

MIND GAMES

# AMERICAN FOOTBALL



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# A Guide to Understanding American Football

by Ken Thomas, Editor, 'Touchdown' Magazine

**The following few pages are provided as a grounding to the rules of American Football. They will take you through the basics of the game, explaining the rules and methods in a general manner. A glossary of jargon is also provided to fill in some detail a little more.**

American Football has many similarities to rugby in that the team which has possession of the ball can run with it, pass it, kick it at the goal posts or, when it makes good tactical sense, simply boot it as far downfield as possible (punt). The opposing team will of course be trying to prevent any downfield progress and, at all times, will seek to wrestle the ball away from the attackers so that they, in turn, can mount an attack.

However, there are several major differences from rugby, most notably that passing can be in any direction and it is the forward pass which is used to dramatic effect. Furthermore, progress down the field by the team in possession is not a free-for-all affair but

rather, takes place by using a series of quite separate and distinct plays called DOWNS.

The attacking team (it is known as the OFFENCE) is allowed four attempts (DOWNS) to gain 10 or more yards. This distance can be gained by using one or, if necessary, all four downs. If successful in this, the offence retains possession and is allowed another series of four downs to gain another 10 or more yards and so on. If, on the other hand, the offence is prevented from gaining the necessary 10 yards, on four downs, by the opposition (they are known as the DEFENCE), possession of the ball is transferred and the two teams exchange roles.

By repeatedly gaining the necessary yardage, the offence retains possession and 'drives' down the field, eventually taking the ball into the END ZONE, which scores a TOUCHDOWN.

In order to measure offensive progress, it is essential that the field be marked out, yard by yard, giving the appearance of a "Gridiron":

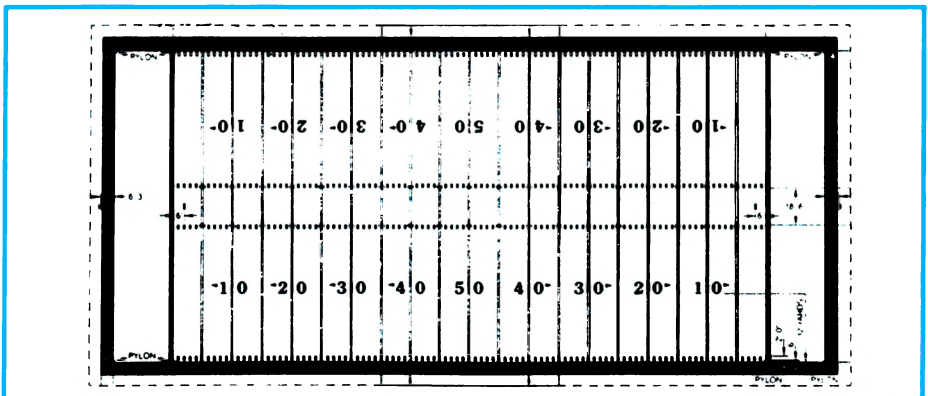


Fig 1: The Field

## The Four-Down System

Armed with a diagram of the field, we can now consider the method of systematic play, the Four-Down System. Let us consider the offence on its own 20-yard line and ready to begin its drive:

1st Down and 10 yards to go: (1st and 10 on the 20): The play gains 4 yards up to the 24-yard line, leaving 6 yards to go to earn another four-down series.

2nd Down and 6 yards to go: (2nd and 6 on the 24): The play gains 5 yards up to the 29-yard line – still 1 yard to go before earning another series of four downs.

3rd Down and 1 yard to go: (3rd and 1 on the 29): The play gains 8 yards up to the 37-yard line, which is more than enough to earn another series of four downs.

1st and 10 on the 37: Lets have a long gain now, say one of 33 yards, putting the offence on the opposing team's 30-yard line.

Unless halted by the Defence, the march continues until the offence takes the ball into the End Zone for a TOUCHDOWN which is worth 6 points. This is followed automatically by a kick from directly in front of the posts and, if successful, is worth 1 point. The latter is known variously as the POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN (PAT) or EXTRA POINT ATTEMPT.

## The Kicking Options:-Field Goal Attempt: Punting

It is only when the downfield drive is in danger of being halted that the offence gives thought to kicking and punting. This will almost always be when the offence has arrived at its 4th down. Failure to gain the yardage for another series of four downs means that possession must be transferred to the opposition at the point where forward progress is stopped.

Usually, a team will discard any thought of gaining the necessary yardage and with either attempt a kick at goal or simply, punt the ball as far as possible down the field. A successful kick at goal, known as a FIELD GOAL, is worth 3 points but there is a price to

be paid for failure in the sense that, following an unsuccessful attempt, the opposition takes over possession at the point from where the field goal attempt took place.

Sensibly, the offence will attempt a field goal, only when within 40 or so yards of the opposition goal line. (Remember that the goal posts are sited a further 10 yards away, at the very back of the end zone). From outside this range the offence will usually punt the ball away, the idea being to place the opposition as deep as possible in its own territory, from where it will begin the return drive.

Kicks on downs other than fourth are possible and will gain ground, but give the ball away.

## Safety

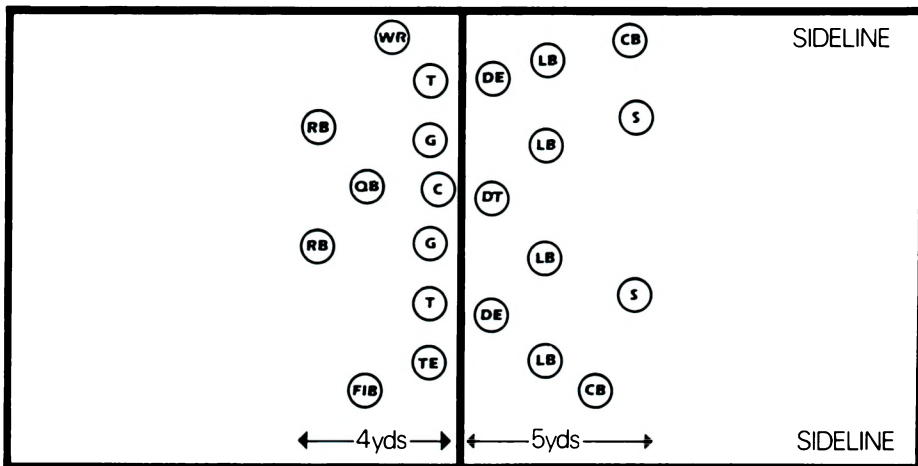
The other method of scoring, known as a SAFETY, occurs when a player in possession is tackled inside his own end zone. In this case, 2 points are conceded to the opposition. This, which represents an indignity, occurs only rarely.

## The Squads:-Offense: Defense: Special Team

A complete American Football team consists of 49 players but only eleven will be on the field at any one time. This group will be the OFFENCE, the DEFENCE or the SPECIAL team. In modern football, it is extremely rare for a man to play in both the 'offensive' and 'defensive' units (these are alternative names for Offence and Defence).

The Special Team, however, will contain players who might otherwise form part of one of the other two units. The Special Team is involved only when attempting or facing a kickoff (this is explained later), a field goal attempt or a punt. Free and unlimited substitution is allowed at all times during the game, between downs. Such substitutions occur in the case of injury or if a player needs to take a breather and when, say, the offensive unit needs extra specialist help for a particular play.

A typical alignment of players is shown in Fig. 2. (overleaf)



**Fig 2:** Player positions

## OFFENCE

**WR** = Wide Receiver – sometimes called Split End

**FIB** = Flankerback

**T** = Tackle

**G** = Guard

**C** = Center

**TE** = Tight End

**QB** = Quarterback

**RB** = Running Back

The Tackles, Guards and Center are collectively known as Interior Linemen.

## DEFENCE

**DE** = Defensive End

**DT** = Defensive Tackle – sometimes known as a Nose Tackle

**LB** = Linebacker

**CB** = Cornerback

**S** = Safety

Defensive ends and the Defensive Tackle(s) are known collectively as Defensive Linemen.

The Cornerbacks and Safeties are known collectively as Defensive Backs.

## The Offence

Fig. 2 shows the offensive unit (playing left to right) in one of several formations possible. At

the nerve centre of all plays is the Quarterback, who will do one of three things:-

Firstly, he might hand the ball to a Running Back, who will then attempt to make forward progress either through or around the offensive front line, represented by the Interior Linemen and Tight End. This is known as a **Rushing Play**.

Secondly, he might throw a **forward pass** to a so-called receiver who has found an open space in a downfield position. Only the Wide Receiver, Flankerback, Tight End and the two Running Backs are eligible to catch a forward pass.

Finally, the Quarterback might run (rush) with the ball himself. This is known variously as a **Sneak, Bootleg or Scramble**.

The Role of the Interior Lineman is that of protector, who does one of two things:-

On a 'Rushing' play, he will attempt to clear a path for the Running Back. This he will do by deliberately obstructing a player of the defensive unit. Known as 'Blocking', this is quite legal in American Football.

On a 'Passing' play together with the other Interior Linemen and perhaps the Tight End and even one of the Running Backs, he will form part of a protective wall around the Quarterback, who needs time to allow the play to develop before releasing the ball.

The Tight End will either play the part of an Interior Lineman, or filter his way downfield to catch a forward pass.

## The Defence

The Defensive Linemen always mount a ferocious charge, to tackle the Running Back or to nail the Quarterback, before he can engineer an offensive play. When they manage to tackle the Quarterback before he has released the ball, this is known as a Sack.

The Linebackers are versatile destroyers who essentially tackle anything which moves. They might attempt to tackle the Running Back or, in the manner of a Defensive Lineman, 'Sack' the Quarterback. Alternatively, they might drop back to help out the Defensive Backs in the face of a passing play.

The Defensive Backs, the Cornerbacks and Safeties, are primarily defenders against the passing play. Always attempting to establish coverage of a potential receiver, they will prevent the pass completion by batting the ball to ground. In this case, the offense retains possession but the ball is returned to the spot of the previous down. For example, following an incomplete pass on, say 2nd and 8 from the offensive team's 30-yard line, the next down becomes 3rd and 8 from that same 30-yard line. In addition they, and indeed the whole defensive unit, can attempt to intercept the forward pass. This is a highly significant defensive play since it results in an automatic change of possession. In the event that the forward pass has been completed, it is the Defensive Back's responsibility to tackle the pass receiver.

## Kickoffs – to start the game and following a score

At the start of each half and to restart play following the score of a Touchdown (with or without a successful PAT) or a Field Goal, there is a Kickoff from the kicking team's 35-yard line. Following these scores, it is the scoring team which kicks off (unlike rugby). After conceding a Safety, the team formerly

on offence kicks off and, in this case, the kickoff is from the kicking team's 20-yard line.

## Strategy And Tactics

On receipt of the ball following a kickoff (or punt), the player who catches the ball will immediately attempt to run back up the field as far as possible. His team will open its series of four downs from the point where the player is tackled. If the kicked or punted ball passes through the end zone or, if the player catching the ball in the end zone declines the opportunity to run the ball back, play restarts with a 1st and 10 to the kick-receiving team on its own 20-yard line. They now have several choices of how to mount an offensive drive. This will always involve the use of numerous substitutions, bringing into action players who have particular offensive talents. The choice of strategy and tactics will depend upon a team's offensive strengths (obviously), its point of progress down the field, the scoreline and amount of time remaining. (There may be a need for heroics!)

Considering the alternatives of rushing and passing, Rushing is a safer, more conservative approach. A long gain is not out of the question but, on average, the gain will be restricted to approximately four or so yards per attempt. On a passing play, the sky is literally the limit. Acres of ground can be gained at a stroke but, there is the ever present danger of the pass being intercepted. And note, that immediately following the interception and as part of that play, the interceptor *can* run the ball back up the field and into the end zone for a touchdown.

It should be added though that, in attempting to intercept the forward pass, the defensive player is not allowed to impede the offensive player (the downfield receiver). This would result in a penalty, giving the offence an automatic gain of yardage.

## Halfway Decisions

As an overview then, whilst the offence is in its own half, it will usually use rushing plays more often than a pass, to grind out the yardage.

Once into the opposition's half and with danger to themselves minimised, the offence will readily mix rushing and passing plays. Approaching the goal line, however, say within 10 yards, an offence will often revert to the safer rushing plays to batter a way through the defences last stand.

The defence will know the strengths of the opposition and will have organised appropriate action. Against a team noted for its rushing prowess, the Linebackers will take up close order with their own Defensive Linemen, to plug any gaps which appear. This, however, leaves their Defensive Backs unsupported and vulnerable to the surprise forward pass.

On the other hand, against a team which relies heavily on the forward pass, one or more linebackers will play with a tendency to drop back, joining the Defensive Backs in covering the eligible receivers. Of course, this leaves the defence weakened against a surprise rushing play. For the defence then, the course of action is dictated by many factors (and a little guesswork).

Specifically, when the offence needs only a short gain, either to earn another series of four downs ('to keep the drive alive', as they say) or to score a touchdown, they will stack up extra Defensive Linemen, at the expense of Defensive Backs, to guard against a rushing play. Equally, when the offence requires a long gain, on 3rd down, the defence will populate its rear with extra Backs, at the expense of Linebackers, to defend against the expected forward pass. (When one Linebacker is replaced by a Defensive Back, the arrangement is known as the 'Nickel Back' formation).

As another option and throwing caution to the winds, the defence can 'Blitz' the quarterback. By this, a Linebacker and perhaps a Safety are committed to killing the play at source by a headlong dash to tackle the Quarterback, ignoring any other possibilities.

The 'Blitz' is a risky all-or-nothing play since, should the Quarterback send the pass

on its way, his downfield receivers then have enormous advantages over the few who remain to defend.

## Penalties

The penalty for breaking the rules of the game almost always involves a loss of yardage by the offending team. Penalty yardage is assessed in five-yard chunks, specifically, 5, 10 and 15 yards. Strangely, though, only rarely do the guilty loose their 'down'. Take for example an offence, on 2nd and 10 from its own 40-yard line, which is guilty of an infringement bringing a loss of five yards. Play resumes with the ball placed on the offensive team's 35-yard line, with still a 2nd down but now with 15 yards to go for another 1st down.

Also, it is a feature of American Football that the captain of the team against which the crime took place has the choice of whether to accept or decline the penalty decision. In most cases he will accept the benefits. However, there are occasions when it would be to his team's advantage to decline the penalty. The latter would be true when, say, on that play, his team had intercepted a pass by the offence. He would most definitely prefer possession of the ball rather than see the offence penalised by five yards and yet retain their possession.

A similar argument is involved when the offence is guilty of an infringement on a 4th-down play from which they did not gain the yardage necessary to earn a 1st down.

Again, with possession automatically being transferred to the team playing on defence, it would be madness to accept the penalty ruling and give the opposition another 4th-down attempt.

## Timing

A whole game takes 60 minutes of 'playing' time (The clock stops when the ball goes out of play). It is divided into four equal 15-minute quarters. Significantly however, a team retains possession from the 1st quarter into the 2nd quarter and from the 3rd quarter into the 4th quarter. During the brief stoppage between quarters, the teams switch

directions of play with the team in possession restarting play from the previous yardage point, but now in the opposite half of the field – there is no disadvantage incurred by the team in possession as a result of the change in direction.

If, however, the scores are tied at the end of 60 minutes, play will move into OVERTIME. This is a series of 15 minute quarters which continue until one side or the other scores to win the game.

## Conclusions

Putting this brief run-through together with the glossary overleaf should provide enough basic knowledge to allow the reader to play and enjoy the computer game and, we hope, derive more enjoyment from the TV screenings of the sport.

Better still why not get along to an actual match? There are clubs starting up all over Europe and there is bound to be one close to you.

**The Introduction has been written for us by Ken Thomas, editor of Touchdown Magazine, who is generally acknowledged as Britain's leading expert on the sport. For those seeking more details Ken has produced a book entitled "A Guide To American Football" which is published by Orbis (£2.95).**





# Football Terminology

**Like any other complex activity, American Football has developed a language of its own. As an aid to clarify we offer this shortform dictionary of gridiron jargon.**

**Audible:** The signals called out by the quarterback when, at the line of scrimmage, he needs to alter the type of play.

**Blitz:** A defensive play designed to tackle the quarterback before he can deliver the pass. Usually, linebackers and a safety join in the pass rush. It is a risky play since it exposes the weakened backfield to the passing play if the quarterback can evade the blitz.

**Blocking:** Deliberately and legally obstructing an opposing player. The blocker is restricted as follows:

- (a) he is not allowed to use hands to grab or hold
- (b) he is not allowed to use arms to encircle or trip
- (c) the block must be from a frontal direction

Blocking is to be distinguished from tackling (allowed only on the man with the ball) for which the only restrictions are those associated with the risk of serious injury, e.g. grabbing an opponent's face mask.

**Chain crew:** The officials, on the sidelines, who operate a ten-yard measuring chain. If there is a dispute over the yardage gained, the ten-yard chain is brought on and becomes the official measure of the yardage.

**Clipping:** A form of blocking by contacting an opponent from the rear and below the waist. It is an illegal act unless the action takes

place as part of the defensive-offensive line interaction.

**Completion:** To catch a forward pass

**Cut:** A sidestep when running at speed.

**Delay of game:** The quarterback fails to initiate play within the allowed 30 seconds

**Direct snap:** The action of the offensive center who, at the start of the down, passes the ball backwards and some 5-7 yards to a team mate, e.g.

- (a) the quarterback in the shotgun formation
- (b) the holder for a conversation or field goal attempt
- (c) the punter.

**Dogging:** An alternative name for blitzing.

**Encroachment:** Making contact with an opposing player before the ball is snapped. This usually means that a lineman has wrongly anticipated the snap of the ball and has lunged forward.

**Fake:** A quarterback pretends to do something in order to confuse the defence. He will 'fake' the hand off to a running back before passing to a receiver.

**Flag on the play:** The official throws down a yellow handkerchief during play to indicate that an offence has taken place.

**Fumble:** The ball is dropped by a player who previously had full control. This can be accidental or as the result of a tackle.

**Goal line:** The chalk line which marks the beginning of the end zone and separates it from the field of play.

**Handoff:** The smooth transfer of the ball by the quarterback, usually to a running back.

**Hang time:** The flight time of a punted ball.

**Hashmarks:** The lines marking the central strip of playing area, and stretching the length of the field. All formal plays begin within or on the edge of this strip.

**Huddle:** The grouping of players, having the next play explained, usually by the quarterback.

**Incompletion:** A forward pass is not caught within bounds.

**Ineligible receiver:** The offensive player, usually a lineman, who is not allowed to catch a forward pass.

**Ineligible receiver downfield:** The ineligible receiver who has moved more than one yard beyond the line of scrimmage on a passing play, before the ball is passed.

**Incompletion:** A forward pass that is not caught within bounds.

**In motion:** An offensive player who, before the snap of the ball, moves to another starting position is said to be in motion. He must run laterally, and is allowed to change direction and turn upfield only after the snap.

**Intentional grounding:** A pass deliberately thrown to ground by the quarterback, to avoid being tackled in possession for a loss of yards.

**Interference block:** The travelling block by a player leading the ball-carrier.

**Interior lineman:** The five players, tackles, guards and center, who form the interior of the offensive line.

**Knuckle ball:** This is a term borrowed from baseball and used to describe the motion of the ball in flight. Instead of gently rotating about its axis, it tumbles.

**Lateral pass:** The pass in a sideways or backward direction (as in rugby).

**Line drive:** A term borrowed from baseball and used to describe the ball which is kicked with great force and which travels a distance, essentially parallel with the ground.

**Lineman:** A player who forms part of the front line, either offensive or defensive, at the start of a down.

**Line of scrimmage:** The imaginary line which passes through the ball from sideline to sideline and across which the opposing linemen face each other in their formal down positions.

**Measuring chain:** The official measure of yardage gained. See also under Chain crew.

**Neutral zone:** The 11-inch strip of ground, the length of the football, stretching laterally from sideline to sideline and straddling the line of scrimmage.

**Offensive holding:** The illegal use of hands by an offensive player in grabbing or holding an opponent.

**Offside:** A lineman, either offensive or defensive, beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped, is offside.

**Onside kick:** The short kick off, as the alternative to the more usual long kick off, following a score, used when the kicking team desperately needs to regain possession to score again.

**Pass interference:** Illegal contact made by either player in the attempt to catch or intercept a forward pass.

**Penalty marker:** The yellow flag (handkerchief) thrown by an official, whilst play is in progress, to indicate that an offence has taken place.

**Personal foul:** An act of violent contact outside the rules of the game, e.g. clipping, late tackle, kicking or punching.

**Piling on:** The unnecessary adding of players' weight to the tackles of others, once the ball-carrier is clearly downed.

**Pitchout:** As an alternative to the handoff, when the quarterback tosses the ball laterally to a running back.

**Play action:** The motion of a quarterback to one side or the other, as a prelude to delivering his pass. As an alternative, he might stand firm in the pass protection pocket.

**Pocket:** The protected area from inside which the quarterback delivers his pass.

**Prevent defense:** The deliberate reinforcement of the defensive backfield to amplify the defense against the expected long pass.

**Punt return:** The distance of the runback following a successful reception of the punted ball.

**Roughing the kicker:** The deliberate, forceful and illegal contact with the kicker after he has kicked the ball away.

**Roughing the passer:** Similar to roughing the kicker, but in this case, the illegal contact is with the passer after he has delivered his pass.

**Rushing play:** Running with the ball following a handoff, pitchout or lateral pass.

**Sack:** To tackle the quarterback in possession of the ball behind the line of scrimmage, for a loss of yards.

**Side line:** Similar to the touchline of soccer and rugby. As in the case of rugby, but not soccer, the sideline is out of bounds.

**Shift:** The concerted movement of offensive players in adjusting to a new alignment immediately prior to the snap of the ball.

**Snap:** The transfer of the ball from the center to the quarterback, initiating play at the line of scrimmage. The center, standing with his legs astride, passes the ball back through his legs.

**Spearing:** The act of diving at a player, helmet first, when he is already clearly grounded.

**Stunting:** The act as an outside linebacker who loops round an inside linebacker to penetrate the offensive line through its middle.

**Tackling:** The act of bringing down or clearly holding with one's arms the man with the ball. See under 'blocking' for the difference between tackling and blocking.

**Time in:** The game-clock is running.

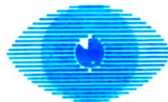
**Time out:** The game-clock is stopped either at the request of the captain or as directed by the officials.

**Touchback:** The act of restarting play from the 20-yard line when, following a kick or punt, the ball has passed through the end zone or, having gathered the ball within the end zone, a defender declines any return run.

**Two-minute warning:** The automatic time out which occurs two minutes before the end of each half.

**Unsportsmanlike conduct:** Ungentlemanly conduct.

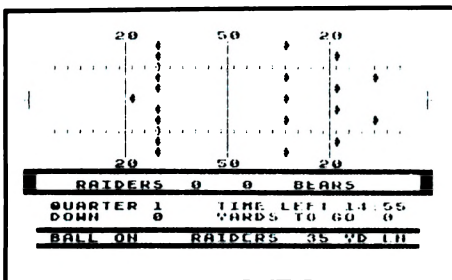
**Yardage:** A distance measured in yards.



# Playing The Game

**Devoted fans, and people who won't read instructions, start here. If you think you're ready to face the challenge of American Football the next few pages will tell you how to go about it from the relative comfort of the armchair, by introducing the options available.**

After loading your copy of 'American Football', follow the instruction screens for a brief run-through of the operation and to start the game. You will be asked to choose either one player (against the computer) or two player game and then to name both teams. After tossing the coin to decide who kicks off the screen will appear—



Kick-off! Raiders start the game.

At the top of the screen is the pitch, upon which all the action will be run. (During plays the ball carrier is indicated by a "flashing" character). Beneath this is the scoreboard which gives you all the information you need, in addition to the match score itself.

Displayed is which quarter of the game is currently being played (there are four of 15 mins GAME time each); minutes remaining in that quarter; which "down" or attempt to gain ten yards, is about to be run; and how many yards remain to be won if the attacking team (on offence) is to keep the ball.

Beneath that is shown the exact location of the ball, relative to one side's goal-line.

The prompt area is the section of screen below the scoreboard and it is here that you will be asked to make your choice of play and be kept informed of what's happening in the match.

## Against the Computer

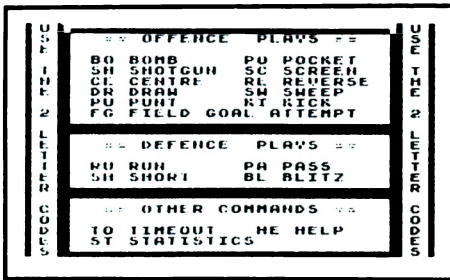
Playing the computer opponent involves responding to the prompt line with a two letter code for your choice of play. The code is simply the first two letters of the play you want, i.e.

S C R E E N   D R A W   S T A T I S T I C S   R U N   E T C

Study the help screen carefully and read through this booklet to familiarise yourself with use of each of the play options. The program will not let you enter an illegal option, so experimenting won't lead to having to re-load! The machine will play you a mean game, mixing it's tactics to keep you off guard and picking up on your pattern of play to improve it's own defence against you.

The use of timeouts will be demonstrated very ably, for instance, should you be leading with around two minutes to go! (Timeouts give a player a way of extending the clock, giving more vital seconds to make a winning play).

Whatever you enter as your option is *not* used in deciding the computer response. It plays the way you do, by evaluation of the



The Help screen.

position on the field, the time left and the type of opponent, to try to 'second-guess' your move and thus defeat your play

There are no difficulty levels in this game – it starts hard and stays that way!

## Head to Head

Two player games run in much the same way, except that each player must enter his/her play in turn. It would be polite not to look at the keyboard while your opponent does this! The computer now acts as referee, commentator and timekeeper and will keep the stats straight as well.

## Timely Matters

The game ends when sixty minutes of game time have elapsed. Each play will take a certain number of seconds off the clock and teams change at end of each quarter, although only at half time is there another kick-off. How long in real-time the game takes depends upon how studiously you make the plays. There is no 30 second penalty as there is in American Football leagues.

## Vital Statistics

At half-time and full-time the stats screen is automatically displayed, and in addition you can call it up at anytime during the game, without losing your turn of play. All the games information is presented on one screen and a printout is available (Spectrum version only) should you desire a record of a

GAME STATISTICS			
RAIDERS	14	7	BEARS
6	PLAYS		13
5	FIRST DOWNS		32
3	RUSH YARDS		92
5	YARDS/RUH		9
5	PASS ATTD COMP		9
26	PASS YARDS		14
15	YARDS/PASS		1
0	FIELD GOALS		1
0	PUNTS		37
0	YARDS/PUNT		0
0-0	INTERCEPTIONS		0
231	FUMBLE RECOVERS		151
0-0	TOTAL YARDS		170
0-0	FIELD GOAL ATTEMPT		1
0-0	PENALTY NUM-YD		5

Put up the Stats at any time.

particularly satisfactory win! If you are exercising this option connect the printer before loading the program.

## Into Battle

Let's run through each of the individual options in turn to get an idea of the usage of each in actual gameplay. Some of these are accepted 'plays' in the true sense of the word, i.e. they would be understood by most American football fans to mean the same thing, but others are compromise labels to cover several possible plays. Centre is an example of this, whilst a screen pass is a

It is usual to use American spelling for words connected with the game, i.e. defense and offense. However, we have kept to the English at all times, for reasons of consistency

Taking the offence first

## Passing

**Screen:** a short 'pass' play in which the linesmen form a protective wall for the

RAIDERS	0	0	BEARS
QUARTER	1	TIME LEFT	14:28
DOWNS	3	YARDS TO GO	6
BALL ON	BEARS	29 YD LN	

A Screen Pass completed.

receiver to try and get behind the defensive 'screen', after catching a lob from the QB.

In the game this is the most likely pass to complete, but will not generally gain you huge yardage. When it does break through, it will break BIG!

**Shotgun:** the passing teams QB retreats with the ball, whilst his team 'fold' around him, buying time. The receivers are spread all over the pitch, (like pellets from a shotgun) to make it difficult for the defence to pick up the play.

Good yards to be gained here, but use of the play give the defence time to anticipate the pass and thus block it. Even-money of making it!

**Pocket:** similar to a shotgun except the line of backs around the QB do not give ground easily, they just shuffle about forming a virtual semi-circle, hoping to keep the opposition away from the QB long enough for him to get the pass off.

If it works it will work well, but your odds are only around those for a shotgun, minus a point or two if the enemy call the defence right.

**Bomb:** the matchwinner! An attempt to pass the ball a long way in one move. Always a risky play to make, but spectacular when it comes off. If the opposition 'blitz' things get very entertaining! Can get you out of some deep holes – or put you flat out in the mud.

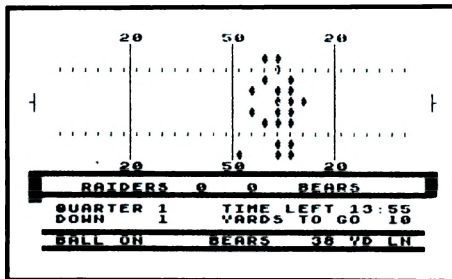
Put it up to win big!

## Running

**Draw:** in theory a cunning deception on the point of the QB. The attacking team line up as if for a pass, but just as the defence comes pounding in to stamp all over him, he hands the ball to a runner – who just happens to be passing by – and who in theory can walk away from the defence for a big chunk of ground.

Nice when it comes off, but liable to lose you ground if they figure it out in time!

**Sweep:** an almost military style manoeuvre in which the man with the ball, accompanied by as many protectors as possible, attempts to



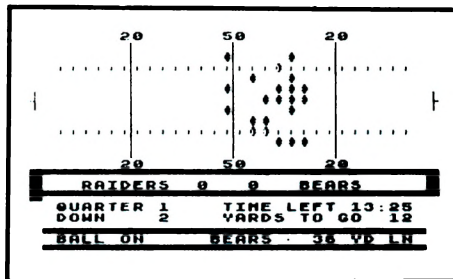
A Sweep (R-L) in progress.

run around the end of the opposing line and then turn it right angles (upfield) leaving a wiped-out trail of defenders behind him. If the defence anticipates it, however, carnage can result – with few yards gained.

**Reverse:** another attempt to foil the opponent into putting his defenders into the wrong place at the wrong time. It starts out as a normal sweep, but then a man takes off in the opposite direction, grabs the ball and runs flat-out for the goal-line. With this one you start praying early that the other guys don't catch on . . .

**Centre:** in this game not really a play at all. It is nothing other than taking the ball from the QB and running head-on into the opposing wall of muscle. If you catch them defending a pass, or have only a few yards to make, this is a good option. Depends on how strong you're feeling.

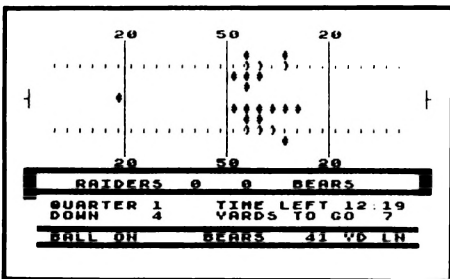
Centre run against a short defence is a real bone-shaker. No prisoners.



A run through the middle (centre).

## Kicking

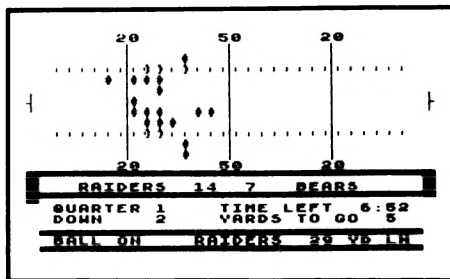
**Punt:** when you don't think you're going to make your ten yards and it's fourth down the option most widely used in the real games is to punt the ball as far down-field as possible and follow up to crunch the catcher before he can run back at you too far. A good punt is around 45 yards but you loose the ball and can get caught on the counter.



Drive stalled! Time to Punt.

**Kick:** used here to describe trying to surprise the opposition by kicking down-field on a down other than fourth. A desperate move but you *will* move the ball away from your own line a long way.

**Fieldgoal:** three points are better than none. If you've moved the ball all the way down the pitch to around 40 yards or less



Going for three points. The Bears kick.

from the end-zone, some reward is due. The opposition have stalled your drive, so you're not going to make the line. A Touchdown is out but kick the ball between the posts and you have those three points showing on the

board. Miss and the enemy start from whence you kicked!

An amazing number of games are won (and lost) on field-goal attempts.

## Defending

**Pass:** if you think your opponent is going to put the ball in the air you need to have men back covering his pass receivers as they come hurtling up the pitch to take the ball. Your defence must be spread out in depth and on it's toes. Call it right and you will greatly reduce the chance of their completing the pass.

Against a run offence your weakened front line is likely to concede more yards than it should.

**Run:** when there appears to be no chance of the ball sailing over their heads, you should get as many men into position to block a runningback as possible. A few will obviously hang around deep behind your line in case some genius breaks through. If they *do* pass, however, you are unlikely to have enough men around to prevent the catch.

**Short:** an unsubtle variation on the RUN option. Here everyone who can walk is piled onto the front line with the express intention of downing one of the opposition. No quarter is given and yards are very hard to get. Lousy against a pass play, however. Most useful near your own line or when the opposition need only a few yards to make a first down.

**Blitz:** an even more unsubtle tactic. Every team knows that the opposing QB is their main enemy. If they can dump him on the floor, ball still in hand they not only ruin the play and gain a few yards back but earn themselves quite a few brownie points into the bargain. Blitz is the preferred method of doing this! As soon as the ball is snapped your players ignore everything else and go chase the QB. If it works great things are possible. Do it *too* often and you get sussed out – which really means the pass is well on it's way to a big gain by the time the bruisers arrive. Use with caution!

## Other options

**Timeouts:** in the game a timeout stops the clock and allows the team calling it to move into position. Effectively this reduces the time taken by the next play and is vital if you're only a few points down with the seconds ticking away.

Once inside the last two minutes most teams have a set drill to prolong the game and get the points they need. (Your computer opponent is particularly good at this!) Used cunningly; timeouts can swing a game in your favour when all seems lost.

**Statistics:** usable at any time in a game and produced automatically at half-time and full-time. The screen will tell you how you're doing on passes, how many yards you made and generally if you should be sacked as a coach -- or cannonised.

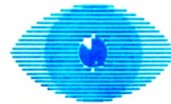
**Help:** a list of all the options open to you. It will not tell you what to do, just what you **could** do. Take your pick.

## Automatic options i.e.: No options!

**Point after:** once you've made a touchdown, you have the chance to earn another point by kicking the ball through the posts. No one turns down the chance of more points, so the computer will automatically make the attempt for you. Just sit back and watch. Most times you'll make it.

**Kick defence:** in order to action a kick play, a team will usually bring on a special squad and thus signal its intention to the opposition. Defending the kick is hence also automatic. If either you or the computer choose to punt, kick or field goal – the appropriate action is taken!

**Penalties:** automatically accepted if it is beneficial to do so.



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# Acknowledgements:

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**Paul Rawling, Philip Harvey** and **Concept Software** for Programming  
**Touchdown Magazine** and **Ken Thomas** for advice and introduction

**Martin Edwards** and **Chris Palmer** for production, debugging and make-up

**Robyn Blake** for Cheerleaders, Counselling and Caffeine

**Heathrow Jets** for demonstrations, demolition and defence.

Our thanks also to **Mrs Jones** for services rendered.