

Card Bowl - Playing Card Football

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Card Bowl reproduces the game of football (American) using a standard deck of playing cards. The game balances strategy and chance, and almost anything that happens in a real football game can happen in Card Bowl, including blocks, runs, passes, sacks, fakes, fumbles, interceptions, punts, field goals, penalties, etc. The game is played with a standard 54-card deck — 52 cards and two jokers, plus a penny to represent the ball.

Contents

Introduction	2
Notes on the Rules	3
Basic Rules	4
Game Clock	5
Special Teams	8
• Kickoff	8
• On-Sides Kick	10
• Punt	11
• Field Goal	14
• Try (Point After TD)	15
• Free Kick After Safety	15
Scrimmage Plays	16
• Overview	16
• The Deal	18
• Drawn Cards	19
• Formations	20
• Turns	21
• Range	21
• Snap	22
• Blocking Pattern phase	23
• Blocking phase	25
• Pass Rush and Sacks	26
• Developing Play	29
• Play Execution	30
○ Rushing Play	31
○ QB Sneak	33
○ QB Scramble	34
○ Passing Play	35
○ Screen Pass	41
○ Lateral	42
Open-Field Run	43
Fumble	45
Abbreviations	47
Example of Play Notes	48

Introduction

Play is based on NFL football rules, which are not explained in these rules. An assumption is made that the reader understands NFL rules, and will use the card game rules in this framework. Consult the official NFL rules to resolve game play questions (<http://www.nfl.com/rulebook>).

The game tries to replicate real football plays. Though the rules may seem complex at first, this is because the game of football is complex. The game follows a basic pattern, though, and the rules make sense in terms of the rules of football, replicating real plays and allowing many different aspects of the game to manifest.

The Basics

Special teams plays

Cards representing different values are simply drawn in a certain order, and modifiers applied to determine results (e.g. distance of punt and yardage returned).

Scrimmage plays

Each player is dealt eleven cards representing players, and spreads them out on the table in formation, face down. The cards are then moved and turned over in a generally specified manner and order, in alternating turns, which represents the development of the play. In addition, at certain points of action, cards are turned over from the remaining deck, which represent the element of chance and the unanticipated dynamics of the game.

The scrimmage play evolves around match-ups between offensive and defensive cards, with the values and modifiers determining the outcome. Multiple cards on each side plus drawn cards may be involved in one match-up.

At some point during one of its turns, the offensive player executes a play (e.g. hands off the ball, throws a pass). Cards from each hand that are directly involved in the play are then added along with drawn cards, and the offensive and defensive values are compared to determine the outcome.

Once you become familiar with the rules of the game, the scrimmage plays can actually replicate the flow and dynamics of a real play. Play can be as slow as you want, with time to consider strategy and consult the rules as needed, especially while learning, but players are encouraged to try playing the game at a fast pace with quick reactions and little hesitation (kind of like speed chess). The game does require a lot of addition, so being able to add quickly is also helpful.

Notes on the Rules

Examples are given in italics.

Explanations of how the rules are designed to correspond with real football, or strategy tips, are given in blue.

It is recommended that new players skim through the rules entirely at the beginning in order to get the gist of the game play, and then begin to play and refer to the relevant sections as needed. (At some point I hope to make web page version with hyperlinks between the different sections.)

The scrimmage aspects of the game may be hard to understand just from reading it without seeing it played, and I hope to put together some diagrams to illustrate various examples.

I am not a hardcore football statistician, so I have tried to make the rules more or less reflect reasonable possibilities based on my sense of the game, but without getting even more complex to try to make the game strictly statistically accurate.

This game is currently a work in progress with limited testing, so I'm looking for players who can test the game and provide feedback for improvement.

Is the game too complex, or parts hard to understand, or is there some inconsistency?

Do you have suggestions to simplify it or clarify it, or make it more reflective of real game play, statistically or otherwise?

And most importantly: Is it fun?

Let me know: scott@cardbowl.org

Basic Rules

Number of players: Two

Use a standard playing card deck, including 52 cards and 2 Jokers.
Deck is reshuffled between each play, with other player cutting.

A penny or other marker is used to represent the ball.

Use a piece of paper to keep track of play results, down, score, etc. (see example at end).

Coin toss: Use the penny. (Or to use the cards, “Home team” calls red or black and cuts card, or both players cut for high card or low card, just agree ahead of time.)

A “hand” consists of 11 player cards dealt to each team that are spread and played in formation on a table.

A “draw” consists of turning over the top card from the deck. Since the order is specified, either team may draw a card, but it is recommended that each draw the cards that represent the actions of that team (i.e. offense draws for snap and handoff, defense draws for run defense yards; offense draws for passing yardage, defense draws for pass defense yards; kicking team draws for kick/punt yardage, receiving team draws for return).

It is recommended to declare ahead of time what the reason is for each draw, so there is no confusion, after seeing the card, what exactly it represents, especially for the scrimmage plays (e.g “snap”, “pass rush avoidance”, “handoff”, “pass”, “pass yardage”, “reception”, “open-field run”, etc.). In cases where the order of the draw is not entirely clear, players should just agree on an order (and let me know so I can clarify).

Card value:

A-10 = face value

J = 11

Q = 12

K = 13

Joker in hand = 15

Joker drawn during scrimmage play or special teams:

- **Red Joker** = turnover
- **Black Joker** = penalty

(Optionally, the game can also be played with a single Joker for turnovers, and no penalties are assessed.)

When drawn during scrimmage play, the Jokers do not have a numeric value, and oftentimes another card is drawn in their place for the valuation of the play, as specified.

Game Clock

There are simple and complex approaches to keeping time. The simple methods don't as much reflect the true clock dynamics of a game; the complex is more accurate and realistic but takes more effort to keep track of. One of the simple methods is recommended while learning the game.

Players should agree beforehand which version of time keeping they will use.

They may also agree to limit timing so a game takes less real time to play.

Simple Timing 1

The easiest method of timing is to simply play a set number of plays, agreed beforehand. The average in the NFL (as best as I can determine, at least) is about 31 scrimmage plays per quarter, or about 36 total plays per quarter including special teams plays, so just use one of those unless both players agree otherwise.

Simple Timing 2

Each type of play uses up a set amount of time on the clock, in 5-second intervals.

Plays that stop the clock use 1 interval (5 seconds), and plays that don't use 8 intervals (40 seconds).

1 interval	Incomplete Pass, Field Goal, Try, any change of possession (Kickoff, Fumble, Interception)
8 intervals	Rushing Play, Complete Pass

In the last two minutes of the first half or the last five minutes of the second half, the offense may forfeit an open-field run draw (including the automatic initial one on a pass play) to go out of bounds and stop the clock.

Players can use 3 timeouts per half to stop the clock.

Clock stops at two-minute warning in each half, and at the end of each quarter.

Simply keep track of 5-second intervals. There are 180 intervals per quarter.

Make a 12 x 15 grid and mark off boxes to keep track – each line is 1 minute.

Or just write the game time at the end of each play next to the yardage.

Complex Timing

A more complex method is offered for keeping track of time that more realistically reflects true game dynamics, and makes the clock a factor in play strategy like a real game.

Time is kept in 5-second intervals.

It is recommended to use a grid paper and mark off a section that is 12 units wide and 15 units high. Each line represents one minute of game time, and the grid represents a quarter. A mark can be placed in each box as time is expended.

Or the time remaining can simply be noted at the end of each play, and the time that runs before the start of the next play.

The Play

- Any regular play uses 1 interval.
- If there is an open-field run at the end of the play, including after a fumble recovery, it uses 2 intervals (but not including the initial automatic run-after-catch draw in the Passing Play, only if there is an open-field run after that).
- Any play that goes more than 25 yards (including interception return) uses 2 intervals.
- Tries (extra points after touchdowns) use no time.
- Field Goals and Two point conversions use 1 interval.
- Kickoffs with no return (touchback) use no time; with returns use 1 interval; with open-field run after the initial return use 2 intervals; squib kick uses 2 intervals.
- Punts with no return use 1 interval; with returns use 2 intervals.

Between Plays

If the clock is not stopped at the end of play, the clock continues to run between plays with the offense choosing to use up between 2 and 8 intervals before the next play. If the offense fails to indicate how much time they are using on the clock before the snap, a default of 7 intervals (35 seconds) is used.

As in football, this means the team in possession of the ball has a great deal of control over the clock, and can either run out the time or use it sparingly with a hurry-up offense.

However, for each interval less than 6 the offense takes before a play, the defense gets one extra card in its hand, which it discards before placing the cards in formation (*e.g. a play done with 10 seconds or 2 intervals between means the defense gets dealt 4 extra cards, in addition to whatever extra cards each side already is dealt, and can discard the lowest 4 cards from its hand before the play, increasing the strength of the hand*). *A hurry-up or no-huddle offense plays at a disadvantage.*

Stopping the Clock

A QB can ground the ball to stop the clock with no intervals taken off. This normally takes 1-2 seconds off the clock, but since clock is in 5-second intervals the play basically uses a down to stop the clock. There is no need to deal hands if the offense intends this play, just draw one card for the Snap (q.v.) to check for penalty or fumble.

Incomplete pass: the clock stops at end of play.

The clock is stopped following a change of possession (kickoff, punt, turnover).

A penalty (not declined) stops the clock.

Special clock rules used only during the last two minutes of the first half and last five minutes of the second half:

- Going out of bounds
 - On any scrimmage play, if the last offensive card drawn is the same suit as the ball carrier (i.e. Reception draw on a passing play, Handoff draw on a running play), the play ends by going out of bounds and stops the clock.
 - At the end of any scrimmage play with an open-field run (including the initial automatic draw at the end of a Passing Play), the offense may choose to run out of bounds instead of taking an open-field run draw. This may be done as long as there is an open-field run draw remaining (*for example, at the end of a pass play, a player may elect not to draw for an open-field run and instead go out of bounds; or a player could draw one card to try to get a first down, and if it is a face card, then elect to go out of bounds instead of drawing the final open-field run card for which he is eligible*).
- A declined penalty stops the clock.

The clock stops after the play when the clock crosses the two-minute warning in each half.

The clock stops at the end of each quarter.

Each team has three timeouts per half that can stop the clock after a play.

Special Teams

Kickoff

Draw two cards. Value – 11 = yard line received. ($Q + 5 - 11 = 6$ yard line)

If negative value, received in end zone. ($A + 7 - 11 = -3$ yards inside end zone.)

Black Joker on first card = Draw another card: 1-5 = Offsides on kicking team tacked on at end of kick; 6-K or other Joker = kick out of bounds, receiving team starts 30 yards from spot of kick.

Black Joker on second card = penalty against kicking team. After play has concluded, draw another card: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g. Illegal block, Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping, personal foul)

Red Joker (on either card) = fumble by receiver. Draw a replacement card to determine position of kickoff reception. Receiver automatically recovers, but sacrifices one return draw (draws only 3 instead of 4).

Return Coverage

After determining the location at which the kick is received, the kicker then draws 1 card for return coverage (Coverage draw).

Red Joker = Receiver fumbles reception, same as above during kickoff draws; draw replacement card for coverage.

Black Joker = penalty against kicking team; Draw another card: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g. Illegal block, Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping)

Return

If the kick is received in the endzone, the receiver can declare a touchback.*

If not, then receiver draws 4 Return cards, one at a time.

4 Return draws – Coverage draw = yardage returned.

In case of Joker draw, Coverage yardage is distributed between Return draws, rounding to nearest, with halves rounded up. (*E.g. if Return draw is a 10, 3 yards would be applied against the first and third Return cards, 2 against the second and fourth.*)

Red Joker = Fumble on return, proceed to fumble rules from that spot (no further draws).

Black Joker = penalty against receiving team; draw another card: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g. Illegal block, Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping); spot of foul is yardage drawn up to that point; draw replacement card for yardage.

*If the receiver draws one or even two cards and is still inside the end zone, receiver can still accept a touchback (*e.g. the receiver starts 3 yards in the end zone and elects to run it out, then draws an A or 2 on the first draw, touchback can still be declared*).

Open-Field Run

Face cards in the coverage draw and the final draw of the return are used to determine if the return continues as an Open-Field Run: J=1, Q=2, K=3.

Final return draw – coverage draw = number of initial OFR draws.

E.g. if the final return draw = K and coverage draw is not a face card, receiver starts OFR with 3 draws; but if coverage draw = J, receiver starts OFR with 2 draws.

Proceed to Open-Field Run rules.

Squib Kick

Kicker can pick yard line to kick toward on receiving team's end of the field, then draw 2 cards that are added beyond that yard line (subtracted from the yard line value) for the yard line received.

If received outside the 15-yard line, receiving team gets only 2 draws for return yardage, and minus one on the OFR value of the final draw and any subsequent OFR draws (*i.e. if a J there is no OFR; Q=1 and K=2*).

On-Side Kick

Kick starts from 30-yard line (unless prior penalty).

Player first declares how many yards will be added to the value of a drawn card, and then draws one card.

Declared yardage + card value = distance of kick

Player can declare lower value to get better chance of recovery and field position, but increased risk of short kick.

If distance < 10, kick over.

Black Joker = out of bounds, kick over 5 yards back

Red Joker = receiver fumbles, loses advantage of extra point modifier in card draw regardless of kick distance; draw replacement to determine yardage.

If the kick is short or out of bounds twice in a row, receiving team can take possession of the dead ball or out of bounds ball (if out of bounds draw a replacement card for Joker to determine distance).

Once distance of kick is determined, proceed to fumble rules, except that on the first draw, the receiving team also gets to add the value of the kick distance – 10 to its draw. In other words, for each yard past the required 10 yards the ball travels, the receiver gets to add the value to their initial fumble recovery draw. Proceed to Fumble rules, except kicking team cannot advance ball after recovery.

The longer the kick (past the required 10 yards), the more advantage the receiving team has in recovering. For example, the kicker declares that he will add 7, and then draws a 7 (an average draw), so the kick travels 14 yards. On the initial fumble recovery draw, the receiving team would add 4 to its draw. If the draw is a tie (including these 4 points) then no points would be added for the subsequent draw(s) – at this point the ball is bouncing and the receiving team has lost its recovery advantage.

Punt

Kicker draws 1-4 cards. If less than 4, number must be declared in advance (failure to do so clearly and a 4-card draw is required).

Total value of drawn cards + 15 = punt yardage (from LoS).

Can elect less for a shorter kick depending on field position and try to place the ball near the other team's goal line.

If less than 4 cards are drawn, kicker can attempt to kick out of bounds (see below).
Kick with only 1 or 2 draws is automatic fair catch (see below).

Red Joker = blocked kick.

Draw one card + 5 for distance behind line of scrimmage, and proceed to Fumble rules, except receiving (blocking) team draws two cards (each counted separately) against the punting team's one card, highest card recovers, if tie then proceed with regular fumble rules drawing one card each.

Black Joker = penalty. Draw again:

Red = against kicking team: 1-5 = 5 yard penalty (Ineligible receiver downfield), 6-10 = 10 yard penalty (Illegal block), face card or other joker = 15 yard penalty (Clipping)

Black = against receiving team: 1-10 = 5 yard penalty (Running into the kicker), face card or other joker = 15 yard penalty (Roughing the kicker).

Punting Out of Bounds

If drawing less than all 4 cards for punt yardage, prior to play kicker can declare an attempt to kick out of bounds. After final card for punt yardage is drawn, kicker draws one additional card to check for out-of-bounds; if suit does not match that of the last card drawn, kick is out of bounds and there is no return; if last card does match suit, kick is not out of bounds and receiver may return.

Return Coverage

After the punt, if not out of bounds, then the kicking team draws one card which represents return coverage. This draw can be used against the punt return or the bounce draw(s).

Red Joker = NOT a Fumble but the Receiver must take a fair catch to avoid the Fumble.

Black Joker = draw another card: A-5 = 5-yard penalty against kicking team (illegal receiver downfield); 6-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g Illegal block, Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping).

Return

If the kick is received in the endzone, the receiver can declare a touchback*.

If not, then the receiver draws 2 return cards.

2 return draws – coverage draw = yardage returned (may be negative yardage).

Red Joker = Fumble on return, proceed to fumble rules from that spot (no further draws).

Black Joker = penalty against receiving team; draw another card: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g. Illegal block, Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping).

*If the receiver draws one card and is still inside the end zone, receiver can at that point still accept a touchback (e.g. *the receiver starts 3 yards in the end zone and elects to run it out, and then draws an A or 2 on the first draw, a touchback can still be declared*).

Open-Field Run

Face cards in the coverage draw and the final draw of the return are used to determine if the return continues as an Open-Field Run: J=1, Q=2, K=3.

Final return draw – coverage draw = number of initial OFR draws.

E.g. if the final return draw = K and coverage draw is not a face card, receiver starts OFR with 3 draws; but if coverage draw = J, receiver starts OFR with 2 draws.

Proceed to Open-Field Run rules.

Fair Catch

Kick with only 1 or 2 draws is automatic fair catch.

After punt yardage is calculated and the return coverage card is drawn, receiver can declare a fair catch, avoiding the possibility of a loss or fumble on the return.

Receiver must draw one card; anything but a **Red Joker**, fair catch is made. **Red Joker** = Fumble.

Black Joker = fair catch is made but penalty, same as punt return.

Bounce

After punt yardage is calculated, receiver may also choose to let it bounce.

The receiving team might elect to let a punt inside the 10-yard line or so bounce in hopes that it will go into the end zone for a touchback.

Draw one card to determine direction and distance of bounce.

Distance = Value.

Direction: Different from suit as Punt draw = bounce in same direction; same suit = bounce back in other direction.

If bouncing in same direction as kick, draw again.

Distance = Value.

Direction: Different from suit as first bounce draw = bounce in same direction; same suit = bounce back in other direction.

Ball is more likely to bounce in direction of kick, and more likely to travel further on a forward bounce than a backwards bounce.

If (initial) bounce card is backwards (toward kicking team) kicking team may apply its return coverage draw against the bounce ([attempting to touching the ball to down it](#)); if coverage card \geq bounce card, ball is down at received spot; if touch card $<$ bounce card, bounce is difference.

If initial bounce card is forward (toward receiving team) *and* kicking team's coverage card is the same suit as the bounce card, it may apply any portion of the coverage card against the bounce ([attempting to touching the ball to down it as close to the goal line as possible before it goes in the end zone](#)).

Red Joker on punt bounce = ball accidentally touches receiving team. Draw replacement card(s) for bounce value and proceed to Fumble rules.

Black Joker = discard and replace ([unlikely to have penalty at this stage of play](#)).

Field Goal

Field position + 18 = Field goal distance

Kicker draws six cards: total value = kick distance

Kick distance \geq field goal distance = success

A 42-yard attempt has a 50% chance (average draw of 7 x 6). It is possible but very unlikely to miss an attempt under 20 yards, and to make an attempt over 60 yards.

Blocked Kick

A **Red Joker** represents a blocked kick, but only if drawn during the initial draws as indicated by the yardage of the FG attempt, as follows:

< 20 (or extra point try after TD) = first card

20–29 = first two cards

30–39 = first three cards

40–49 = first four cards

50–59 = first five cards

\geq 60 = any card

Longer kick must be kicked lower for more distance and is easier to block.

Red Joker drawn after potential block draws is discarded and replaced with another draw.

For location of fumble, divide first FG card drawn by 2 (rounded up) for yardage traveled before block occurs, starting from 8 yards behind LoS (if **Red Joker** is first draw, block is 8 yards behind LoS).

Proceed to Fumble rules.

Penalties

Black Joker as first draw = 5 yard penalty, draw additional card: Red = against offense (illegal procedure), play stops; Black = against defense (offsides), play proceeds, draw replacement card for joker, offense can decline penalty at end of play.

Black Joker as second draw = penalty against defense, draw again; A–10 = running into the kicker, 5 yd penalty; face card or other joker = roughing the kicker 15 yd penalty and automatic first down.

Black Joker drawn any time subsequently is discarded and replaced with another draw.

Try

Extra Point

Same as a 20-yard field goal, except only first card counts for block or botched snap with Joker, and block doesn't result in a fumble.

Two-Point Conversion

Play run from the two-yard line.

Because only the fumbling player can recover and advance a fumble during a Try, in order to advance a fumble during a two-point conversion the offense must draw a face card *of the same suit* as the defensive draw (which isn't a face card).

Gain ≥ 2 yards = 2 points.

Free Kick after Safety

If a safety occurs, the team that committed the safety may either:

- punt from the 20 yard line, drawing 4 cards but adding 25 for total yardage punted ([punter is unhurried with no defensive pressure](#)), or
- do a kickoff, drawing 2 cards -1 for the yard line received from the other team's end zone (same as kickoff but from 20 yard line, so only 1 yard is subtracted instead of 11).

Return is same as kickoff return (see Open-Field Run).

Scrimmage Play

Overview

This section provides an overview of the sequence of events in a scrimmage play. Refer to each section for details.

The Deal

Offense deals a hand or team of eleven cards to each player. (More cards may be dealt and the lower cards discarded to end up with a hand of eleven cards.)

Formations

Formations are basically anything an NFL team would actually do. Offense places all cards on table in formation face down, and places ball on Center. Defense places cards in formation.

Snap

Offense begins play by revealing the QB, and moving ball from C to QB. One card is drawn to check for penalty or fumble.

Blocking Pattern Phase

[This phase represents the first few moments after the snap when linemen commit to their blocking patterns.](#) With cards still face down, offense moves cards to indicate match-ups—which offensive cards are matched with each defensive card—and may also move RBs up to block in the line. Defense makes adjustments (*e.g. move LB up into line*). Then offense and defense each have one additional turn to make adjustments. QB Sneak may be executed during this phase.

Blocking Phase

[This phase represents the moments after the line blocking has been engaged and the line dynamics are shown.](#) Both lines are revealed. Additional adjustments may be made. The offense may also execute any play during this turn or any time after.

Pass Rush and Sacks

If defensive side of line match-up(s) are greater than offensive side plus the QB, there is sack potential and pass protection draws must be made, or a play executed immediately.

Developing Play

Offense reveals one card per turn, and defense may respond by revealing one or more cards to match up with the offensive card.

Play Execution

On any of its turns, in addition to revealing one card (or during the Blocking Phase revealing the QB and line) the offense may elect to execute the play. The ball is moved from the QB to the ball carrier or receiver.

Rushing Play

A RB is revealed and moved up into the line at one match-up, or in between two, and the ball placed on the RB. The offense draws one card for the handoff; the defense adds one LB to the play, and draws three cards. The ball carrier counts double. Blocking backs count half. The match-ups are totaled, and the difference between the offense and the defense is divided in half for the yardage gained in the play. An extended open-field run may also occur.

Passing Play

The ball is moved to the receiver, which is revealed. The defense reveals its coverage and adds one LB or S to the match-up. Cards are then drawn as part of the offensive side of the match-up that also have to meet certain criteria to avoid an incompleteness: one pass draw must be lower than the QB, an unlimited number of yardage draws cannot be the same suit as the receiver, and one reception draw must be lower than the receiver. Finally, the defense draws two more cards. The coverage may also have a chance to break up the play. (The red joker drawn at any point is an interception.) If the pass is complete, the match-ups are totaled, and the difference between the offense and the defense results in the yardage gained in the pass. Then one additional card is drawn for yardage on the ground after the reception, and certain defensive cards in the secondary may be counted against it. An extended open-field run may also occur.

Other Plays

QB Sneak, QB Scramble, Screen Pass and Lateral are all variations on the basic rushing and passing plays, with the latter two being hybrids between a run and pass. Start with the basics while learning.

Open Field Run

An extended open-field run may occur if face cards are drawn as the handoff draw in a rushing play, or the reception draw in a passing play (also as the last draw in a kickoff or punt return on special teams). J is one draw, Q two draws, and K three. Each face card drawn allows that many more draws, and so on, so a big play may be made.

The Deal

Use a penny (or similar marker) to represent the ball.

Offense deals a hand or team of eleven cards to each player, alternately, starting with the Defense.

As an option, hands of 12-15 cards may be dealt (agreed upon beforehand), with 1-4 lowest cards discarded by each player, to end up with hands of 11 cards. This will result in stronger hands with fewer very low cards in each hand. This does change the dynamics of the game. It is recommended to start by dealing 12 or 13 cards to the offense and 14 or 15 cards to the defense, and then experiment from there.

If players agree, this method may also be used to give one player a handicap by dealing 1 or more extra cards to one player, giving that player better hands on average.

Players may also agree to vary the number of cards dealt in each quarter. For example, Q1 = 13 cards, Q2 = 14 cards, Q3 = 14 cards, Q4 = 12 cards, which would represent the idea that players are warming up and getting into the rhythm of the game during the first quarter, performing at their peak during the second and third quarters, and then they are tired out by the fourth quarter.

This method may also be used to shift the game to a more offensive or defensive game, for both players the same or for each player separately, by dealing more cards when a team is on offense or defense, for example if the team you are representing has an especially strong defense. Each player can have an option to determine this at the start of the game, for example by giving each player a set number of extra cards that can be assigned to either offense or defense for the duration of the game.

After the hands are dealt and appropriate number of cards discarded to yield 11-card hands, the deck is then placed face down between the players to one side.

Playing for the Turnover

If the defensive player receives the **Red Joker** in his hand, he can choose to discard it and draw another replacement card. The **Red Joker** is then returned to the deck and the deck thoroughly reshuffled before the snap. [This might be done when the defense is losing near the end of the game. Having the Red Joker in his hand would preclude a turnover, so the defense can play for the turnover but sacrifice some yardage.](#)

Drawn Cards

As cards are drawn, they are placed as follows (players may develop their own methods that work, this is just recommended):

- No value (e.g. the snap): place in a face-up pile beside the deck.
- Value in a match-up (yardage draws): place overlapping the player cards such that the cards are grouped together but the value of each card is visible (for a run, place overlapping the RB card; for a pass, place in a line with the first card overlapping the QB and the last drawn card overlapping the Receiver).
- Part of an open-field run at the end of play: place in their own pile in front of the player, overlapping so each card is visible.
- Part of a fumble recovery: overlapping the **Red Joker** on either side.
- Penalty determination draw: overlapping the **Black Joker**.

Formations

Formations are basically anything an NFL team would actually do.

Offense

Offense places all cards on table in formation face down, and places ball on Center. Offensive formations include the QB, 5 Linemen, TEs, Backs and Receivers. Can use shotgun formation, have various numbers of receivers on either side, etc.

If Shotgun formation is used:

- RBs provide immediate automatic pass protection (see Pass Rush and Sacks)
- QB value is +1 for a pass (see Passing Play)
- RB value is -1 for a run (see Rushing Play)

Card placement in offensive formations will be designed to get as many high cards as possible into the play match-up. In a passing play the hand's highest cards would be used as the QB and one or more receivers. In a running play, the highest card would be used as the ball carrier, and other high cards would be used for blockers in the line, and perhaps the other, blocking back (counted at half value). With a strong hand containing several face cards, an option play would allow the offense to choose a run or pass based on the most advantageous match-up after the cards are all revealed.

Defense

Defense places cards in formation. Linemen may be either lined up directly with, or offset by half from, the offensive linemen. DE may line up offset by half outside the T or TE. Defensive formations may include LBs, CBs, Ss, etc. (How far from the LoS the secondary card is lined up is not factored into the play, so basically the LBs and Ss are all in one row, but it is good to leave a row of space between the line and the LBs for cards that may be added to the line matchup.) Defense may play double coverage on Receivers.

Because the defense always gets to add one player card to the end of each play before it draws, it makes sense to place high cards in the secondary. See Range for what cards can be added to what match-ups. This represents a LB or S that basically follows the ball/play and reacts to be part of any play that unfolds. If the offense were to line up 1 WR on each side, the defense might put high cards in each OLB position to cover the entire field. If the offense were to line up with 2 WRs on each side, the defense might put high cards in the MLB position and in the S position to cover the entire field; but if the defense is expecting a run, a high card might be placed only in the MLB position and not the S.

Offense may place one card in motion. (*e.g. TE move to other side, HB move to TE, etc.*)

Defense may respond with reasonable adjustments, including moving DE to cover TE, moving LB up to or away from the line, shifting the Line cards up to one full position to either side.

Turns

The offense can move and/or reveal only one card per turn, except that the QB and entire offensive line is revealed in one turn. Once the initial Blocking turn is completed and the lines are revealed, each turn then is literally one “turn” of a card, as the offense reveals one card at a time until it executes a play.

The defense can choose to reveal any card that is matched up with an offensive card that is revealed. The defense can commit (move into a match-up) and/or reveal any number of additional cards on each of its turns. Only cards that are revealed by the defense can be used in a match-up when the play is executed, except for one LB covering a RB receiving a pass, and the final extra card that can be added to every play match-up.

The offense, on any of its turns, either at the start of the turn or at the end, may execute a play (hand off, pass, or QB sneak), indicated by moving the ball on top of the new ball carrier card, after revealing it (if it isn't already). In case of a QB sneak the player just moves the QB onto the line. See Play Execution.

Range

Defensive LB or S cards that are not matched-up initially are eligible to be brought into certain match-ups based on their range on the field.

- I/MLB(s) range is the line (including TE as receiver), and RB as receiver.
- OLBs range is half the field, from the C over (including line and receivers), and RB as receiver on that side
- S range is WRs on that side, and TE if acting as a receiver.

The defense will always get to add one card at the end of the play (except in QB Sneak), so it is generally wise to place two high cards in position to cover the entire field (e.g. MLB and S, or two OLBs).

On each defensive turn, the defense may shift any secondary cards one position, i.e. from S to OLB, or from OLB to ILB, or visa versa, changing the range the card may be applied to the next round.

If the offense reveals a low card at QB, the defense may assume a run, move OLBs up into blocking match-ups on the line, and then move S cards from each side into OLB positions, where they can be applied to the line the following turn.

If the offense reveals a high card at QB, the defense may predict a pass, move Ss or OLB up with CB into coverage match-ups against WRs, and then move OLB cards from each side into S positions, and ILB into OLB positions, where they can be applied to coverage the following turn.

Snap

Offense begins play by revealing the QB, and moving ball from C to QB.

Low card for QB would indicate a run and high card would tend to indicate a pass, but with a good hand the offense could fake a pass to keep the defense from playing against the run, or leave open options to go either way once the match-ups are revealed.

Draw one card for snap (which has no value in play except in checking for penalty or fumble):

Black Joker = draw again:

- Black = 5-yd penalty against defense (offsides), play continues with offense having the option to decline at end of play.
- Red = 5-yard penalty against offense (false start, illegal motion, illegal formation), play stops, penalty is assessed and down is repeated. However, if drawn card is a face card, the penalty is delay of game, and the offense can choose to take a time-out and avoid the penalty.

Red Joker = draw again:

- If in regular formation (QB directly behind C) and draw is an A or a 2, snap is fumbled that many yards behind LoS; proceed to Fumble rules.
- If in shotgun formation and card is A to 5, snap is fumbled, draw again for number of yards behind LoS; proceed to Fumble rules.
- If not a fumble, then it is a 5-yd penalty against offense (i.e. illegal motion, false start); play stops, penalty is assessed and down is repeated. However, if drawn card is a face card, the penalty is delay of game, and the offense can choose to take a time-out and avoid the penalty.

This is to reflect the low likelihood of a fumble from snap when in regular formation; shotgun formation has a slightly higher risk of fumble (but gets automatic pass protection from backs).

This is one exception where a **Red Joker** can represent a penalty instead of a turnover.

Blocking Pattern phase

This phase represents the first few moments after the snap when linemen commit to their blocking patterns.

Offensive turn

With cards still face down, the offense designates the blocking pattern of offensive line, blocking up to one full card to either side (*e.g. a C can block a DT lined up directly in front of a G*). In addition, Gs can “pull” from the line and block up to two cards over (*a G can join in a match-up all the way from a TE to the other G, but it risks leaving its own hole open for pass rush*). Cards are moved to indicate match-ups: which offensive cards are matched with each defensive card. Two (or even three) offensive linemen may block one defensive lineman; cards can be moved together and overlapped slightly to indicate which are part of one match-up.

Offense can move a maximum of two cards into each blocking match-up during the Blocking Pattern phase and on each turn thereafter (*e.g. Offense can't bring up 1 RB and pull both Gs to block for the run through one match-up before the line is revealed, but two additional cards can be added on the next or later turns*).

Offense can run a QB Sneak (see QB Runs) at the end of this turn, prior to the defense having the opportunity to respond.

Defensive turn

With cards still face-down, the defense may make any additional commitments (i.e. moving LBs up into the line, either as pass rush or run defense, or moving Safeties up to double team Receivers). Cards committed is moved and placed overlapping with the other defensive card(s) it is matched with, across from offensive cards that it is matched up against. Defense may also move line cards directly back into LB position (i.e. DE to OLB, DT to ILB).

Defense can move a maximum of two cards into each blocking match-up during the Blocking Pattern phase and on each turn thereafter (*e.g. Defense can't bring 3 LBs up to pass rush through one match-up before the line is revealed, but two additional cards can be added on the next or later turns*).

Defense can shift any secondary cards one position, i.e. from S to outside LB, or from outside LB to inside LB, or visa versa, changing the Range (q.v.) the card may be applied to following the Blocking Pattern phase. *If the offense reveals a low QB, the defense may assume a run, move LBs up to block holes in the line, and shift S to outside LB positions.*

The second Blocking Pattern turn

The second turn of this phase represents the next few moments when the backs and LBs can see the general blocking patterns of the line and respond accordingly. They can't tell yet how well the blockers are actually going to be matched up, but they can at least see which direction blockers are moving and committed to, and may have an indication what the offense intends to do. Backs can provide pass protection or blocking for a rush, and LBs can move up to block perceived holes or to apply additional pressure on the QB.

Second Offensive turn

At this time, the offense may move backs up into line match-ups as blockers.

Second Defensive turn

Defense can move LBs forward to join blocking match-ups at line, or move Safeties up to join CBs. Defense can also move back into LB position a LB previously moved up to the line, or a DE.

Defense can't move up any cards that have just been shifted in the first turn of the Blocking Pattern phase, outside of their initiate Range, i.e. the S can't be moved to outside LB and then up into line on the other side, all in the blocking pattern phase; the Range of the S stays the same until the Blocking Phase turn.

Defense can also shift secondary cards one position, changing the Range (q.v.) the card may be applied to the next round.

At this point, with cards still face down, only the number of cards applied to each match-up is known, not the value of the cards themselves, so players have to balance applying cards where they might not be needed with being too late and not being able to apply cards where they are needed. This also allows for both teams to run "fakes" or misrepresent their intentions. For example, the defense could have low cards as linebackers that are both moved up into one match-up as if they are rushing, perhaps forcing the offense to execute a play immediately before being able to reveal and assess the match-ups available. Or the offense could move a blocking back into position on the line in an offensive weak spot, hoping to draw in a LB to defend against the run, and then executing the run at a different point in the line, or doing a play action fake and instead executing a pass.

Blocking phase

The blocking match-ups are revealed to determine their effectiveness. The offense may also run a play immediately during this turn.

This phase represents the moments after the line blocking has been engaged and the line dynamics are shown, including holes in the defensive line, weak points in the pass protection, strength of the defensive pass rush, etc.

Offensive turn

The offensive line is revealed.

The TE is optional; if revealed, TE is blocking if it later becomes a receiver, a max of 1 yardage card may be drawn; if not revealed it can receive long but is not blocking the DE pass rush.

At this point, the offense may immediately execute a play (a quick hand-off or pass). A running play at this phase prevents additional LBs from being added to the defensive match-up (except final card that is always added); a passing play prevents additional cards from being added to coverage match-ups (except final card that is always added).

If a Passing Play is executed at this point, then the offense may not draw any extra yardage cards in between the Pass draw and the Reception draw. This would represent a quick drop by the QB, then dumping the ball to a receiver on a short slant or out pattern.

Defensive turn

Defensive line is revealed.

If the TE is not revealed, DE matched with TE can also not reveal and cover the TE as a receiver, or can choose to reveal and rush the QB giving up coverage of TE.

If the TE is revealed, DE can also reveal to block/pass rush against TE, or can choose not to reveal and be applied with CB to WR matchup, or to a Back receiver, on this a later turns. The DE, instead of pass rushing or blocking against the run, can drop back and provide pass coverage.

Defense can reveal and move up into line match-up any additional LBs to apply pass rush or block holes against run, which are applied the following turn.

Defense can also move Line cards back into LB position, providing pass coverage rather than run blocking or pass rush. At least three defensive cards must remain on the Line.

Defense again can shift any secondary cards one position, i.e. from S to outside LB, or from outside LB to inside LB, or visa versa, changing the range (q.v.) the card may be applied to the next turn. If the offense reveals a low QB, the defense may assume a run, move LBs up to block holes in the line, and shift S to outside LB positions.

Pass Rush and Sacks

Once the line cards are revealed, for each single or adjacent pair of line blocking match-ups:

- Pass Rush value = defensive match-up value (single or adjacent)
- Pass Protection value = offensive match-up value + QB value

If starting in shotgun formation, each RB may be applied to one match-up immediately (see below).

If Pass Rush value > Pass Protection value at any blocking match-up, there is pressure on the QB and sack potential: Before each subsequent turn the offense must draw to avoid the sack, unless it executes a play immediately at the start of its turn. One Sack draw must be made for each match-up in which Pass Rush value > Pass Protection value.

If Pass Rush value \geq Pass Protection value + Sack draw = sack. (Tie goes to defense)
Yards lost = difference in value + 3.

If Pass Rush value > Pass Protection value + 13:

The pass rush (blitz) is so overwhelming that the sack is automatic, in which case no quick play is allowed before the pass rush draw. The offense still draws, but only to determine yardage behind LoS at which the sack occurs. This applies even if the offense intended a running play, i.e. unsuccessful handoff or RB stuffed. *Even on a Rushing Play when the QB value won't count in the match-up, the QB can be in danger if the value is too low, and a blitz is made with insufficient protection.*

Red Joker = Fumble by QB; position = Pass Rush value + 3 – Pass Protection value; proceed to Fumble rules.

Black Joker = 10-yard Holding penalty on offense. Draw replacement for Sack draw. Play continues and defense has option to decline at end of play.

Pass Pressure

If the Pass Protection draw succeeds, but the difference is less than 7 (Pass Rush value – Pass Protection value + Sack draw < 7), then the QB is under pressure and takes a completion penalty on a pass thrown during the following turn.

7 – Difference in value = Pass Pressure value

On the next turn, if the QB passes, the Pass Pressure value is added to the Pass draw value for determining completion (but not for yardage) (*e.g. if a Pass Pressure value is 3 and QB is a Q, Pass draw ≥ 9 = incomplete, but QB is still worth 12 for yardage of pass is completed*). See Passing Plays: Pass Draw.

QB Protected

If Pass Protection value \geq defensive Pass Rush value at all blocking match-ups, this means the QB is effectively protected and has plenty of time to execute a play. The offense can take as many turns as it wants, revealing cards and forcing the defense to be revealed, before executing a play, and can use any number of yardage cards in a passing play (q.v.). The defense may, however, during its turn move a LB into the pass rush, the value of which would be applied on the following turn.

In other words, the defensive pass rush has to overcome both the line match-up and the QB to have a sack potential, and the offense must draw enough value to overcome the difference in order to avoid the sack. For example, if the defense has a DT=J and a LB=K who has moved up into the same match-up, their Pass Rush value would be $11+13=24$. If the matching OT is a 7 and the QB a Q, the Pass Protection value would be $7+12=19$. Thus the offense would have to draw better than a 5 to avoid a sack for that turn; a 5 or less and a sack would have been achieved. If a 3 were drawn, it would be a sack for 5-yard loss ($2+3$).

The offense can avoid the pass rush by executing a play (see Play Execution) immediately at the beginning of its turn, prior to forcing the defense to reveal cards, or moving any additional blockers into position. **This represents the QB being hurried by pressure coming through the line, having to throw quickly without being able to carefully assess the coverage, or hand off quickly without an extra blocking back being able to get into position.**

If there is a pass rush, the offense when it executes a passing play can only draw one yardage card (see Passing Plays) for each turn that has occurred starting from the revealing of the offensive line. **This represents time for a receiver to run his pattern and get open, with deeper patterns taking more time.**

Continuing the example, alternately, the offense may decide that an approx. 5 in 13 chance of being sacked is not worth it, and execute a play immediately. To pass, the offense would turn over and move the ball to a receiver, without first seeing the defensive match-up, and would be limited to no yardage cards. If one pass protection draw is successful, then one yardage card may be drawn, etc.

If, on the other hand, the offense wanted to go for a longer pass, using for example three yardage cards in the pass, the offense would have to make a total of three draws against the pass rush.

Blocking backs

Backs block (against a pass rush or for a run) at one-half value (rounded up).

If the offense lined up in the shotgun formation, RBs can block a pass rush immediately, but only on the side they are lined up on (from the C over), and only one RB can be applied to a single pass rush match-up per turn. Otherwise, with a regular formation, or a back moving to the other side, moving a back into blocking position requires a turn, and

its value is then applied against the pass rush on the following turn. Offense may also move a RB from one side to the other during its turn, so it can be applied on the next turn.

*Continuing the example above, if the QB avoids the sack on the first draw, the offense on its next turn might move a back up into this match-up to help block against the pass rush. If the back were a 5, its blocking value would be 3. The pass protection value would now be $19 + 3 = 22$. The QB may still be sacked with a draw of A or 2, but the offense may accept that risk in order to have time to take additional turns and force the defense to reveal its coverage (see *Unfolding Play* below). Each turn, before the offense reveals one receiver, it would have to draw against the pass rush.*

Developing Play

If the QB is not sacked and the offense hasn't opted to execute...

The play develops with the offense revealing one card at a time (e.g. RB, TE, WR), i.e. one "turn" per turn. The defense is forced to turn over the match-up card(s), and has the opportunity to respond by committing and revealing any number of additional cards within Range (q.v.) to that match-up (e.g. *the offense reveals a WR, the defense must reveal the corresponding CB, and has the option to also reveal a S or LB and commit it to that match-up*).

This represents the QB in the pocket, surveying the field, seeing how the defense is covering the receivers as they run their patterns, looking for the best play, i.e. the most advantageous match-up.

If there is pressure on the QB and sack potential (see Pass Rush and Sacks) then the offense must draw against the pass rush at the start of each turn, before revealing a card.

The offense may opt to execute the play at the start of the turn before the pass rush draw. The play may go to a card that is already revealed, or the offense may reveal a new card and then move the ball on top of it without seeing the defensive match-up first.

If the defense does not have any sack potential on the line match-ups (i.e. $DL < OL + QB$ – see Pass Rush and Sacks), that means the QB has good protection and is able to stay in the pocket, give receivers time to run downfield, and consider all options before choosing to execute a play. The offense can see all of the match-ups and pick the best one.

If the defense completely overpowers the offense, a sack may be likely—or even inevitable if the Pass Rush value has more than 13 points greater than the Pass Protection value—but in this case the offense can execute a quick play at the beginning of its turn, with the disadvantage of not being able to see the defensive match-up(s), and also limiting the number of cards that can be drawn for pass yardage (see Passing Plays).

This continues until the offense executes a play.

Play Execution

On any of its turns, in addition to revealing one card (or in the first turn revealing the QB and line), the offense may elect to execute the play.

A play may be executed at the beginning of a turn, avoiding a pass rush draw and not giving the defense the opportunity to move additional cards into the match-up; or at the end of a turn, after one offensive card has been revealed, and any defensive cards matched-up with it plus any other cards the defense chooses to commit to the match-up have also been revealed.

There are two main types of play: the Rushing Play and the Passing Play. The QB Run is a special type of running play. The Screen Pass and Lateral work like a hybrid between the two.

As with real football, the rush/run has a greater chance of getting some yardage but shorter yardage, while the pass can have a greater chance of getting longer yardage but a greater risk of getting no yardage, and a greater risk of a turnover. The skill of play calling, using the cards in your hand, is like real football.

Once a play has been executed, then the values of whatever offensive cards and defensive cards are involved in the play match-up are totaled, with indicated modifiers, to determine the outcome of the play.

See each type of play for details of play execution.

Rushing Play

To execute a rushing (running) play, the offense:

- Moves the Back who is receiving the hand-off (HB, FB, etc.) up to join one of the match-ups in the line, or in between two match-ups, revealing the Back card in the process if it is not already revealed; and
- Moves the ball marker from the QB to the Back.

The Handoff

The offense draws one card, to see if the hand-off is made without a fumble or penalty. This card is added to the offensive match-up.

Red Joker = Fumble, no replacement handoff card is drawn, 3 defensive cards are drawn to determine location of fumble based on face cards drawn to determine if behind the LoS (see play outcome below); proceed to Fumble rules.

Black Joker = Penalty.

First, draw replacement card for yardage, then draw the remaining yardage cards for the play, then draw a card to determine the penalty:

Red = against offense: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping)

Black = against defense: 1-10 = 5 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g Illegal use of hands); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g Personal Foul such as face mask).

Defensive Reaction

The defense then adds to the defensive side of the play match-up:

- 1) One additional card in range from the defense (see Range) (e.g. *ILB*);
- 2) Three additional cards drawn from the deck.

- **Black Joker** = Penalty.

First, draw replacement card for yardage, then draw the remaining yardage cards for the play, then draw a card to determine the penalty:

Red = against offense: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping)

Black = against defense: 1-5 = 5 yard penalty (inadvertent face mask); 6-10 = 5 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g Illegal use of hands); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g Personal Foul such as face mask).

- **Red Joker**: Draw replacement card and complete all 3 defensive draws to determine location of fumble (see play outcome); proceed to fumble rules.

Play Outcome

The outcome of the play is determined by comparing the total offensive values and defensive values involved in the play match-up.

If the run goes in between two blocking match-ups, then both match-ups are including the calculating the play.

Modifiers:

- If the play started from the shotgun formation, the RB value is -1.
- The RB carrying the ball is worth double value (*e.g. a RB Q = 24 points*).
- Blocking Back (i.e. Back committed to the blocking match-up prior to the hand-off), is worth one-half value (rounded up) (*e.g. a RB 9 = 5 points*)

The offense will have at least 3 and as many as 6 or 7 cards involved in the play, including the ball carrier (worth double value), the hand-off draw, and at least one lineman, plus up to three more depending on the blocking match-ups and whether the ball is run between match-ups, and/or a blocking back (worth half value).

The defense will have at least 5 cards involved in the play, including at least one lineman, one additional card (*e.g. center LB*), and 3 drawn cards, and may have additional lineman (if the ball is run between two match-ups) and LBs also involved.

O = Offense value

D = Defense value

If $O > D$, Rush yardage gained = $(O - D) \div 2$

If Offense is greater, yardage gained is half the difference.

If $O=D$, no gain, play is stopped at LoS.

If $O < D$, regardless of the total values, yards lost are determined by face cards drawn in the three defensive card draws: J=1, Q=2, K=3; except that the loss can't be greater than the negative value of $D - O$. (*e.g. If the defensive draw is 3, 7 & J and $O < D$, the play would be a 1 yard loss; if the defensive draw is 4, Q & K, the play would be a 5 yard loss; however, if the defensive draw is 4, Q & K, but $(O - D) \div 2 = -2$, the loss would be only 2 yards*). This is due to the fact that even if a defense completely overpowers an offense, this usually results in only a few yard loss, in this case 1-9. Drawing a face card in the defensive draw indicates penetration through the line.

Breaking into the Open Field

If $O > D$ (yards are gained), face card values are totaled for handoff and 3 defensive draws: J=1, Q=2, K=3; if handoff total > def. total = run breaks into the open field and continues; proceed to Open-Field Run and with initial draw of handoff total > def. total (*e.g. if handoff draw=K and defensive draw is J-7-3, draw 2 cards for initial OFR draw*).

QB Sneak

The QB plunges immediately into the offensive line. A QB Sneak may only be executed from regular (not shotgun) formation. This is the only play that may be done during the Blocking Pattern phase while Line cards are still unrevealed. To execute a QB Sneak, the offense moves the QB to join a match-up on the line, or in between two match-ups, with the ball still on the QB.

The QB may only run through or in between the C or G match-ups (not T or TE).

The play is different from other Rushing plays (q.v.) in these respects:

- No handoff card is drawn.
- QB as rusher only counts for face value, not double value like RBs, for rushing yardage.
- The defense does NOT get to add one extra card (LB) at the end of the play.
- The defense draws only two additional cards from the deck.
- A maximum of 1 yard may be lost on the play.
- Total match-up is divided by 4 to determine final yardage.
- No Open-Field Run is possible at the end of the play.

Offense = QB value + offensive line blocking values.

Defense = defensive line blocking values + 2 draws.

QB Sneak yardage = $(O-D) \div 4$ = yards gained (rounded up if half – e.g. if $O-D = 0$ or 1 , no gain; if $O-D = 2$ to 5 , gain = 1; $O-D = 6$ to 9 , gain = 2; etc.).

If $O-D < 0$, yards are only lost based on face cards in defensive draws, as in a regular Rushing play (J=1, Q=2, K=3), but a maximum of 3 yards may be lost.

On two defensive draws:

- **Black Joker** = Penalty.
First, draw replacement card for yardage, then draw the remaining yardage cards for the play, then draw a card to determine the penalty:
Red = against offense: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping)
Black = against defense: 1-5 = 5 yard penalty (inadvertent face mask); 6-10 = 5 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g Illegal use of hands); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g Personal Foul such as face mask).
- **Red Joker**: Draw replacement card and complete all 3 defensive draws to determine location of fumble (see play outcome); proceed to fumble rules.

A QB Sneak can gain a few yards, but because the difference is divided by four, it will never gain more than a few yards. This would most likely be done if the offense only needs short yardage and wants to limit the number of defensive cards that can be committed to the play, or in the face of a perceived blitz (LBs moved into the line during the Blocking Pattern phase).

QB Scramble

QB runs out of the pocket.

QB can run through or between any line blocking match-ups, and the QB Scramble is the same as a regular RB rushing play (q.v.), except:

- No hand-off card is drawn.
- QB is only face value (not double like a RB).
- Defense draws two cards.
- Maximum loss is 6 yards.
- There can be no open-field run at the end.

O = Offense = QB + offensive line blocking values.

D = Defense = defensive line blocking values + 1 extra player card + 2 draws.

QB Scramble yardage = $(O-D) \div 2$.

Running Out of Bounds

Only if the QB runs through the match-up on either end of the line, the QB may elect to run out of bounds, but must subtract 2 yards from the run yardage. The offense may decide whether to run out of bounds at the end of the play after the yardage of the play is known.

The success of the QB sneak will depend largely on the difference in the line blocking match-up. A significant advantage on the line match-up(s) represents a running lane for the QB. If the offense reveals all of its eligible receivers and doesn't see a favorable passing match-ups, and doesn't have a RB to run a draw play, the QB may choose to scramble for yardage instead.

Passing Play

To execute a passing play, the offense reveals the Receiver (if it is not already), and moves the ball marker from the QB to the Receiver.

In case of a pass to a RB, the offense must first move the back up to the LoS on the same side the RB is line up (except in the case of a Screen Pass—see below).

Coverage Phase I

The defense then reveals the defensive side of the play match-up, including:

- Card(s) covering receiver, i.e. already assigned to match-up; or if a RB coming out off the backfield, the defense may automatically apply one card that is not already revealed—MLB, OLB on same side, or CB or DE on same side; plus
- One additional eligible card from the defense (see Range) (e.g. *S*, *LB*).

(Two additional cards drawn from the deck will be added later, after the offense yardage is done.)

Completion and Yardage

There are four tests that must be met for the pass to be complete: 1) Pass draw must be lower than QB, 2) Yardage draw(s) (optional) must be different suit from Receiver, 3) Reception draw must be lower than receiver, and 4) Defensive draw in which defender has opportunity to break up the play if of equal or greater value as Receiver.

When drawing the pass cards, it is recommended that the Pass draw be overlapped with the QB player card (so both values are visible), then the yardage draw placed in an overlapping line toward the R card, then the Reception draw placed overlapping the R. This way the cards actually resemble the flight of the ball from the QB to R, and form a line that can be totaled for the offensive match-up value.

- 1) **Pass Draw:** The offense first draws one Pass card.
 - If play started from shotgun formation, QB value is +1.
 - Incomplete pass: If Pass draw \geq QB card value, the pass is incomplete (**poor throw**). Continue to draw Reception draw and 2 Defensive draws to check for penalty or interception.
 - If the QB was under pressure and had to make a Sack draw on the previous or same turn, and but the difference was less than 7 (Pass Rush value – Pass Protection value + Sack draw $<$ 7), then the QB is under pressure. The amount by which the Sack draw succeeded is subtracted from 7 to derive the Pressure value. $7 - (PP + S - PR) = \text{Pressure}$. On the Pass draw, the Pressure value is added to the Pass Draw value for determining completion (but not for yardage). *For example, if the Pass Rush value is 24, the Pass Protection value is 19 and the offense makes a Sack draw of 8, then $7 - (19 + 8 - 24) = 4$. If the Pass draw + 4 \geq QB value, pass is incomplete. If the QB escapes being sacked but is under pressure, a pass is less likely to be complete, and also is*

able to gain less potential yardage because a lower Pass draw has to be made for completion.

- The Pass draw also counts for yardage as part of the offensive match-up.

Red Joker = Fumble

- QB fumbles before passing, proceed to fumble recovery at 5 yards behind LoS.

Black Joker = Penalty against Offense

- 5 yard penalty from LoS (e.g. Ineligible receiver downfield or Illegal forward pass)
- Play continues and defense can decline at end of play.
- A replacement card is drawn for Pass card yardage.

2) **Yardage Draw(s)**: The offense then can draw additional passing yardage cards that are added to the offensive value for the pass play match-up. The offense does not have to declare beforehand how many cards it will draw and can stop at any time, based on the anticipated yardage given the match-up cards that are shown so far (all except the Reception draw and the final two defensive draws – see below). These cards may be drawn one at a time, so the offense can decide when to stop based on the draws, or the offense can draw multiple cards at the same time, so all count for yardage even if there is an interception (otherwise, after an interception, no additional yardage cards are drawn). The offense can also choose to not draw any pass yardage cards ([a short but high-percentage pass](#)). Player should declare that the next card is a Yardage draw, otherwise it is considered a Reception draw; then Yardage draws continue until a Reception draw is declared.

- If any pass yardage card is the same suit as the Receiver card, the pass is incomplete. (A Receiver that is a **Black Joker** counts as a spade and a **Red Joker** counts as a heart.) Continue to draw 2 Defensive draws to check for penalty or interception.

It is possible to draw enough cards to throw a long pass, but the longer the pass, the greater the chance of incompleteness (and interception or penalty). Each additional pass yardage card drawn has about a 25% chance of being incomplete, so the offense must weigh pass yardage against the chance for an incompleteness. Also, this may factor into which card is chosen as a receiver—if the rest of the hand has many cards of the same suit, this would reduce the chance of an incomplete pass to that receiver.

- Sacks: For each line match-up that results in a sack potential (see Pass Rush), the offense must draw one Pass Protection card before each Pass Yardage draw. The pass protection draws may have already taken place during the unfolding of the play, but if not, then each remaining pass protection drawn would be done prior to the corresponding pass yardage draw (e.g. *if the offense has drawn one pass protection card and avoided a*

sack during the first turn, then passed at the start of the next turn, it would not have to draw again if executing a one-card pass, but if executing a two-card pass, it would draw one yardage card, then one pass protection card, and then the second yardage card).

There is no limit to the number of cards that may be drawn—including none—except:

- If a pass is executed during the Blocking phase (i.e. before any defensive cards are revealed), then the offense may not draw any extra cards for pass yardage; only the Pass and Reception cards are drawn.
- A pass to a RB who starts behind the LoS can have a maximum of one Yardage draw;
- If a pass is executed at the beginning of the first turn after the Blocking phase to avoid a pass protection draw, then the offense may draw only one extra card for pass yardage.

Red Joker = Interception

- Field position of interception is determined by total match-up value including Pass and Yardage draws (with no replacement nor additional pass yardage draws), Reception draw, and two final defensive cards draws (see below), but at a maximum of five yards behind the LoS.

Black Joker = Penalty

- Draw again after end of play (draw replacement card for pass yardage)
Red = against Offense, Pass Interference, 10 yards
Black = against Defense, Illegal contact, 5 yds & auto first down
- Play continues
- Can decline at end of play.

3) **Reception Draw:** Then the offense finally draws one Reception card.

- Offense must declare that it is the Reception card before drawing (or immediately lay it down overlapping the Receiver card before seeing the value), so it is clear that it is not a Pass Yardage draw.
- Incomplete pass: If this draw is equal to or greater than the Receiving card value, the pass is incomplete (**dropped or defense breaks up the play**).
- This card also counts for yardage as part of the offensive match-up.

Red Joker = Interception

- Field position of interception is determined by total match-up value after replacement Reception draw, and the two final defensive draws (see below), but at a maximum of five yards behind the LoS.

Black Joker = Penalty against Offense

- 10 yard penalty (e.g. Offensive pass interference)
- Play continues (draw replacement card for Reception draw) and defense can decline at end of play.

After all offensive match-up cards are drawn, but before final two defensive cards are drawn, the offensive player may elect to discard and not count any of the drawn cards (but not the QB and R cards) as yardage in order to try to avoid throwing the ball out of the back of the endzone. *(For example, a pass play executed from the 1-yard line might risk going past the back of the endzone, so while the Pass and Reception draws must be made to check for completion, they don't have to be used for yardage if the value of two defensive draws expected to average 14 would result in the total yardage being past the back of the endzone, but the offense must guess at this before seeing the defensive draws.)*

Coverage Phase II – Defensive Draws

After the offense has drawn its Pass card, all of its passing Yardage cards (and Pass Protection draws if required), and its Reception card, then the defense draws two additional final cards that are added to its pass defense match-up to calculate the final yardage outcome of the pass.

Even if the pass is incomplete, these final two defensive cards are always drawn anyway to check for interception or penalty.

- 4) **Defensive Play:** The defense also has one final opportunity to break up the pass and cause an incompletion. If any of the initial cards matched up against the Receiver (not the extra card added at the end, but the defenders matched up at the time of play execution) is equal to or greater than the Receiver card, then the defender still has an opportunity to break up the play, with the first defensive draw. If $\text{Defense card} + \text{first Defensive draw} > \text{Receiver card} + \text{Reception Draw}$, the defender makes the play and the pass is incomplete (ties goes to offense). *(For example, if the Receiver is a Q and the Reception draw is a 7 on the offense, and the defender is K, if the defense's first coverage draw > 7, the pass is incomplete.)*

Red Joker = Interception. Draw a replacement card for defense, and calculate total yardage for interception field position as if it was a completion, including for the offense additional pass yardage cards drawn up to and including the card that resulted in an incompletion, if applicable. If $D > O$, the interception occurs maximum 5 yards behind LoS.

Black Joker = Penalty: Defensive pass interference. Draw a replacement card for defense, and calculate total yardage for interference field position as if it was a completion, including for the offense any additional pass yardage cards drawn up to and including the card that resulted in an incompletion, if applicable. The ball is moved forward to the location of the interference and offense has an automatic first down. If the interference takes place in the end zone, the ball is placed on the one-yard line. If $D > O$, there is no pass interference for a receiver behind the LoS, but it is a 5 yard penalty (e.g. tackling a receiver). Offense may elect to decline the penalty *(e.g. if pass is complete and open-field run yards are made at end of play)*.

Play Outcome

If the pass is complete, the yardage outcome of the pass is determined by comparing the total offensive values and defensive values involved in the play match-up. (Unlike with a running play, the Receiver carrying the ball is *not* worth double value, but the final total is worth full value, no divided by 2.)

The offense will have at least 4 cards—the QB, the Receiver, the Pass draw, and the Reception draw—plus whatever additional pass yardage cards are drawn.

The defense will usually have at least 4 cards involved in the play, including the player(s) matched up with the Receiver (CB for WR, DE for TE, LB for HB, etc.), one additional card (*e.g. center LB or SS*), and two drawn cards, and may have additional cards involved (*e.g. FS, SS or LB*) if those cards are committed to the match-up before the play is executed. It is possible, however, for example if the offense reveals several strong receivers and defense commits all of its LBs except one and then a pass is thrown to a RB, the defense may not have a card matched with the RB Receiver, in which case the defense may have only 3 cards involved in the defense.

If play started from shotgun formation, QB value is +1.

O = Offense value; D = Defense value
If $O \geq D$, $O - D$ = yardage gained on pass

If $O < D$, the offense may choose to throw away the pass, i.e. out of bounds and incomplete, rather than risking a loss of yardage, or may complete the pass, hoping to gain yardage in the run after pass. *At the time the ball is thrown the QB would know if the reception was going to be behind the LoS and would be able to throw it away instead.*

Finally, the total yardage outcome of the pass must not go beyond the back of the endzone or the pass is incomplete. Offense may choose to remove one or more cards from yardage value to avoid this happening prior to the 2 defensive draws (see above).

Run After Pass or Interception

At the end of a successful pass play or after an interception, the receiver (or interceptor) automatically gets to try to run for additional yardage after catching the ball.

One or more defensive card(s) (LB, S, CB) that has not yet been revealed (if any) can be applied against the run after the pass (see open-field runs for more explanation of which cards may be applied).

Pass run card – defensive card = yardage gained (*e.g. the offense draws a 9 and the defense has a LB 5 that has not yet been revealed, $9 - 5 = 4$*). If the value ≤ 0 , no additional yardage is gained, but no yardage is lost (i.e. forward progress; *e.g. $A - 4 = 0$, not a negative*).

Card Bowl Rules v1.1.6

If yardage is gained *and* a face card is drawn, proceed to Open-Field Run, with initial draw as follows: J = 1 card; Q = 2 cards; K = 3 cards.

Red Joker = fumble, which occurs at the point of all yardage value drawn prior to the fumble (a replacement card is not drawn); proceed to Fumble rules.

Black Joker = penalty. Draw another card:

First, draw replacement card for yardage, then draw any additional open-field run cards for the play, then draw a card to determine the penalty:

Red = against offense: 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g. Holding); face card or other

Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping)

Black = against defense: 1-10 = 5 yard penalty (inadvertent face mask); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g. Personal Foul such as face mask, late hit).

Screen Pass

The Screen Pass is somewhat of a hybrid of a pass and a run.

The screen pass operates like a passing play for completion, and like a rushing play for yardage. It trades the risk of an incomplete pass or interception for the extra yardage that might be gained with the Open-Field Run at the end.

To execute a screen pass, the offense moves the RB up into one or between two blocking match-ups, revealing the RB in the process, and moves the ball marker on top of the RB, declaring that it is a Screen Pass.

The offense may also use as its blocking match-up a WR, or it may even combine two WRs into one blocking match-up, and then utilize them for the screen pass, but only on the condition that the WR(s) has/have not been revealed until the play is executed.

The offense may also move a Back to the side and reveal it as if it is to catch a pass and force the defense to respond and reveal, but not execute the play yet, and then use this back as the blocking match-up for the screen pass to the other Back. Or it may combine a blocking Back with a WR (previously unrevealed) as the blocking match-up. In any case, the blocking back blocks at half value, the same as with a rushing play.

The offense then draws for completion the same as a quick pass, i.e. one Pass card is drawn that must be lower than the QB, and one Reception card is drawn that must be lower than the Receiver. Jokers drawn during these draws are the same as for a pass, i.e. interception or penalty.

However, the resulting match-up is *not* used to calculate the yardage of the pass.

Instead, if the pass is complete, the play from that point is executed as if it is a Rushing Play (q.v.) to calculate yardage of the initial run—with the ball carrier counting double, the Reception draw counting like the handoff draw, and blockers being added together, with the total divided by 2. The QB and the Pass draw are *not* included.

However, at the end of the initial running yardage, the offense then automatically gets to draw for an Open-Field Run (q.v.)—not just if the defense draws an A like a rushing play.

The run after screen pass is considered to start at the LoS, but if no yardage is gained and either of the defensive draws during the initial match-up is a face card, this indicates the yards behind the LoS at which the pass is caught, same as a loss of yardage on a run, but the offense still gets to draw for an Open-Field Run at the end. Offense can also choose at this point to throw the ball away for an incompleteness in this case, before seeing the Open-Field Run draw. Defense can apply unrevealed cards in the secondary against the Open-Field Run one at a time the same as for any other running or passing play, and the offense can apply additional downfield blockers against the defensive tacklers.

Lateral

A Lateral (toss, pitch) is the same as a Screen Pass, except:

- Only the Reception draw is used for completion—there is no Pass draw.
- An incompletion (Reception draw \geq Receiver) is a Fumble 5 yards behind the LoS.
- The run starts from 5 yards behind the LoS (yardage gained = $O - D - 5$; if $O > D$, yardage lost from defensive face card draw(s) starts from 5 yards behind the LoS).

A lateral works much like a screen as a hybrid pass/run, but trades less chance of incompletion with less yardage, and greater chance of loss of yardage and fumble.

Open-Field Run

The procedure is the same for kickoff and punt returns after the initial return, as well as for runs after pass completions, screen passes, laterals, and rushes that break into the open field at the end of a scrimmage play, plus interceptions and fumbles that are picked up.

If the card drawn is a face card, then additional cards are drawn as follows:

J = 1 card

Q = 2 cards

K = 3 cards

If additional face card(s) is/are drawn again, then more yardage cards are drawn accordingly, continuing until a draw occurs with no face card, when play concludes. (*E.g. the first OFR card is a Q, then 2 additional cards are drawn; if those are K and J, then 4 additional cards are drawn; and so on until no face cards are drawn.*)

Total yardage run = the value of all the cards added together.

An open field run will typically go less than 10 yards before being tackled (longer for a punt or kickoff return), but there is always a chance of the run continuing, and several face cards drawn in close succession can result in a very long open field run. A longer run also means a greater risk of a penalty or fumble.

Open-Field Tackles (Scrimmage Plays)

For open-field runs at the end of a scrimmage play (rush, pass, screen, lateral), the defense may apply one or more remaining non-line-blocking cards that have not yet been revealed (*e.g. LB, S, CB*) against each set of offensive yardage card drawn. In other words, the 3 cards drawn after a K are all part of one draw, and defensive card within range may be applied against them all together (rather than each individually).

If the defense card – offense card \geq the run yardage card, the play is stopped with no additional yardage, even if the yardage card is a face card (forward motion stopped). As long as some yardage is gained, though, a face card allows another draw.

Defensive cards can be applied against the OFR based on where they are located at the time the play is executed.

For a pass to a WR, lateral or a run around the end, unrevealed defensive cards from the same side of the field are applied against the first OCR draw (including a MLB), and then those from the opposite side are applied against the next set of OFR draws (if there are any).

For a run through the line or a pass to a TE or RB, unrevealed defensive cards in LB positions are applied against the first OCR draw, and then those from the S positions on either side are applied against the next set of OFR draws (if there are any).

So on the initial draw for a WR or RB running around end, the CB, S, OLB and ILB on that side may be applied against it (including MLB). Then the OLB and S from the other side may be applied against the next set of draws.

For a TE/RB receiving pass or running through the line, the OLBs and ILB may be applied against the first draw or set of draws, and S cards from each side may be applied to the subsequent draw.

Note that this is based on the position of the cards at the time the play is executed, so if the defense suspecting a run moves the S into a OLB position prior to execution, this would count as an OLB for purposes of being applied against the OFR.

If after the initial and second set of OFR draws, all defensive cards will have been applied, and any remaining OFR draws are made without any defensive subtractions.

For example, after a completed pass to a WR, the offense draws a K for the automatic run-after-catch. The defense can apply any unrevealed CB, S, OLB or ILB on that side against the K. If the offense still gains yards after the defensive cards are applied, then the offense draws 3 more cards for an open-field run, and the defense could apply any ILB, OLB or S cards from the other side of the field against the total of all three OFR draws. Supposing one of the OFR draws is a Q and yardage is gained after defensive cards are applied against the OFR draws, then the next and all subsequent sets of OFR draws would not have any defensive cards applied against them.

[This represents players who might not have been close enough to be part of the initial play, but come across the field to arrive later to help stop the open-field run.](#)

Fumbles and Penalties

Red Joker = fumble, which occurs at the point of all yardage value drawn prior to the fumble (a replacement card is not drawn); proceed to Fumble rules.

Black Joker = penalty.

Keep Joker in line of OFD cards to note position where penalty occurred.

First, draw replacement card for yardage, then draw any additional open-field run cards for the play, then draw a card to determine the penalty:

- Red = against offense, assessed from the spot of the penalty (any yards gained subsequently are discarded): 1-10 = 10 yard penalty (e.g Holding); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty (e.g. Clipping)
- Black = against defense: 1-10 = 5 yard penalty (inadvertent face mask); face card or other Joker = 15 yard penalty and automatic first down (e.g Personal Foul such as face mask, late hit).

Fumble

Fumble generally occurs any time the **Red Joker** is drawn during an applicable action or play (snap, handoff, rush, open-field run, etc.). See each play type for specific fumble notations.

The field position at which the fumble occurs is generally at the point the Joker is drawn, calculating all cards drawn prior to that, with a replacement card if specified.

Fumble recovery is simply drawing for the higher card. Each player draws one card (except for blocked punt, see below), offense first, and the higher card recovers the fumble.

Bounce

If the draw is a tie, players keep drawing until one is higher.

However, before each subsequent draw, draw one card for the bounce, which is calculated as follows:

A	=	4 yards towards offense
2	=	3 ”
3	=	2 ”
4	=	1 ”
5 – 9	=	0 (no bounce)
10	=	1 yard towards offense
J	=	2 ”
Q	=	3 ”
K	=	4 ”

Black Joker = Penalty.

Draw another card: Red = against offense; Black = against defense

1-5 = 5 yard penalty; 6-10= 10 yard penalty; face card = 15 yard penalty

Modifiers/Exceptions

Depending on the type of play in which the fumble occurs, for the initial draw one player may get to draw more than one card or apply certain modifiers (also indicated in play descriptions):

- On-Side Kick: receiving team adds distance of kick – 10 (*e.g. if kick distance is 14 yards, receiving team would add 4 to its initial fumble recovery draw*).
- Blocked Punt: receiver draws two cards for first draw – both are matched separately (not added together) against the kicker’s one card; kicker must beat both of receiver’s draws to recover (and of course then it is still a turnover if 4th down and sufficient yardage isn’t gained in a run after fumble recovery).

In addition, players may also attempt to either fall on the ball, or attempt to pick it up and run with it. This must be declared by both teams in advance of either team drawing. If it

is not declared then no modifier is applied. Increased chance for recovery can be traded for less chance of running after recovering, and visa versa.

To fall on the ball, a player adds 1 or 2 points (as declared) to its recovery draw, but subtracts the same number of points from the face card value for determining the initial draws for an open-field run (see below).

To attempt to pick up and run with the ball, a player subtracts 1 or 2 (as declared) points from its recovery draw, but adds the same number of points to the face card value for determining the initial draws for an open-field run (see below)—although this is not to exceed 3 in any case.

Run After Fumble

If the winner recovers with a face card, a run can be made after the fumble recovery. Face card values are compared for both teams, with any modifiers applied (see above): J = 1, Q = 2, K = 3; winner value – loser value = initial draw for OFR (*e.g. if winner draw = K and loser draw = J, draw 2 cards for initial OFR draw*). Proceed to Open-Field Run rules.

If more than one card is drawn on one side (i.e. blocked punt) only the highest card counts.

On an on-side kick recovery, only the card's face value counts, not the added recovery value for the receiving team from the kick distance. Receiving team might have lower face card value and still recover the ball.

Fumble During a Try

Because only the fumbling player can recover and advance a fumble during a Try, in order to advance a fumble during a two-point conversion the offense must draw a face card *of the same suit* as the defensive draw (which isn't a face card).

Abbreviations

Cards

A = Ace
J = Jack
Q = Queen
K = King

Player positions

Offense

QB = Quarterback
RB = Running Back (Half Back, Full Back, Tail Back, etc.)
C = Center
G = Guard
T = Tackle
TE = Tight End
WR = Wide Receiver
R = any Receiver: WR, TE or B

Defense

DT = Defensive Tackle (incl. Nose Tackle)
DE = Defensive End
LB = Linebacker
CB = Cornerback
SS = Strong Safety (lined up on same side as TE)
FS = Free Safety (lined up on other side from TE)
S = either Safety, FS or SS

Other

O = Offense
D = Defense
LoS = Line of Scrimmage
FP = Field Position
OFR = Open-Field Run

Example of Play Notes

On a regular lined pad. You can make this as detailed as you want to record the game. The description of the play is optional, you can just keep track of the down and yard line, but it is fun to record and see the drives. Draw a line to indicate a change of possession.

I'm interested to see copies of game records to see how realistically the game works out.

Steelers

Kickoff	to 3, 21 yd return to 24
1 & 10 @ 24	pass 16
1 & 10 @ 40	run 2
2 & 8 @ 42	run, -1
3 & 9 @ 41	18 pass + 5 = 23
1 & 10 @ 36	run 7
2 & 3 @ 29	run, -1
3 & 4 @ 30	run -2, fumble, D recovers +4 return

Cowboys

1 & 10 @ 36	run 2; 5 yrd pen. vs. D, auto 1 st down	
1 & 10 @ 43	pass 7	
2 & 7 @ 50	run 5 + 8 = 13	
1 & 10 @ 37	run 4	
2 & 6 @ 33	pass inc.	
3 & 6 @ 33	pass 5 + 5 = 10	
1 & 10 @ 23	pass inc.	
2 & 10 @ 23	run 6	
3 & 4 @ 18	run -2	
4 & 6 @ 20	38 yd FG good	3-0 Cowboys

Using a Cribbage Board

A cribbage board happens to have the same number of holes that a football field has yards, including the end zones: 120. However, since the football FP is based on yard lines—the lines in between the yards—there are actually only 99 yard lines between the end zones, so the 50th hole from each endzone of the cribbage board represents the 50 yard line. In other words, there are 119 yardage marks in a football field (including the end zones) and 120 holes in a cribbage board, so the middle two holes are both the 50 yard line and one of them is just skipped during play, with yardage being calculated from the end of the field that the FP is in.

Use two pegs: one represents the field position, and one the first down marker. Many cribbage boards have 60 and you go around twice, in which case for football you can use a different track for each end of the field, each team's territory. You can also move a peg in a different section to keep track of the down.