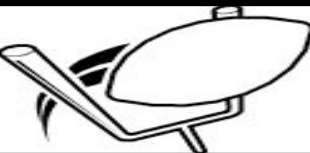


# HOW TO KICK A FOOTBALL

BY ERIK HINTERBICHLER

## A Beginner's Guide



Some of you may be wondering how it is that people like Adam Vinatieri consistently make game winning field goals from 40+ yards out. It's actually pretty simple. You just have to kick the ball through the two yellow posts. Some kickers think that kicking the ball 2 feet to the right of the posts will still get you 3 points. Well, that's not true. The ball must go between the uprights.

Luckily, most of us have coaches that will remind us of this fact once a day, if not more. However, for those of you whose coaches treat you like you don't exist, don't despair. There will be plenty of people in the stands to let you know where the ball is supposed to go. Also, during the week the media should provide you with the advice you need to be successful.

Some kickers, however, need more than simple audio feedback in order to learn where the ball is supposed to go. This is not a problem. The first time you kick a ball outside the uprights, don't be surprised if your coach orders extra running and/or wood-pushing for you and your team. Let the pain of these exercises remind you that next time the ball should go down the center.

If this is still not enough, and you find yourself consistently kicking the ball everywhere except the middle, then consider putting some extra time in the weight room. Since lifting weights hurts, and pain is weakness leaving the body, you will have much less weakness upon leaving the weight room than you had coming in. And less weakness equals more kicks made.

Now that we've covered the basics of field goals, it's time to move on to kickoffs. Coaches nowadays tend to want their kickers to be able to kickoff in a certain direction. These "directional" kickoffs are meant to hinder the return team by providing them with only two paths to return the kick, rather than three. Despite the fact that this is seriously unlikely to help your coverage team, directional kickoffs are still useful because they reduce the amount of distance you can kick the ball downfield. This is helpful when you want to provide the opposing team with good field position, so that you can prove your defense is better than their offense.

Of course, kicking the ball in the right direction is always a problem. Often times while doing crossword puzzles on the sidelines, kickers will forget which way the ball is supposed to be kicked off. These kickers will then kickoff to the right, instead of to the left, thereby incurring the wrath of coaches and teammates as the opposing returner high-steps his way into the endzone. Such a miscue can make for some uncomfortable sessions in the film room. It certainly doesn't help when you also failed to make the tackle and were laughed at by players on the opposition's sideline. So it is recommended that you always ask a member of your kickoff team which way you are supposed to kick the ball before you actually kick it.

Lastly, we move on to punts. Punting is difficult because you are required to handle the ball. It is therefore key that punters put out of their mind all distracting thoughts like running for touchdowns or stiff-arming opposing linebackers. These thoughts will only bring about increased suffering if they are acted upon. It is therefore imperative that you kick the ball as soon as you catch it, in order to decrease the chances that you will decide to take off with it down the field. ■

## 5 Easy Steps

To Improving Your Kicking

- Keep your head down
- Follow through
- Kick the ball straight
- Kick the ball high
- Push the wood

