



Numbering Exceptions and Eligibility

There are only two numbering exceptions allowed in the NFHS football rules, and both are for scrimmage kick formations. During all other scrimmage formations, numbering and position exclusively determine receiver eligibility.

This means to determine who is eligible, officials should ask themselves two questions: (1) Is this a scrimmage kick formation? If no, eligibles are determined by number and position. If yes, then ask (2) Are they using a numbering exception? If no, eligibles are determined by number and position. If yes, the snapper (and all other number exceptions, if fourth down or a try) must be within the ends and are ineligible.

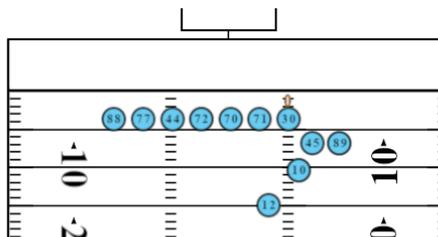
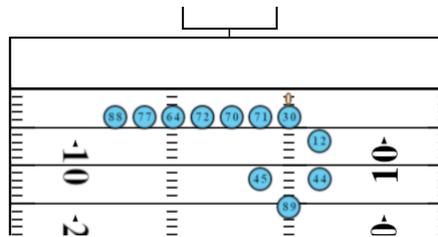
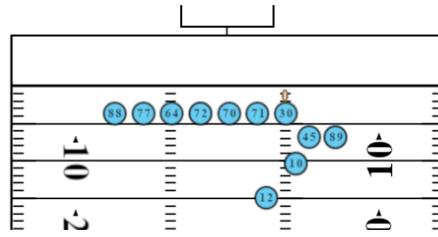
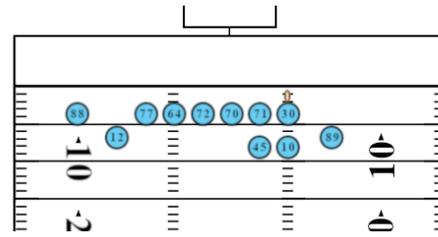
For the first question, you must know how a scrimmage kick formation is defined. A team is in a scrimmage kick formation when:

- A player is in position with a knee on the ground 7 or more yards behind the line of scrimmage and another player 3 or less yards behind that player in a position to place kick; or
- A player is 10 or more yards behind the line of scrimmage and in position to receive a long snap.

These are the only two formations in which a team may use a numbering exception. Otherwise, teams must have five players numbered 50-79 on the line of scrimmage to be a legal formation, and these players are ineligible. There is no allotment for a team to declare an eligible receiver that has these numbers or is not in the backfield or on the end of the line.

While in these formations, teams may utilize a numbering exception that would allow less than five players numbered 50-79 on the line of scrimmage. Teams are still required to have a minimum of five players on the line of scrimmage; and, if first, second or third down, only the snapper may not be numbered 50-79.

In either case, the snapper (and all other number exceptions, if fourth down or a try) must be within the ends and are ineligible. Below are some diagrams that explain these concepts.



Rules Review: 4th & Goal from Team R's 5-yard line. Team K lines up in a place kick formation, with the following numbers on the line of scrimmage: K88, K77, K44, K64, K72, K70, and K30 as the snapper on the end. The ball is snapped to K10 with his knee on the ground. K10 rises to his feet and then makes a pass to K30 in the end zone for an apparent touchdown.

Ruling: K30 has committed three live ball fouls. Because Team K is using the numbering exception in a scrimmage kick formation on fourth down, the snapper and all number exception players must be positioned within the ends. When K30 lines up as an end, this is an illegal formation. When K30 goes downfield for a pass, it is an ineligible receiver down field. When K30 catches the pass, it is an illegal touching. Team R will likely decline the first two and accept the illegal touching. Team R's ball, first and 10 on Team R's 10-yard line.