



# Dead-Ball Officiating

By Harold Buck



## **Quote from a non-official:**

**“How can you give a talk about how to officiate when there’s nothing happening?”**

**Quote from an official:**

**“Thou shalt be great  
dead-ball officials.”**

**—Jerry Seeman**

# Part 1: Dead-Ball Basics

# Live-Ball vs. Dead-Ball

- Live-ball officiating is primarily *reactive*
- Dead-ball officiating is primarily *proactive*

# What is a dead ball?

- Any time the ball is not in play is a dead ball
- This includes: pre-game, timeouts, between periods, and post game

# When does a dead ball begin?

- There is:
  - An action that requires a whistle to stop play
  - A brief pause while the official recognizes the foul and brings the whistle up to the mouth
  - The sounding of the whistle
- The dead-ball begins with the action requiring a whistle

# Dead-Ball Fouls

- Any foul that occurs during a dead ball is a dead-ball foul, even if
  - it occurs as a continuation of a live-ball play
  - *it occurs before the whistle.*
- A legal hit will not be flagged just because the live ball ended a split second before.
- Hits after a goal are almost always illegal.



# Assessing Dead-Ball Fouls I

Dead-ball fouls are enforced in the sequence they occur, if known

# **Assessing Dead-Ball Fouls II**

**Technical fouls may be possession fouls or time-serving, depending who is due possession**

# Assessing Dead-Ball Fouls III

If a face-off is pending when  
you have dead-ball  
simultaneous fouls with equal  
penalty time, NCAA and  
**NFHS no longer differ**

# The Most Common Dead-Ball Fouls

- Late hits
- Conduct fouls and USCs
- Illegal crosse or equipment
- Illegal procedure (delay of game)
- Fighting

# Dead-Ball “Fouls” That Do Not Get Called

- Technical fouls typically not called:
  - Push, hold, illegal screen, interference,
  - Since play is dead, no advantage gained
  - If severe, call a conduct foul or USC
- Exceptions exist:
  - Illegal screen just before the whistle to restart play

# Dead-Ball Fouls Are More Likely:

- In a blowout (by the trailing team)
- In a tightly-contested game
- In a rivalry game
- After other dead-ball fouls
- After a hard foul or cheap shot
- When players are jawing at each other
- When a coach is out of control

# **Live-Ball vs. Dead Ball Fouls (on opposing teams)**

- For “live-ball, live ball,” you have simultaneous fouls and no free clear
- For “live-ball, dead ball,” enforce in the order they occurred and award a free clear
- In both cases, common penalty time is non-releasable (NCAA 7-2-d)

# Signaling Dead-Ball Fouls I

Live-ball and dead-ball fouls  
are enforced differently,  
so they should be signaled  
differently



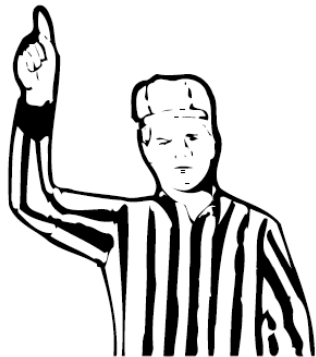
# Signaling Dead-Ball Fouls II

Use the one-hand open palm overhead to signal dead ball when necessary.



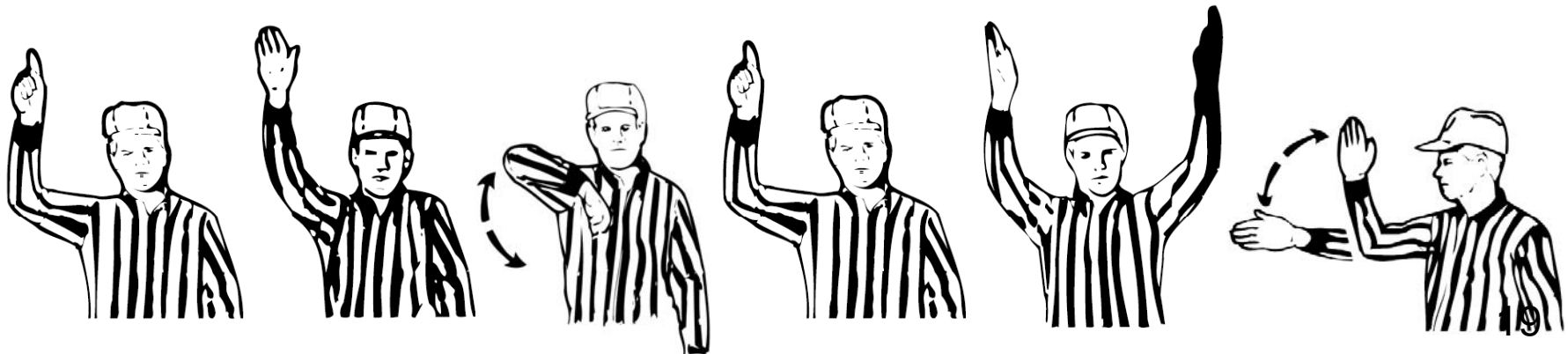
# Situation #1

- **Play:** B1 illegally body checks A1 *before* ball enters the goal (**not** a dead-ball foul)
- **Signal:** “Blue, #1, illegal body check, one minute. Goal is good. Face-off.”



## Situation #2

- **Play:** B1 illegally body checks A1 *after* ball enters the goal
- **Signal:** “Blue, #1, dead ball, illegal body check, 1 minute. Goal is good. White ball.”



# **Part 2:**

## Keep the game moving quickly

# Quick Restarts I

If the ball is out of position or no one picks it up, ***tell the players where you want it*** and use a 5-second count

# Quick Restarts II

As soon as the ball is in possession and in the right spot, restart play for

- Any loose-ball technical foul
- Any change-of-possession technical foul
- Any end line out-of-bounds ball

# Quick Restarts III

Exceptions:

- Use 5-count for **any** player too close on free play
- Use 5-count for goalie to get back to crease on **any** restart

# Slower Restarts I

Use 20-second timer:

- After goals
- After reporting time-serving penalties
- For sideline horns
- To summon players after TO or to start period



# Slower Restarts II

- Start within 3–5 seconds if no sideline horn
- Count players
- Don't restart until getting signal
- Don't get talked into quick whistle

# **Part 3:**

# **Goal scored**

# Goal Scored

When the ball enters the goal, you will need to contend with some or all of:

- A crease call
- An interference call
- A questionable goal
- A flag down
- A dead-ball foul
- Coach/player conduct
- Reporting fouls
- A routine equip. check
- A coach's check
- A timeout
- Writing the goal down
- Rotation
- 20-second timer
- The next face-off

# Goal Scored: Lead

- Is it a goal? (Must be on GLE)
- Is there an offensive foul? Before or after the goal?
- Look at shooter after the goal
- Equipment check?

# Goal Scored: Trail/Single

## • **Late hits!**

- Is the foul live-ball or dead-ball?
- Help with the crease
- Equipment check?

# **Part 4:** **Communication**

# Communicating with coaches

- Ignore statements
- Answer questions if appropriate
- Don't explain every call
- Explain unusual calls
- Be polite and respectful
- Get information for them if possible

# Communicating with players

- Encourage sportsmanship
- Talk them out of fouls
- Get the stage set for the restart
- Inform the goalie of the penalty situation
- **Brief** explanations of rules or calls



# Signaling Calls

Make sure you see  
the residual action after  
the whistle stopping play  
before turning  
to make your call

# Signaling possession fouls

- Watch for residual action from play
- Short and sweet:  
“Loose ... push ... blue ball!”
- Sometimes you can even drop “Loose”
- Make call loud and clear, with big signals
- Try to appear detached; don’t be angry!
- **Quick restart:** everyone should be “in the play”

# Signaling time-serving fouls

- Residual action
- Trail reports; relay or make sure partners have the call
- Don't assume your flag is for the same foul as your partner's flag
- Find open space, plant feet, pause
- Loud, large, clear: C-NOTE
- Pump fist and start timer
- Partner(s) should have field ready
- Don't start until you get point from Trail

# Explanations

- Explain the call if there is something unusual
- Don't over-explain routine calls
- The fewer words the better

# Signaling violations

Let everyone know exactly what the foul was as quickly as possible. Which accomplishes this best?



“Illegal  
procedure!  
White  
ball!”



“Illegal procedure!  
Blue number 27 is  
playing from out of  
bounds! We’re  
going White!”



“Playing from out  
of bounds! White  
ball!”

# Example of over-explaining

“We have a personal foul, on number 99 of the defense, after he tackled the quarterback, he’s giving him the business down there, that’s a 15-yard penalty.”

—Legendary NFL Official Ben Dreith

# **Part 5:**

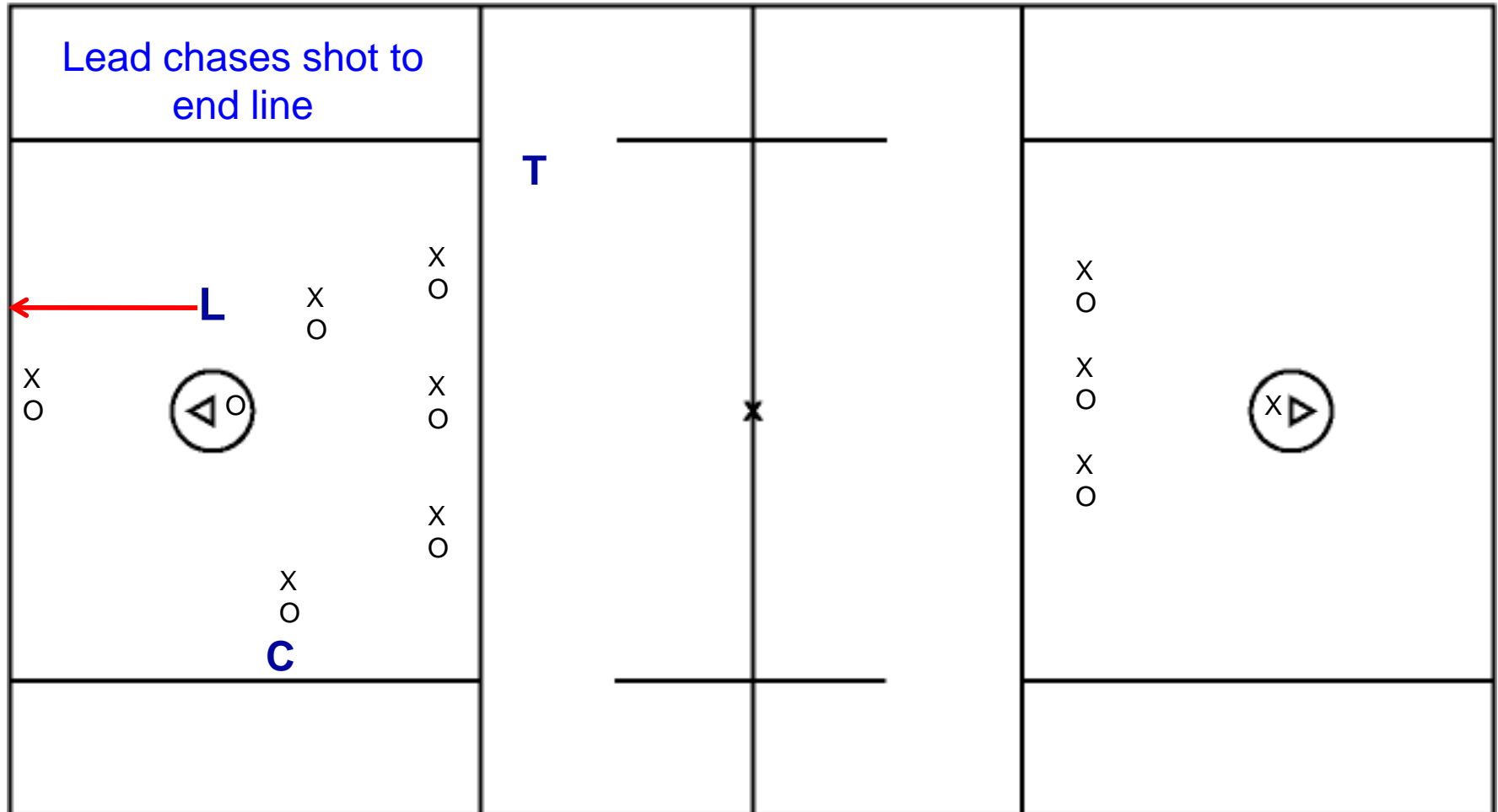
# **Mechanics**

# Dead-Ball Mechanics

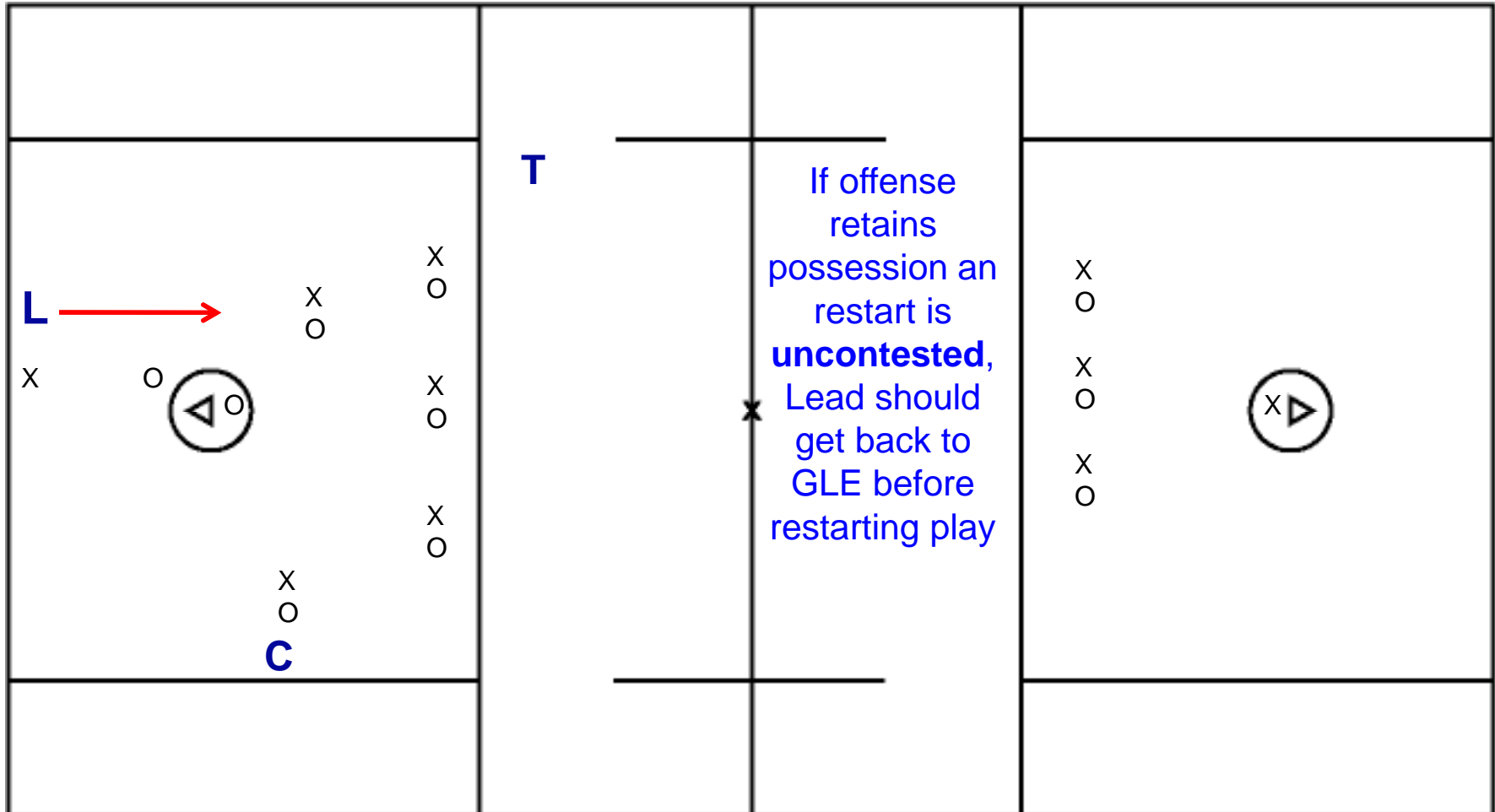
- Use dead-ball time to get into proper live-ball position
- Choose your position based on
  - Your speed
  - The speed of the players
  - How likely it is that the team in possession will maintain possession
  - Whether the clear is being contested



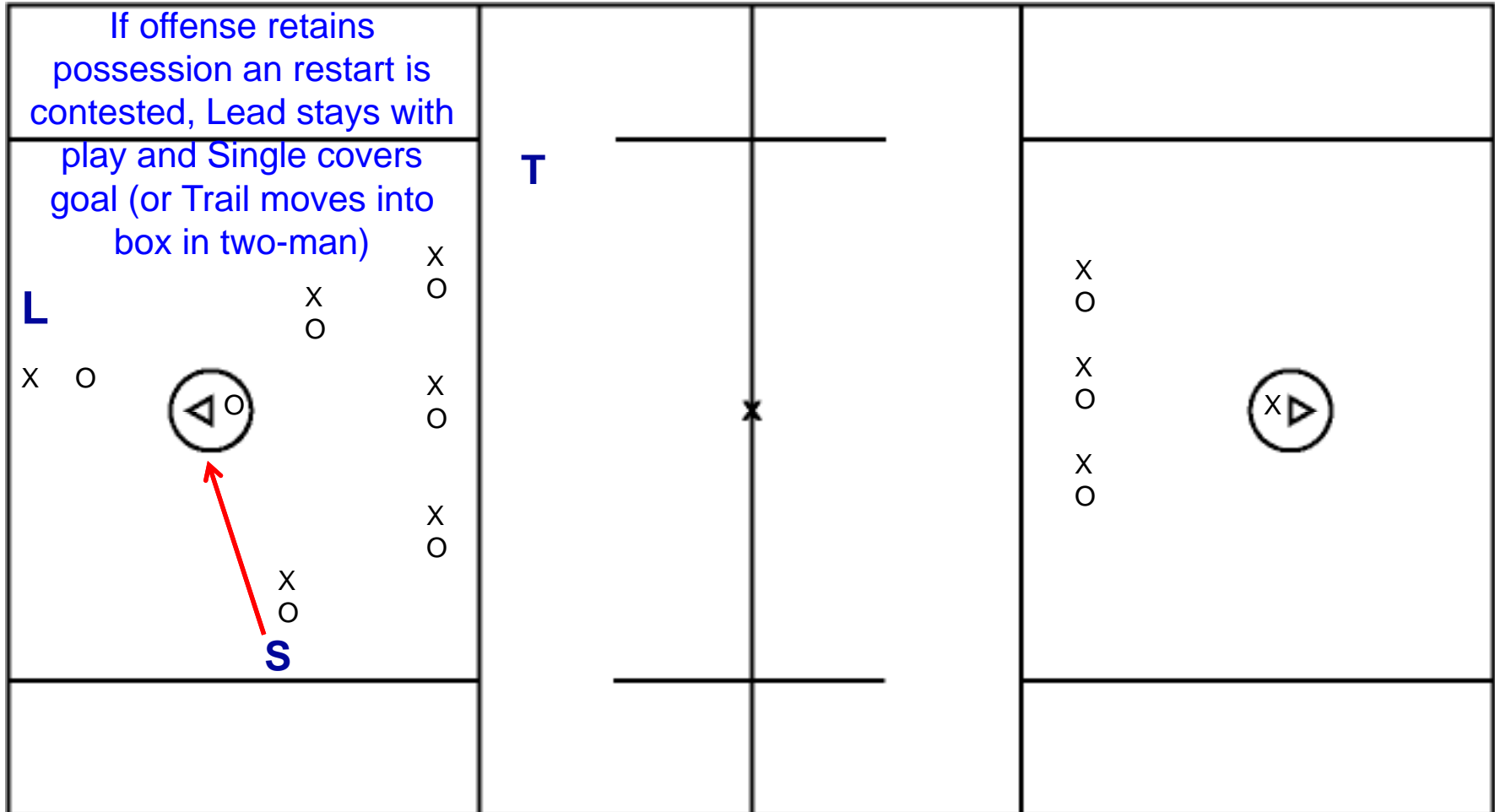
# Shot out of bounds



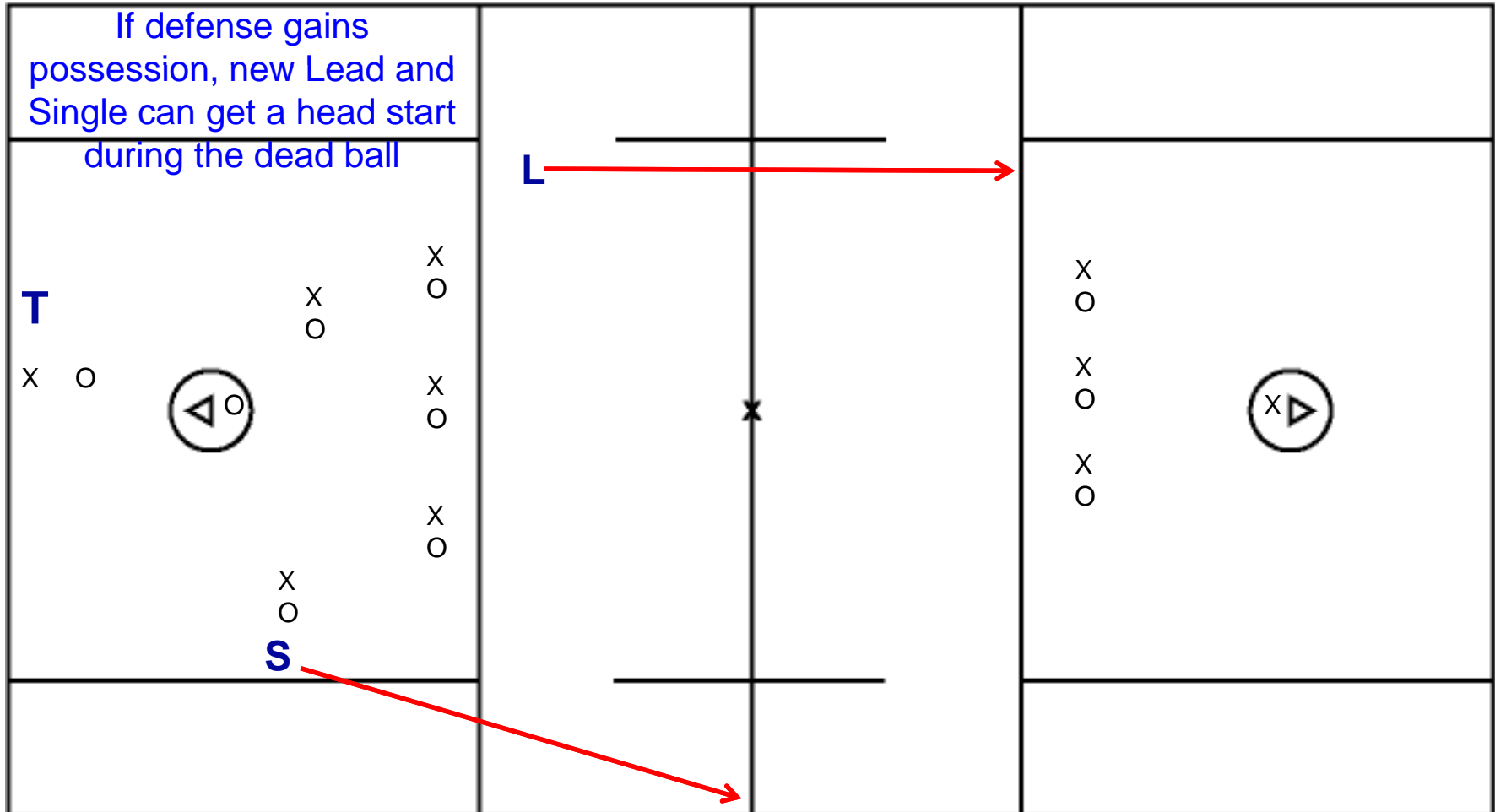
# Dead ball: Ball awarded to offense



# Dead ball: Ball awarded to offense



# Dead ball: Ball awarded to defense



# Part 6: Fitness

# Fitness

- Fitness is important for dead-ball officiating
- You can't "ref yourself into shape"
- Getting into shape requires specific training: speed, endurance, variety
- Always check with an M.D. or D.O. before starting an exercise program.

# **Part 7:**

# Other Issues

# Use “free time” to

- Discuss the game situation
- Hydrate, apply sunscreen
- Check score & scorecard; sign scorebook
- Communicate with coaches
- Check for players close to 5 personals
- Rotate positions if situation warrants



# Equipment checks

- Have a plan, but be flexible
- Practice so you can execute quickly
- Communicate so you know when to check (unofficial signal: bump one fist on other)
- Reschedule check if there's a penalty on a goal scored
- Treat fouls on opposing teams as *simultaneous* dead-ball fouls

# Timing issues

- Start with briefing during pre-game (or at least by leaving instructions)
- Watch for
  - Clock not starting/stopping correctly
  - Not releasing on penalties correctly
  - Correct use of horn
  - “Home cooking”
- Extra guidance on man-down face-off

# Correcting errors

- Officials' conference to get call right: referee makes the final decision
- Tipped ball: allow horn when correcting direction of play
- NFHS "coach's challenge"
- Inadvertent flag or whistle
- Admit your mistakes

# Injuries

- Stop play when appropriate: err on the side of caution
- Use the trainer or call 911 (don't try to treat, move, or even touch the player)
- Do not try to rush the player off the field
- Unconscious players
- Report unconscious players/major injuries to the assigning authority after the game

# Suspended games

- Lightning: 30-30 rule is **not sufficient** according to NFHS
- Coaches get teams into vehicles or permanent structures
- Record game info (game will be resumed from point of interruption unless coaches agree to terminate)
- There are no rules saying a game is “complete” after a certain point

# Scorecard: game score

- Less of an issue with visible scoreboard
- Must check score after each period; advisable to check score after each goal
- Most likely to screw up when there is a penalty to report, a timeout, or an equipment check
- You can slyly get a “vote” from the table
- On a disagreement, the referee wins

# Scorecard: other info

- Use it to record
  - Alternate possession
  - Timeouts: write quarter and time left
  - Captains names
  - Expulsion fouls/USCs/injuries to report
  - Game situation for suspended game
- Get to your spot before pulling out card
- Confirm card info during “free time”

# Pre-Game

- Sets the tone
- Field inspection (nets, markings, hazards)
- Coach's certification
- Uniform/equipment inspections
- Brief table personnel
- Coin toss (then check nets again)
- Lineup (*brief*: hazards, special rules)



# Post Game

- Pay attention: you have jurisdiction until you leave field, and ejections are possible after horn (note in scorebook)
- Report:
  - Major injuries
  - Fights/expulsions/“Parking lot” incidents
  - USCs (if required)
  - Problems with field, facilities, or game balls
  - “Parking lot” incidents
- Call assigner with “heads up” for controversial issues; follow up with written report