Football 101

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www.eecs.wsu.edu/~bakken/football101.pdf
Overview of Tutorial

Goal: help you understand what is going on in the game to a reasonable level
Non-goal: make you an expert, explain even half the rules, etc.
History & Traditions

• Football Invented late 1800s
  – Not related to soccer (“football” in most of the world)
  – A cousin of rugby
• Colleges have played each other since ca. 1890
  – Season is late August until late November; plus bowl games
• Many traditions associated with it
  – Each college has their own
  – Beloved part of many alumni’s lives
  – Passionate fans: almost like a secular religion
  – “tailgating” & Fieldhouse
  – Mascott: WSU Cougars, Idaho Vandals, …
• For players, emotional momentum is a big part
• Many football terms have made it into (American) English slang usage
• You defend your **goal line**
  – If ball in your half of the field, it is on “Your 35 yard line”
• You try to cross your opponent’s goal line with the ball
How to Win

• Scoring most points wins
  – If tied after normal time, overtime tiebreakers decide

• Points
  – **Touchdown (6):** Cross your opponent’s goal line firmly holding the football
  – **Extra Point (1 or 2):** one play after touchdown from the 3 yard line
    • (1) Kick a field goal
    • (2) cross your opponent’s goal line with the ball (like touchdown)
    • Note: almost always teams kick the extra point
  – **Field Goal (3):** kick ball through “uprights” at your opponent’s endline
  – **Safety (2):** stop your opponent behind its goal line
Flow of the Game

• A game has 4 quarters of 15 minutes each
• Between 2nd and 3rd quarter: halftime (20 minutes)
• Clock runs most of time
• Clock stops some times
  – When player with ball runs out of the playing field
  – When a player is hurt
  – When a first down is made (briefly, while chains are being moved)
  – When a team calls timeout (3 per half for each team)
Flow of the Game (cont)

• Each half starts with a **kickoff** from their 35
  – Receiving team runs back as far as they can

• Team with ball is now on **offense**
  – Tries to cross goal line

• Team without the ball is **defense**
  – Tries to stop the offense
  – If they get the ball, they can try to cross opponent’s goal line

• If a safety happens, team on offense punts from 20 yard line
Flow of the Game (cont.)

• The Offense runs **plays**: **pass** or **run**
  – A play starts with a **hike/snap** from the **center** (a player)
  – A play starts from the **line of scrimmage**
  – Has 4 plays to make 10 yards or opponent gets ball
    • If don’t get 10 yards after 3 plays, usually **punt**: kick ball away
    • If get 10 yards (**first down**), you get another 4 plays
  – Line of scrimmage and first down marked by tall pole with a 10 yard chain
    • Official at each end of chain, holding it
    • On TV, lines across screen generated by computer
  – Offense can give up the ball
    • Scoring a touchdown or field goal (then you do a kickoff)
    • Don’t make a first down
    • **Fumble**: drop the ball and opponent picks up
    • **Interception**: throw the ball and opponent catches it
Players

• 11 players on each team on field at once
• Teams use different configurations of players on both offense and defense
  – Offense changes configurations (scheme) often
  – Defense usually does not change that much
• Some specialized players and configurations for kicking plays
  – Punt, kickoff, field goal
Example Defense

CB
DE
T
G
DE
LB
LB
LB
S
S
CB
Kinds of Players

Offense

– **Offensive line**: 5-7 big players in middle who line up on the line of scrimmage and just **block**
  - **Center (1)**: snaps ball to start play
  - **Guard (2)**: on each side of center
  - **Tackle (2)**: next to guard
  - **Tight End (0-2)**: outside tackles, usually block but can catch pass

– **Backfield**: 1-4 fast players who run with ball (or catch pass)
  - **Quarterback (1)**: takes snap from center, also throws
  - **Running back (0-3)**: lines up behind quarterback, can run with ball or run down field to catch a pass

– ** Receivers**: 0-5 fast players who run down field to catch pass
  - Names: wide receiver, slotback
  - Can block on a running play
Kind of Players (cont.)

Defense:

– **Defensive lineman (4-5):** big players on the line of scrimmage
  - **Defensive Tackle (2-3):** line up in middle of line
  - **Defensive End (2):** line up on outside of line

– **Linebackers (2-4):** line up behind defensive line
  - Faster and smaller than lineman, slower and bigger than defensive back

– **Defensive Backs (3-5):** fast players who **cover** receivers and try to stop them from catching the ball
  - Also tackle ball carrier if they see it is play is a run
  - **Cornerback (2):** line up in front of wide receivers
  - **Safety (1-3):** line up deeper
Kinds of Offensive Plays

• **Run**
  – A player on offense has ball and runs as far towards goal as he can

• **Pass**
  – Ball is thrown by offensive player to a team mate downfield
  – Thrower must not cross line of scrimmage
Kinds of Defensive Plays

- **Rush**: try to get to the quarterback or the running back who has the ball
  - Normally only linemen rush
  - If a linebacker or defensive back rushes, this is a **blitz**
Other Notes

- Lots of rules and strategies on both sides
- Frequent substitution of players between plays
- Stadiums can get LOUD
Football Video

- [http://espn.go.com/watchespn/](http://espn.go.com/watchespn/) has video of football games you can watch.