

The circle of live ball

Fan level

Rule 4 – Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out of Bounds

This section's content

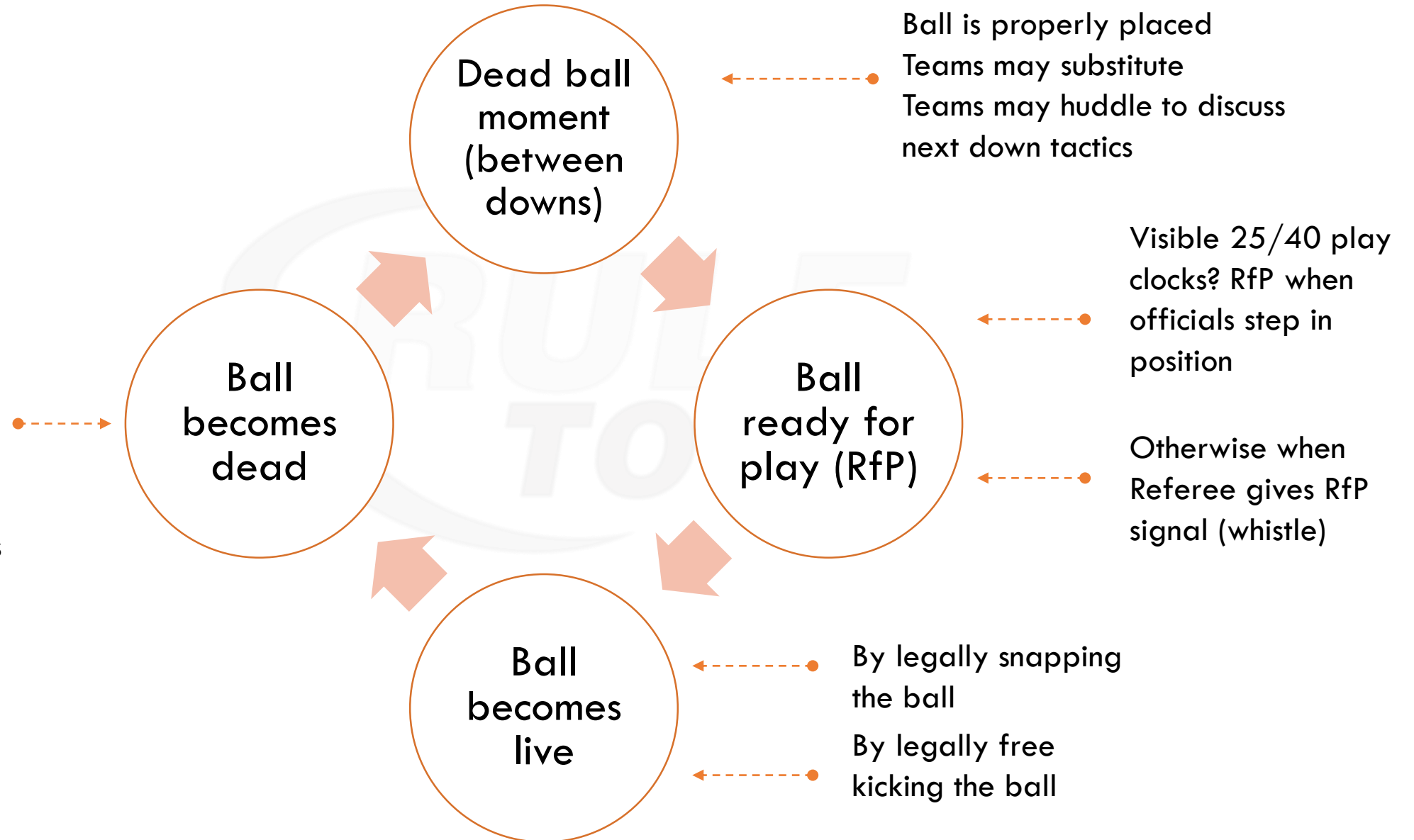
1. Dead ball, ready for play, live ball
2. When does the ball become dead?
3. When is a player or ball out of bounds?



The circle of live and dead ball

Most common reasons why ball becomes dead:

- Ball (carrier) out of bounds
- Ball carrier is 'down'
- Forward pass is incomplete
- Ball carrier's forward progress is stopped
- A score
- Return team fair catches a kick



When does the ball become dead?

Most common reasons:

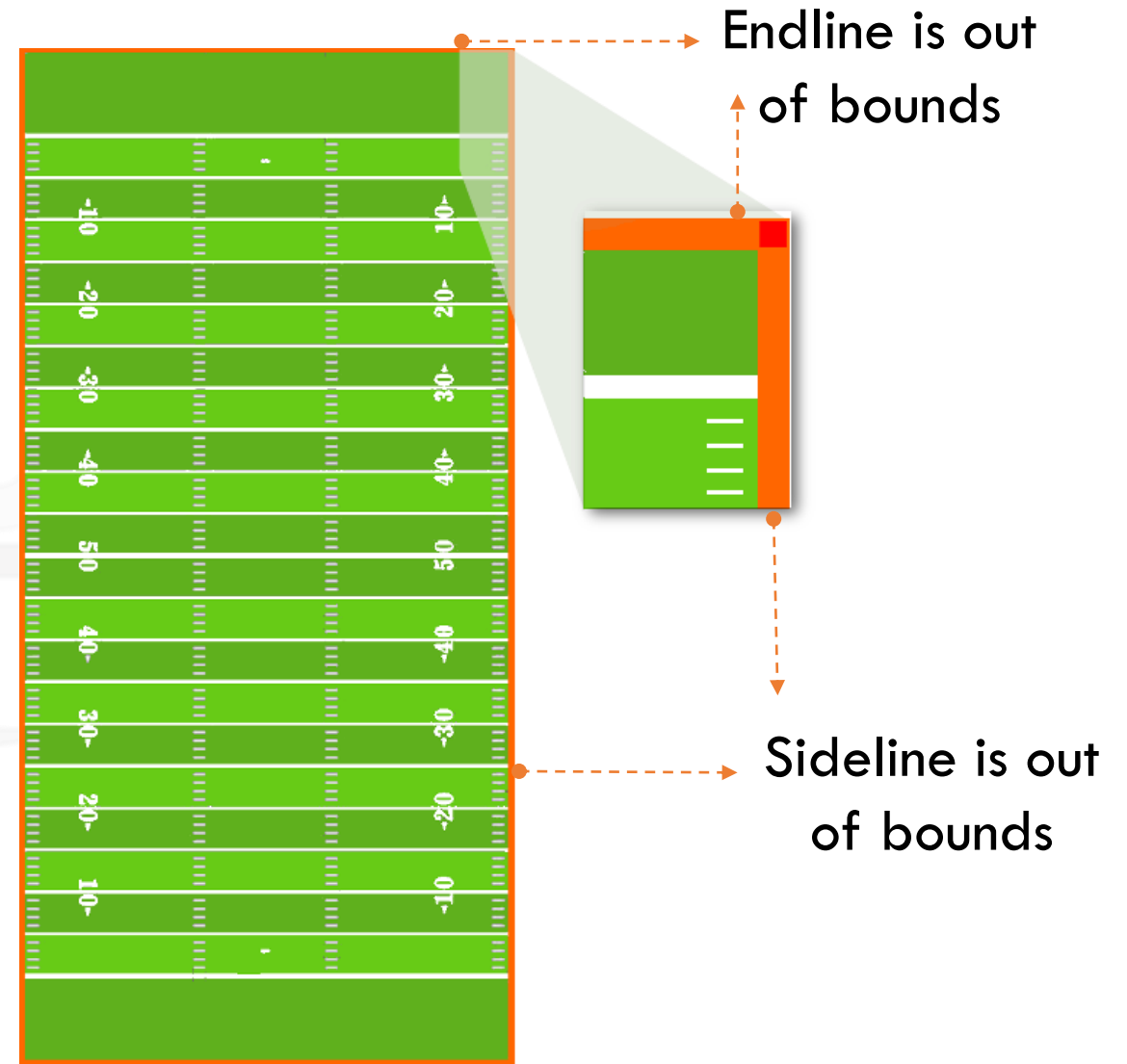
- Ball carrier is 'down' (touches the ground with anything other than hands or foot)
- Ball carrier steps/falls out of bounds
- A forward pass is incomplete (touches the ground)
- A loose ball (e.g. fumble) touches out of bounds
- Ball carrier's forward progress is stopped (he is pushed back by the defense)
- A score
- On a kick play, the return team makes a fair catch

Other reasons:

- Inadvertent whistle
- Kicking team recovers the ball when it is a 'kick'
- A loose ball comes to rest, no players attempt to recover it
- An illegal kick occurs (e.g. the ball is punted beyond the neutral zone)
- On 4th down or the try, a fumble is recovered by another player
- Simultaneous catch
- Ball becomes illegal
- In possession of an official
- Ball carrier simulates knee on the ground
- Airborne pass receiver is held to prevent return
- Ball carrier loses helmet

When is a player or ball out of bounds?

- A player is out of bounds when any part of his body touches anything that is out of bounds (players **excluded**)
- A loose ball (e.g. a fumble, pass or kick) is out of bounds when it touches anything that is out of bounds (players **included**)
- The sidelines and endlines are completely out of bounds (marked orange in the graph).



Remember: the circle of live ball

- The game consists of a continuous loop of:
 - dead ball
 - ball ready for play
 - live ball
 - and dead ball again
- Most common reasons why ball becomes dead:
 - Ball (carrier) is out of bounds. The sidelines and endlines are completely out of bounds.
 - Ball carrier is 'down'
 - Forward pass is incomplete
 - Ball carrier's forward progress is stopped
 - A score