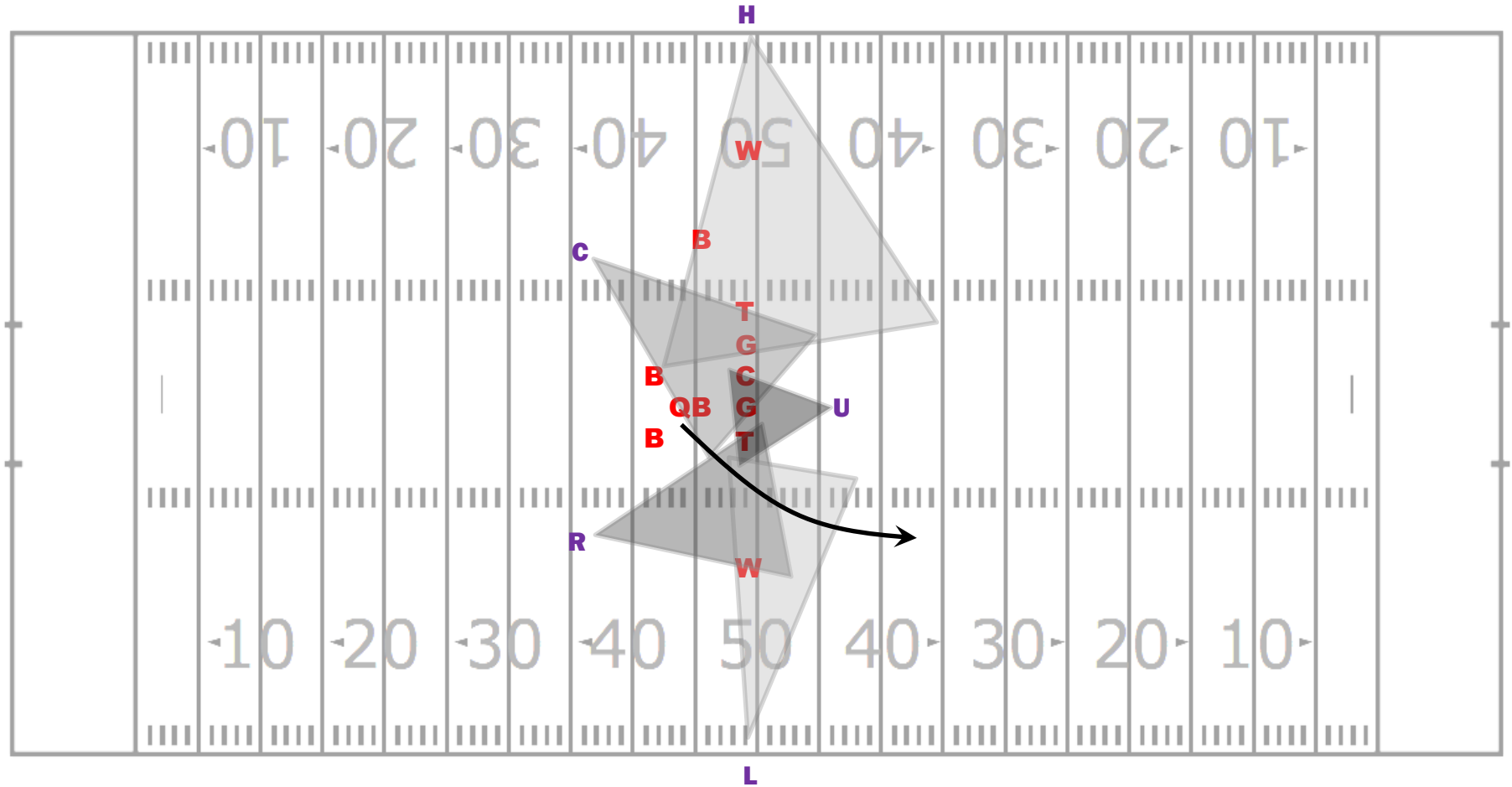
- Runs to the right: R covers front side POA. CJ & U cover back side, with U being free to transition to second level blocks.
 - Runs to the left: CJ covers front side POA. R & U cover back side, with U being free to transition to second level blocks.
 - Watch for pulling guards as they will take you to the POA most of the time
 - Runs between 'A' & 'B' gaps: R & CJ focus immediately on POA. This may result in the R & CJ watching action by U's initial keys.

- HL, LJ, SJ, FJ, and BJ retain usual run play responsibilities

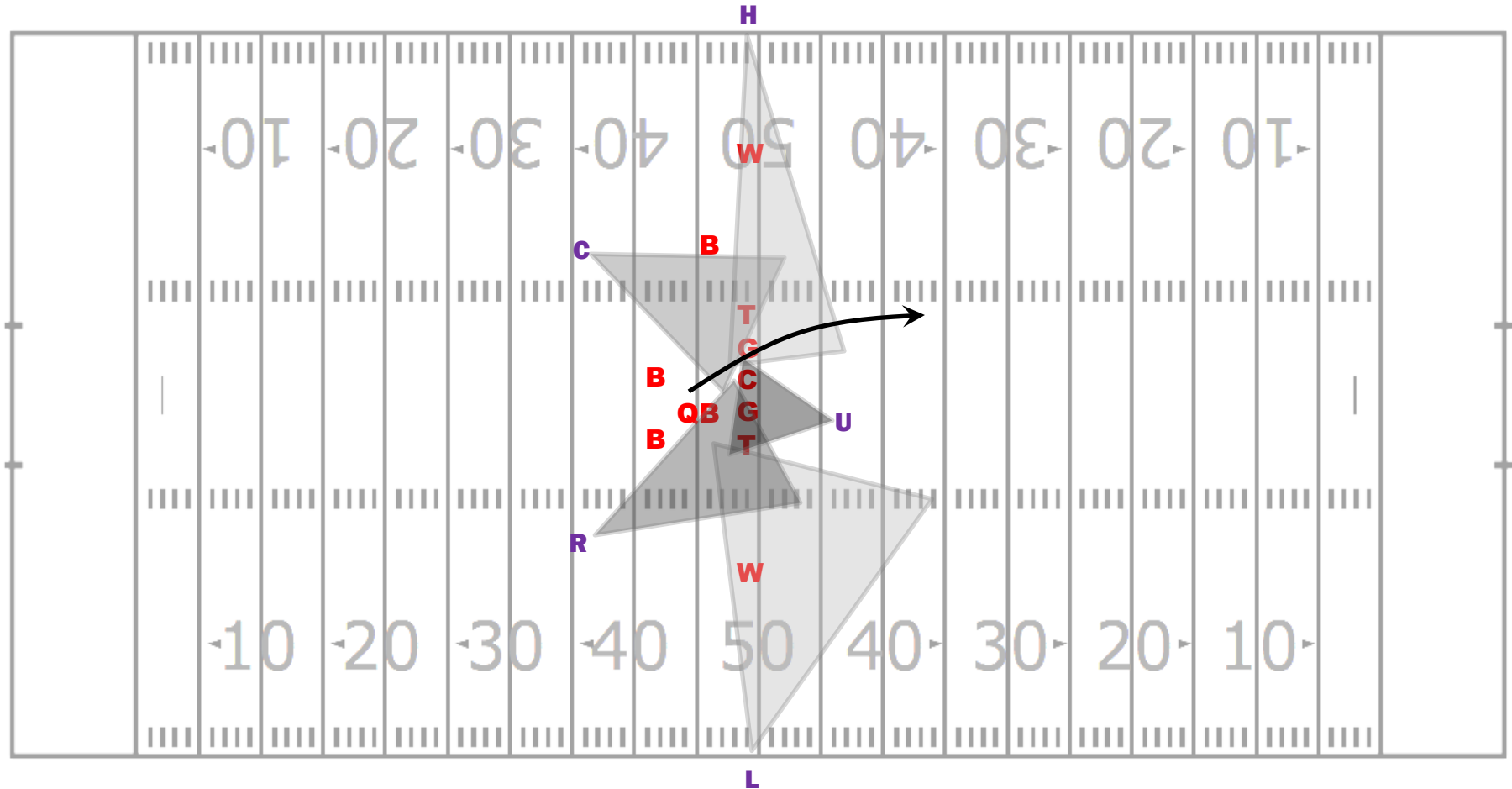
Run Coverage Diagram Up the Middle (“A” Gap)



Run Coverage Diagram To the Right ("B" & "C" Gap)

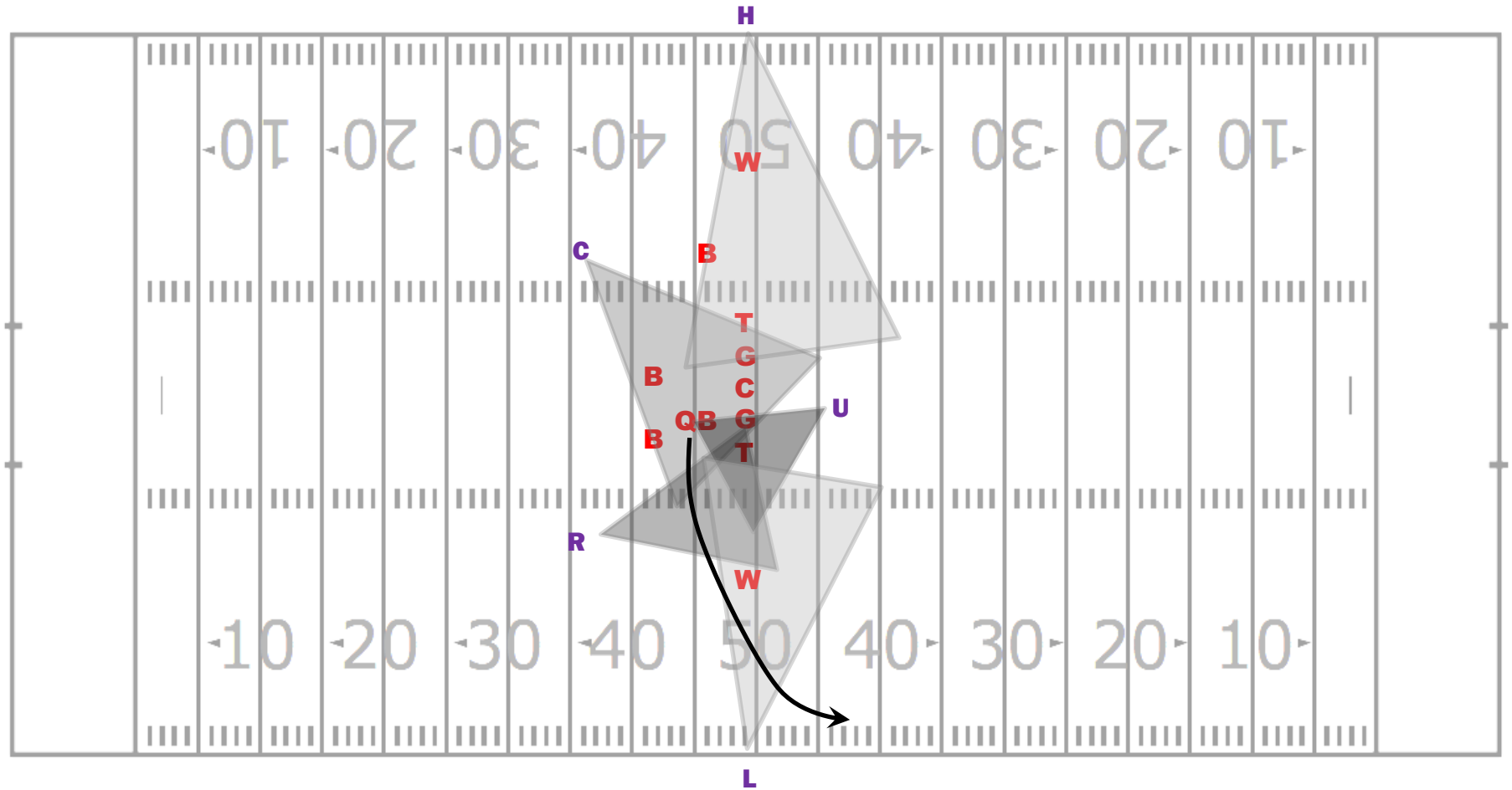


Run Coverage Diagram To the Left ("B" & "C" Gap)



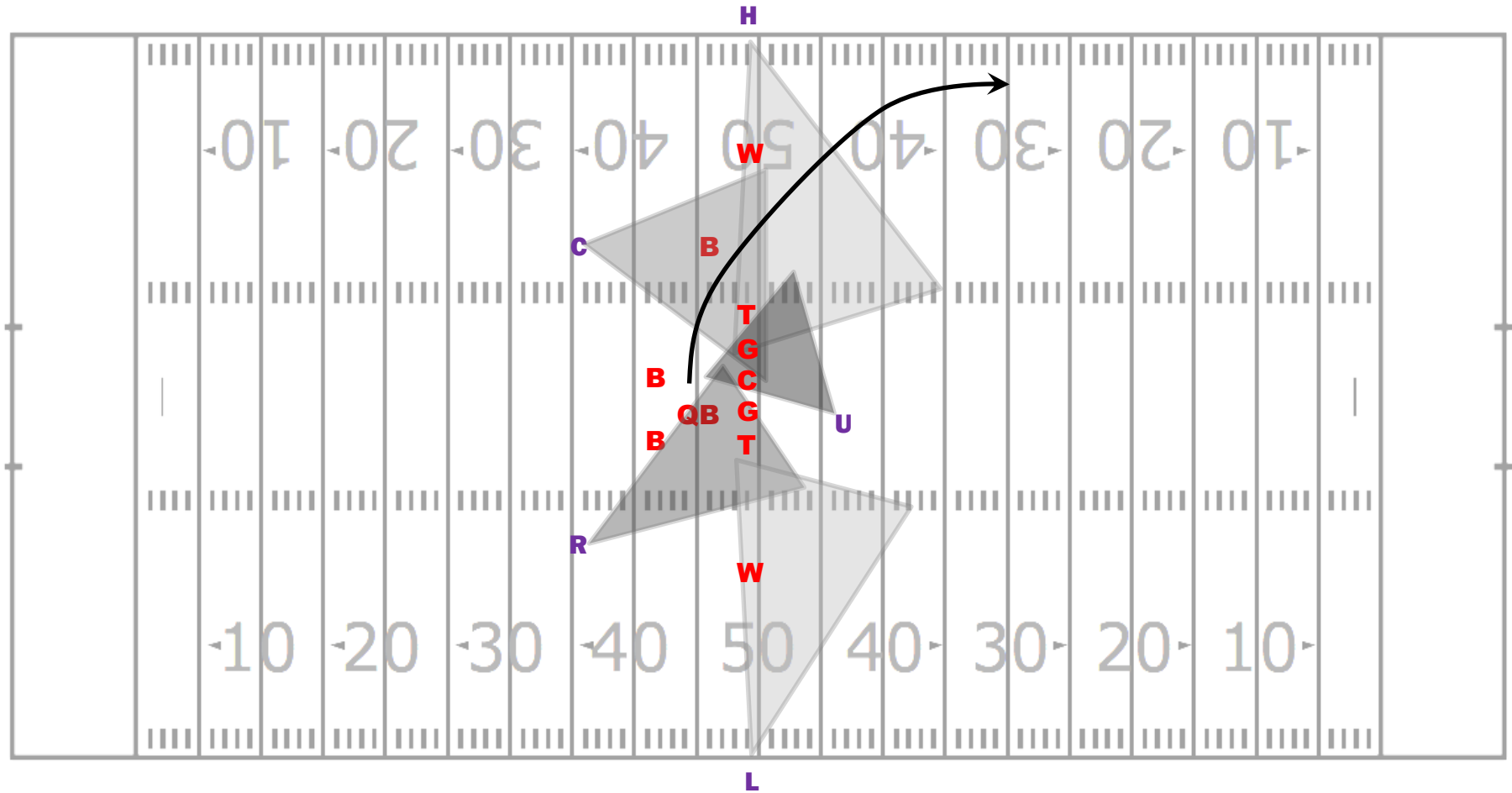
Run Coverage Diagram

Stretch Run Right



Run Coverage Diagram

Stretch Run Left



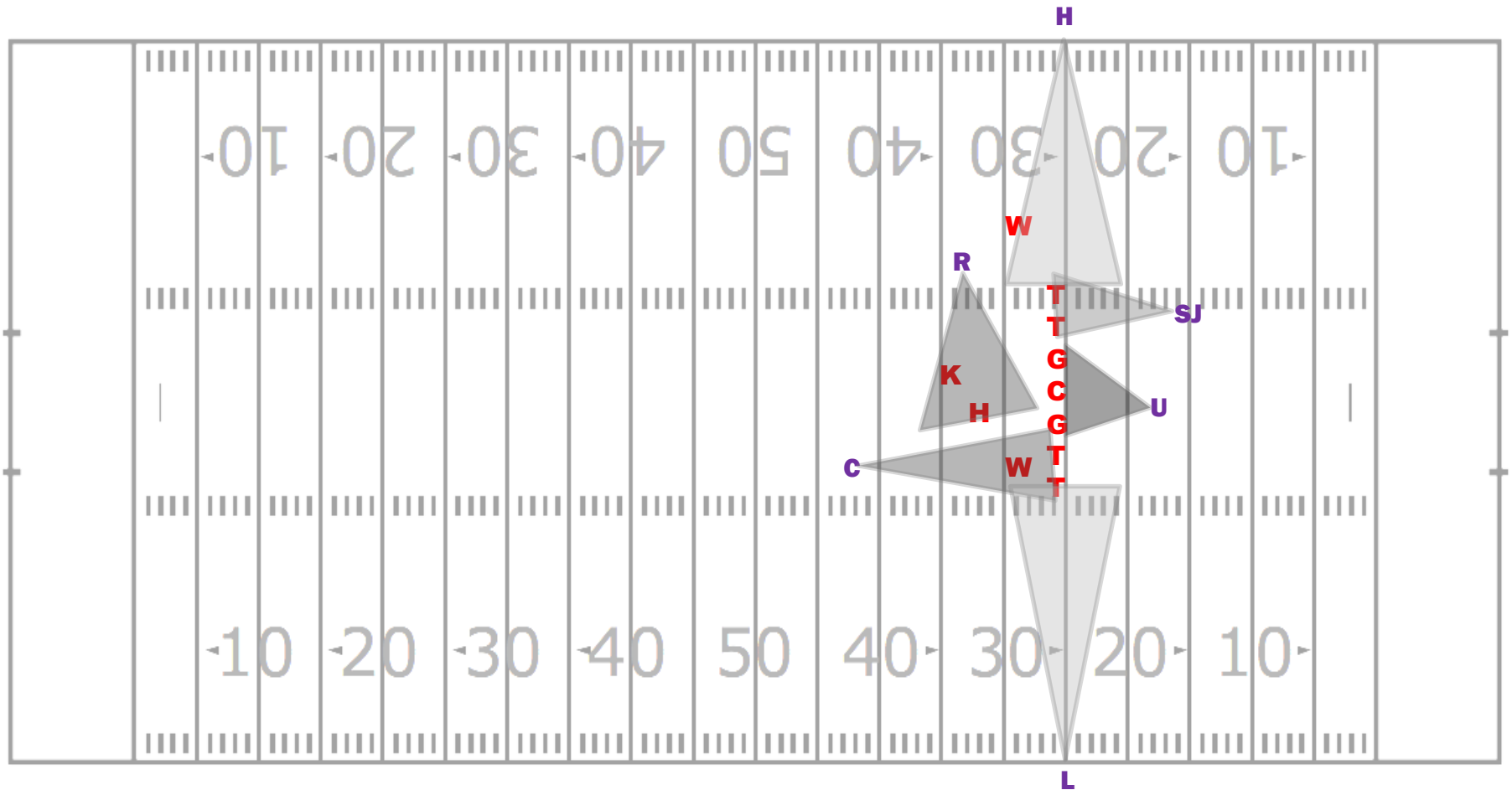
Scrimmage Kicks: Punts

- Initial position: 1 yard deep of kicker 3+ yards wider & behind tight end on left side. Move into position. U will hold the snap.
- Key on your tackle/wingback/personal protectors. Observe your side of offensive line move downfield. U should cover the blocks on R's side until R has cleared the kick. Then R will have his side and the U can turn to help downfield.
- Be prepared to provide input to R on any action on the kicker.
- After the snap, observe offensive line move downfield on your hash. Be prepared to rule on OH (holding (usually takedowns) by the receivers) as the kickers move downfield to cover.
- Goal line responsibility for any blocked punts or returns

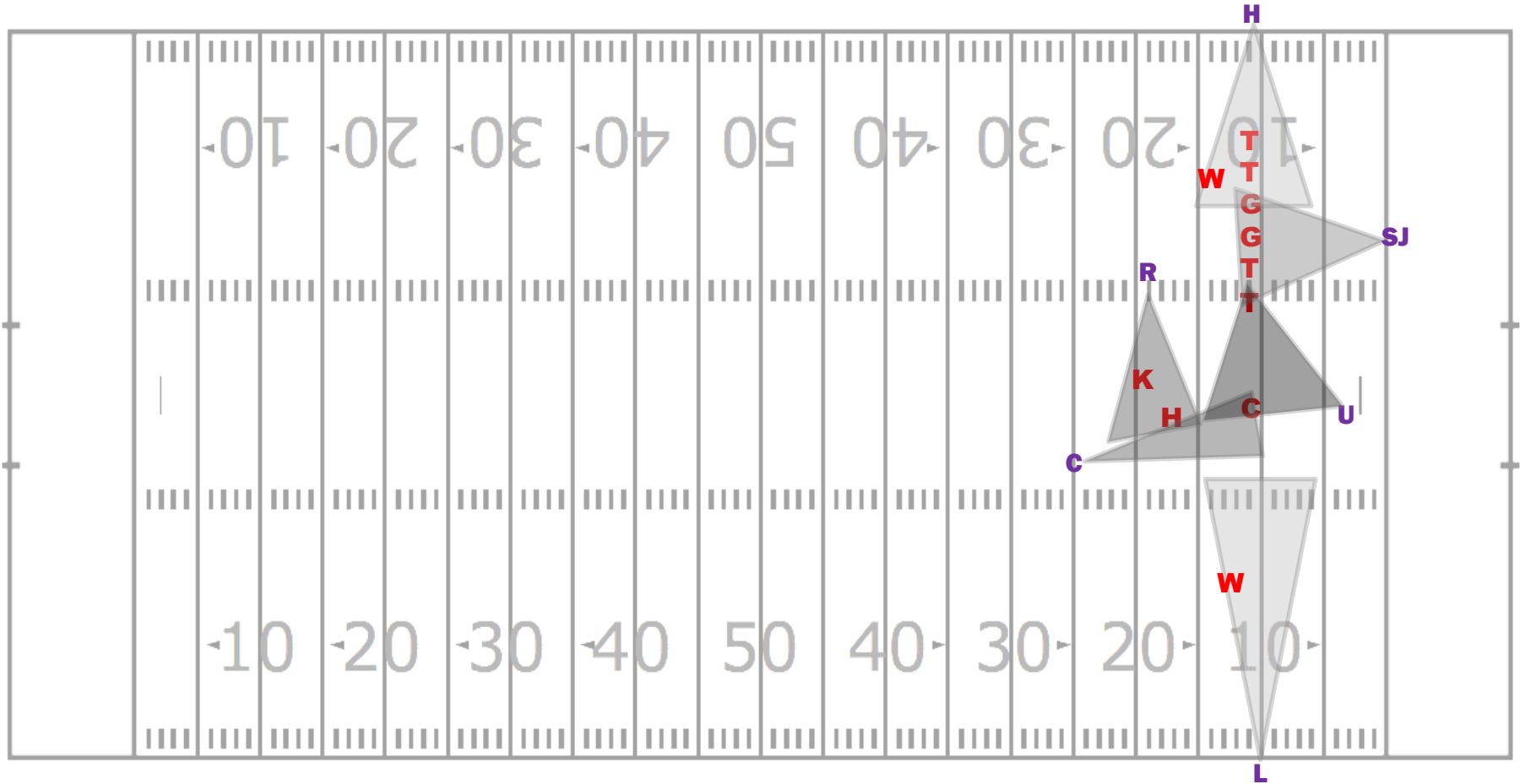
Scrimmage Kicks: Try

- Initial position: Offensive backfield, opposite of R (who will be looking “in” at kicker/holder), as wide as the widest offensive lineman, approximately one yard deep of kicker. The SJ will always line up with the R, and opposite the CJ.
- Observe action on & against tackle/tight end on your side of field, (discuss w/referee during pregame on R & CJ crossing (observing tackle/tight referee’s side of field), may help with guard. Be prepared to rule on DH (pull & shoot), leverage/leaping, ILH, BBW, FST (only when the movement by the defensive player(s) in that area is clearly visible), etc. The CJ has goal line responsibility on long returns after possession by Team B. Officiate inside out; bracket the play in with the nearest wing official on that side of the field.
- Swinging Gate plays (discuss during pregame):
 - If the kicker/holder are in position, CJ covers gate to his side. SJ will cover gate to his side.
 - If the kicker/holder are not in position, R/CJ/SJ use regular scrimmage play mechanics

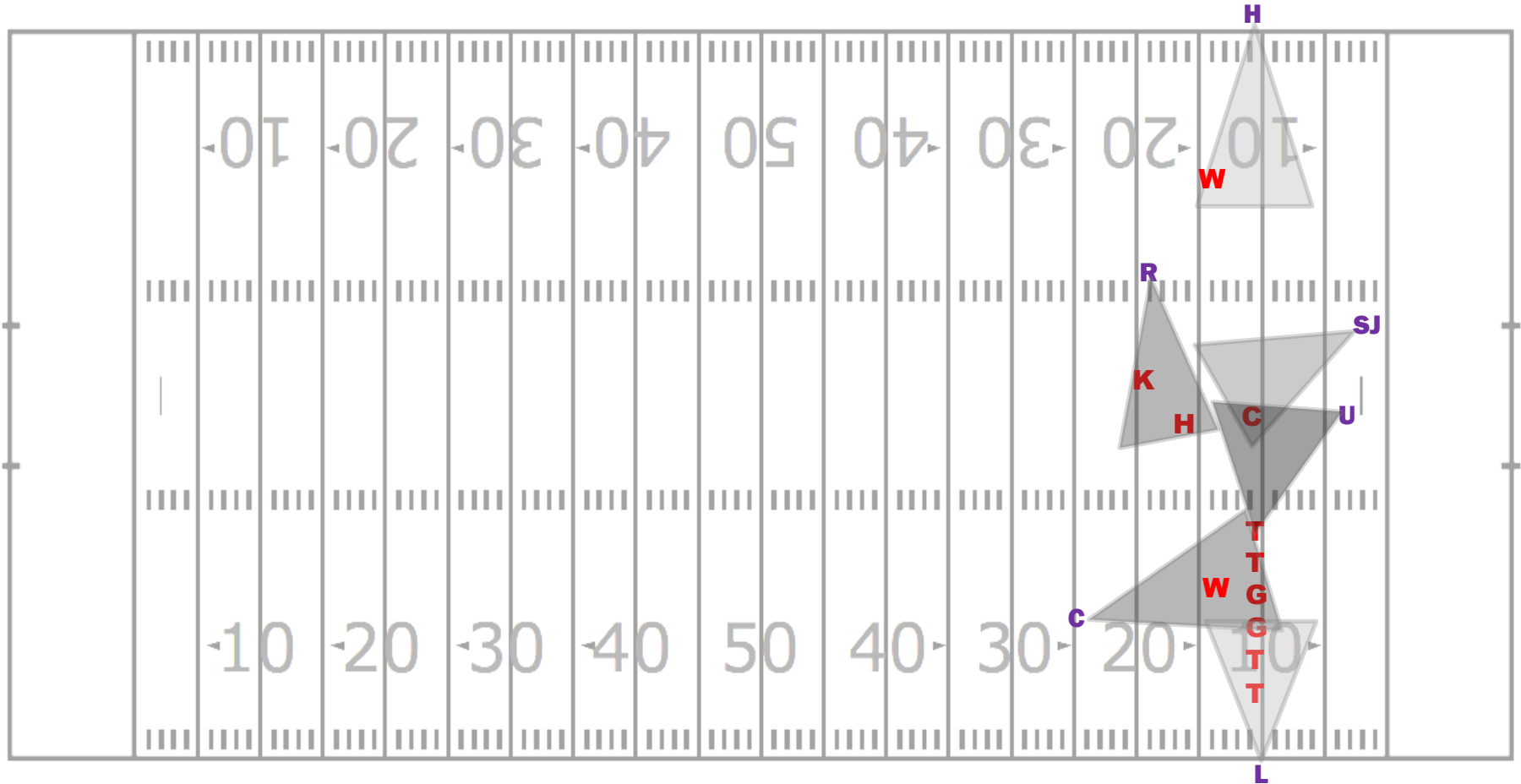
Try by Kick Diagram



Swinging Gate Diagram: Try (SJ Side)



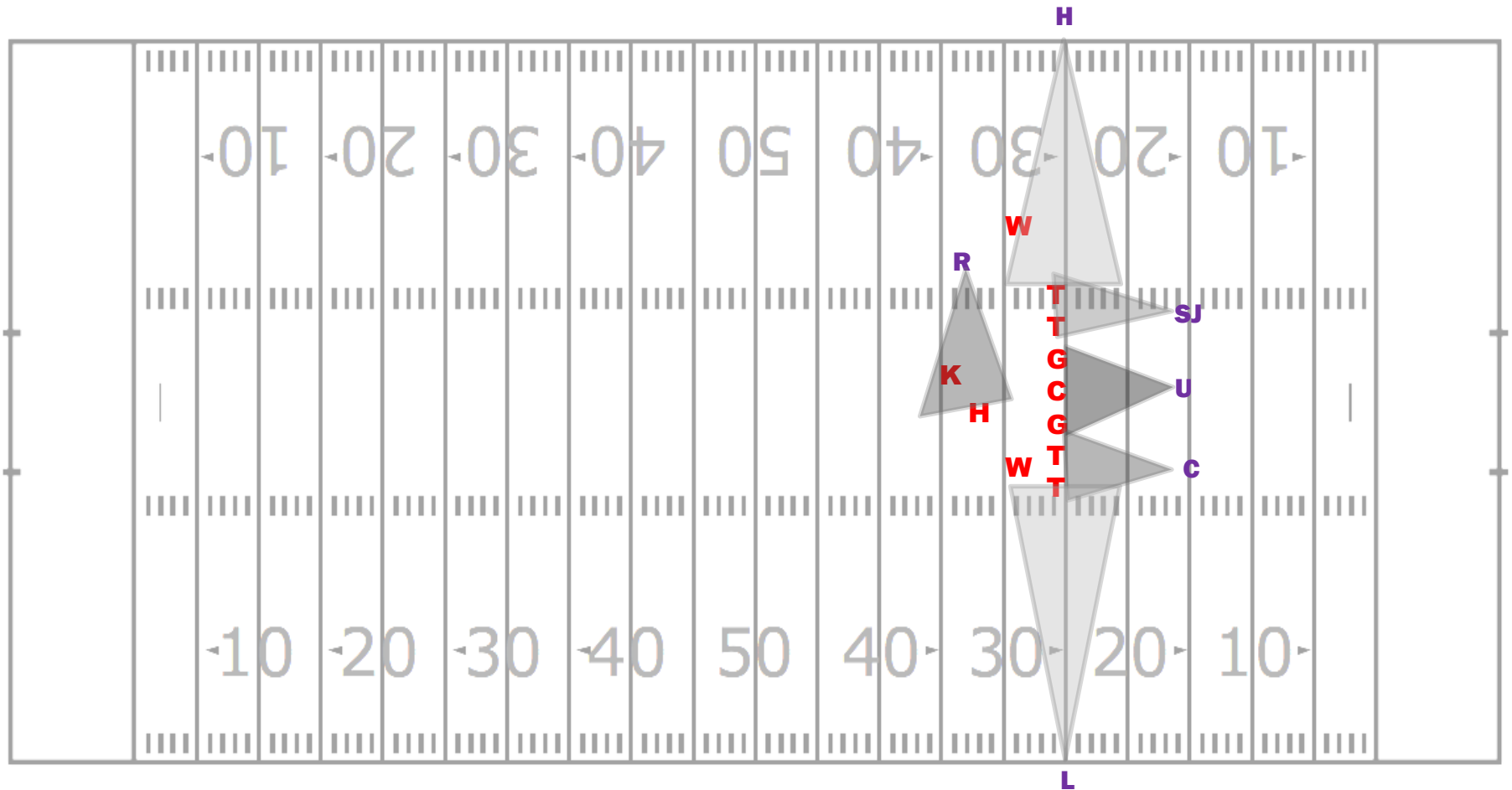
Swinging Gate Diagram: Try (CJ Side)



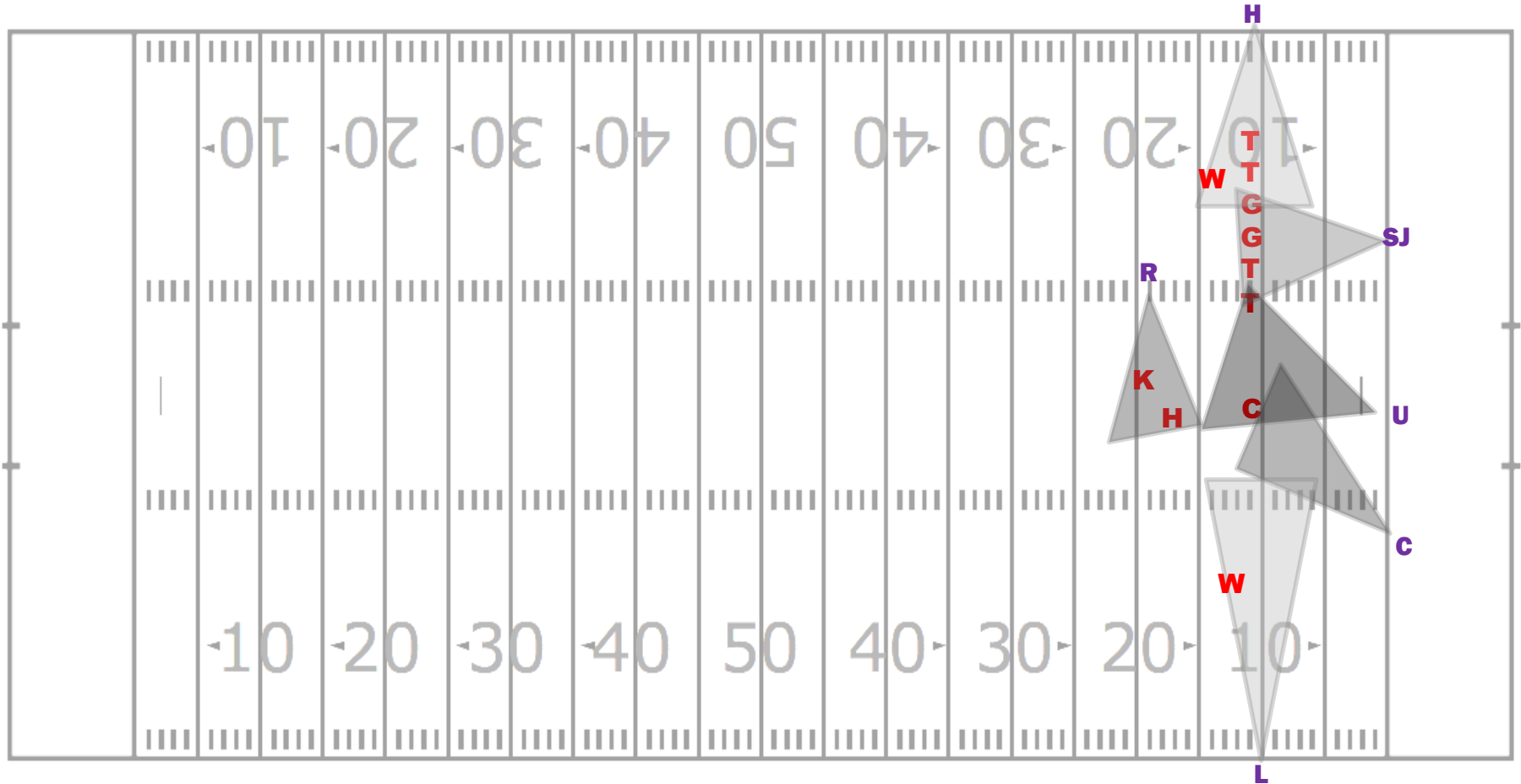
Scrimmage Kicks: Field Goals

- Initial position: Line up on Team B's side of the ball; flank the Umpire, with the Center Judge to the Umpire's left and the Side Judge to the Umpire's right. This alignment is the same for field goal attempts from any spot between the inbounds lines.
 - Observe action on and against the tackle / tight end on their side of the field; (discuss with Umpire / Side Judge during pregame If the kicking team has a tackle-over formation), they should key on both tackles if on their side.
 - Be prepared to rule on leverage/leaping, DH, (pull & shoot), ILH, BBW, (only when the movement by the defensive player(s) in that area is clearly visible), etc.
 - Swinging Gate plays (discuss during pregame):
 - If the kicker/holder are in position, CJ covers gate to his side. SJ will cover gate to his side.
 - If the kicker/holder are not in position, SJ/U/CJ use regular Field Goal mechanics

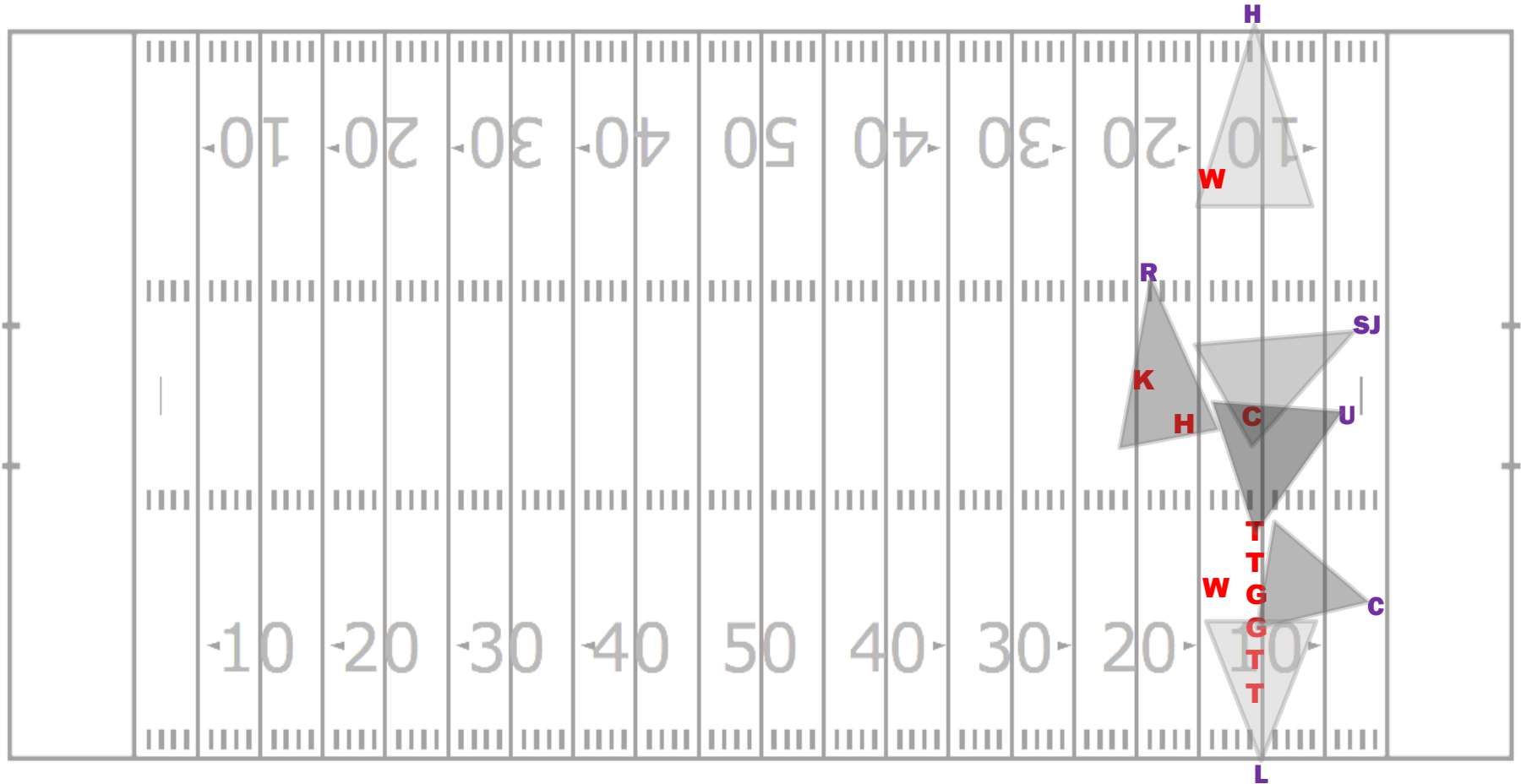
Field Goal Kick Diagram



Swinging Gate Diagram: Field Goal (SJ Side)



Swinging Gate Diagram: Field Goal (CJ Side)



Next Play

- **Ball Spotting:**
 - CJ primarily responsible for spotting the ball.
 - U may spot the ball when run ends in close vicinity of U between hashes.
 - BJ may spot the ball on long passes
 - If U or BJ place ball, they must wait to transition control to CJ to be consistent in the process
- **Pace of Play:** CJ, U, & R must be consistent in setting pace of play, to include administering substitutes.
 - Do not let Team A's desire to speed up the game disrupt pace. Ultimate goal is to place ball with ~ 28-31 seconds on play clock.
 - Hustle but do not hurry to get to the dead ball action. Keep your head on a swivel to position yourself to see all action around the dead ball spot.

Next Play, cont.

- Holding Snap:
 - U will hold the snap on field goals and kick tries.
 - Substitution when Team A huddles: Snap will not be held.
 - Substitution when Team A does not huddle:
 - CJ solely responsible, if warranted, for holding snap even if U/BJ spot the ball.
 - Your communication is with the QB when holding the snap.
 - Position yourself between the Center and QB, but closer to the QB to prevent the snap. This allows you to transition back to your initial position sooner and complete your pre-snap checklist.
 - Release when signaled by R.
 - CJ must have opportunity to clear deep backs in formation (Warning then 5 yrd DOG)
 - On punts turn over ball and substitutions to U. CJ takes position as in normal scrimmage kicks.

Miscellaneous

- Penalties: CJ & official on chains walk off distance, U & non-chain official confirm
- Measurements: CJ will obtain new ball from SJ/FJ and be ready to be spot it, if necessary.
- Goal line responsibilities: CJ is responsible for covering Team A's goal line on all returns except for scoring kicks (e.g., – FGs/Trys).
- Hurry-up under 2:00 in the half – U will spot the ball and manage substitutions while game clock is running, however, discuss and confirm at pregame.

