ABSTRACT: The present application discloses a standard-sized, rectangular football playing field characterized by the fact that it is marked off by parallel, transverse lines spaced every five yards between a pair of transverse goal lines spaced 100 yards apart. Normally, these transverse lines, called yard lines, are colored white, as are the parallel, longitudinal lines which extend the full length of the playing field and define its lateral boundaries; however, in the present disclosure, certain of the transverse lines, which preferably include the goal lines, the midfield or 50-yard line and each of the six transverse yard lines nearest each of the goal lines are colored other than white to distinguish these lines, and the zones defined thereby, from other lines and zones on the field.
FOOTBALL FIELD AREA IDENTIFICATION MEANS

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to the identification of certain zones of a football playing field for immediate and unmistakable recognition thereof by both officials and players. Preferably, conventional white line markings are retained for the side line markings which define the lateral playing field boundaries, certain of the transverse yard lines, the end lines which define the ends of the playing field, and the hash marks which will be defined hereinafter. However, certain selected ones of the transverse yard lines, which may include the 50-yard line and each of the yard lines within 30 yards of each goal line, and the goal lines, are colored other than white (and in some cases, different from each other) to clearly distinguish these lines, and the zones defined thereby, from other lines and zones on the field. Thus, both the officials and the players will be able to quickly and easily recognize these markings and distinguish these zones from other zones almost any place on the playing field. This, in turn, will serve to virtually eliminate the possibility of mistaken identification of these lines and zones by either the officials or the players and, in general, will result in fewer disputes and insure a fairer game.

The main object of the present invention therefore, is to provide a novel means of identification for selected lines and zones of a football playing field which virtually eliminates the chance that these lines and zones will be mistaken for other lines, or not recognized by either the officials or players, or both, regardless of their vantage points.

Further important objects of the present invention are to provide a novel identification of the above character, which is readily adaptable to the present system of field markings, poses no obstructions or hindrance to play of the game, and which will require little or no rule change.

Additional objects are to provide a novel identification means of the above character, which is relatively inexpensive to employ and which is both safe and reliable in use.

Other objects and advantages will become more apparent from a consideration of the detailed description to follow, taken together with the drawings annexed hereto.

BROAD STATEMENT OF THE INVENTION

Broadly described, the present invention relates to a football playing field of the type having a generally rectangular configuration, said playing field being defined by longitudinally extending, generally parallel side lines approximately 160 feet apart and approximately 120 yards long and joined at their ends by generally parallel end lines, said field being marked by a pair of transverse goal lines generally parallel to and spaced approximately 10 yards from a respective end line and extending from side line to side line, and generally parallel transverse yard lines spaced approximately every 5 yards from the goal line to goal lines, and each of which extends from side line to side line; the improvement wherein the six transverse yard lines closest to each of said goal lines, said transverse goal lines and the transverse yard line which is substantially equidistant from each goal line are colored to distinguish them from the other transverse lines.

In another aspect, the present invention relates to a generally rectangular football playing field of standard dimensions bounded by longitudinal side lines and transverse end lines, said field having a pair of goal lines spaced selected distances from a respective end line and yard lines spaced selected distances from goal line to goal line, said goal lines and said yard lines being generally parallel to each other and to said end lines and extending from side line to side line, the improvement which comprises identifying the areas of said field within a selected distance from each goal line by coloring with a certain color the selected yard lines within and defining the said areas said selected yard lines comprising some but not all of said yard lines to distinguish those that are of said certain color from the other differently colored transverse lines adjacent to said areas, and identifying said goal lines and a yard line which is equidistant from each goal line by coloring these lines to distinguish from the other differently colored transverse lines adjacent thereto.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a plan view illustrating a football playing field embodying the present invention. FIGS. 2 and 3 are enlarged fragmentary views of selected portions of the field of FIG. 1 illustrating a preferred form of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now specifically to the drawings, a typical football field is illustrated generally at 11 in FIG. 1 and is seen to be generally rectangular in configuration, being defined by generally parallel side lines 13, 15 which are approximately 120 yards long and approximately 160 feet apart. The side lines 13, 15 are joined at their ends by transversely generally parallel end line 17, 19. The field 11 is marked off by a pair of goal lines 21, 23 spaced approximately 10 yards from a respective one of the end lines 17, 19, respectively, and by yard lines 24—42, inclusive, which are spaced approximately every 5 yards from goal line 21 to goal line 23. The yard lines 24—42 and the goal lines 21, 23 are generally parallel to each other and to the end lines 17, 19 and conventionally extend from side line 13 to side line 15. In addition, two sets of hash marks 43, 45, substantially equidistant from each other and from adjacent side line 13, 15, are provided to mark each yard between adjacent ones of the lines 24—42 and between the lines 24, 42 and the goal lines 21, 23, respectively. Finally, a pair of hash lines 47, 49 located substantially midway between the side lines 13, 15 are provided each at a distance spaced approximately 2 yards from the goal lines 21, 23, respectively, and these are designated as the 2-yard lines.

In the normal process of a football game, the officials and the players must be able to distinguish certain of the lines referred to above, and the zones marked or defined thereby, from other lines and zones on the field. To assist in this matter, it is customary to number certain of the yard lines in accordance with their customary nomenclature. Thus, each of the lines 25, 41 are known as “10-yard lines,” since they are spaced 10 yards from their respective goal lines 21, 23, and therefore may be marked, using the usual lime material, near each side line 13, 15 with the numeral 10. In similar fashion, the lines 27, 39 may be marked with the numeral 20, the lines 31, 35 with the numeral 30, the lines 31, 35 with the numeral 40 and the line 33 with the numeral 50 since it is at “midfield” or 50 yards from each goal line 21, 23. In addition, the goal lines 21, 23 are sometimes made broader than the other transverse lines 24—42, inclusive, and small flags 51, 53 are sometimes placed at either end of the goal lines 21, 23. This is to distinguish these goal lines 21, 23 since it is when a player on one team carries or catches a ball past the opposing team’s goal that a touchdown is scored.

However, during the playing of a game, and particularly during the progress of an actual play, it is quite often very difficult for the players and officials to distinguish certain critical lines, and zones defined thereby, from other lines and zones. Thus, for example, the hash lines 47, 49 often become confused with the goal lines 21, 23 in spite of the wider dimension of the goal lines 21, 23 and the goal line marking flags 51, 53. This occurs either because the official or player is at a difficult visual angle and therefore lacks proper perspective, or simply as a result of confusion and excitement which often surrounds play, or both. This has, in many cases, resulted in a premature or incorrect signal by an official that a touchdown has been scored. Once a signal that a touchdown has been scored is given, little or no regard is given to noting the position on the field where the play actually stopped. Thus, when the error is discovered, if at all, it will not be known where to place the
ball to reinstitute play. This situation is, at best, unfair to the game participants.

Another example relates to the situation or play known as an "onside kick" in which one team, that is, the kicking team, tries to recover possession of the ball before the other team, that is, the receiving team. According to present-day rules, the ball is kicked from the 40-yard line and must travel at least 10 yards, or to the 50-yard line, before a player from the kicking team can touch the ball in an effort to recover it. Again, because of the confusion and excitement surrounding this type of play and for lack of good visual perspective on the part of the officials and players, it is often difficult to ascertain the exact field position of the ball when first touched by one of the players after it has been kicked. In other words, since the 50-yard line looks just like the 45-yard lines which are adjacent thereto, it is difficult for an official to determine whether the ball has actually traveled the necessary 10 yards, by crossing the 50-yard line, when the first player touches it. In addition, the players have a difficult time determining whether the ball has traveled the required 10 yards so that they sometimes hesitate before making a recovery attempt. In either case, that is, a wrong decision by either officials or players, the result is unfair.

Furthermore, with respect to the area near the 50-yard line, the rules require that the receiving team, on a kickoff play, position certain of its players between the 45 and the 50-yard lines. Often, the officials have had to instruct these players as to where they are to line up mainly because of the general lack of good perspective. Still another example of confusing or uncertain situations is that which arises with regard to penalties to be assessed against an offending team from a position within the offending team's 30-yard line. The rules stipulate that except for certain penalties, i.e. "pass interference," an offending team cannot be penalized more than half the distance from the point of infraction to its goal line. With the exception of the "pass interference" penalty referred to above, all other penalties involve either a 5-yard or a 15-yard stepoff against the offending team. Thus, when a penalty is to be assessed against an offending team from within its 30-yard line, the ball should be moved toward the offending team's goal. The distance the particular penalty carries (i.e. either 5 or 15 yards) but not more than half the distance to the offending team's goal.

The rules provide further that the team against whom an infraction is committed has the option of "accepting" the penalty or "refusing" it. To this end, the head official, called the referee, informs that team what the particular infraction was and where the ball would be placed were the penalty to be "accepted" as well as where it will be placed were the penalty "refused." Here again, in the excitement and confusion of a game, or because of improper perspective, or simply as a result of a mistake or oversight in thinking the infraction was committed inside the offending team's 30-yard line when it was not, or vice versa, the referee may err in explaining the "option" and may even assess the penalty incorrectly. This error, like the others described above, may not be discovered until it is too late to correct and the result can be one of great injustice to one team or the other.

The present invention successfully removes these confusing and uncertain situations by providing a simple, effective and virtually foolproof means of identification for the lines and zones set out above. Thus, both the officials and players will easily be able to recognize these lines and zones during play, regardless of their vantage point or perspective, and the possibility of error, and resulting unfairness to one team or the other, of the type referred to above, is virtually eliminated. Furthermore, the present invention provides a clear identification means for these lines and zones which will assist the press and spectators in following and understanding a game.

Referring now to FIGS. 2 and 3, it will be seen that each of the 35-yard lines 30, 36, the 40-yard lines 31, 35 and the 45-yard lines 32, 34 is colored white, as is customarily done now utilizing a nontoxic, lime material. The 50-yard line 33, however, is colored other than white to readily distinguish it from the other yard lines adjacent thereto. The color of this line 33 should also be such as to contrast it with the green color of turf and with the normal brown color of dirt such as appears on a football field. Suitable colors for this purpose include red, orange and yellow (gold) and FIG. 3 illustrates, by shading, that the 50-yard line 33 is orange in color. Thus, during an onside kick play, described above, both the officials and players will readily be able to determine whether or not the ball has traveled the necessary 10 yards simply by observing whether it has passed the orange (or otherwise nonwhite) 50-yard line 33.

In similar fashion, the goal lines 21, 23 are colored to distinguish from the white hash lines 47, 49, respectively, the other yard lines adjacent thereto and also to contrast with the color of the turf and dirt normally found on a football field. FIG. 2 illustrates one of the goal lines 21 and by shading that it is colored yellow (or gold). It will be understood that the other goal line 23 preferably will be similarly colored so that during play, no mistake can be made, regardless of vantage point of the observer, as to whether or not a player has crossed the opponent's goal line.

Each of the yard lines from the 5-yard line to the 30-yard line, inclusive, at each end of the field, that is, lines 29 and 37—42, inclusive, are colored to distinguish from the white hash lines 47, 49, the goal lines 21, 23 and from the yard lines adjacent thereto such as the 35-yard lines 30, 36 and the 40-yard lines 31, 35. To this end, the lines 24—29 and 37—42 are shown by shading as being red in color. Thus, the officials, as well as the players, will be reminded, when discussing or assessing a penalty within this area, that as a result of the penalty, the ball cannot be moved more than half the distance toward the goal line of the team being penalized. A mistake was possible heretofore when all the lines were colored white, is virtually impossible on a field marked according to the present invention.

It will be appreciated that the colors indicated for the particular lines, that is, the orange 50-yard line 33, the yellow goal lines 21, 23 and the red lines 24—29 and 37—42 are achieved by adding a suitable, nontoxic coloring material to the lime material or by substituting another nontoxic material of the desired color for the conventional lime. In addition, the particular colors disclosed above are for the purpose of illustration only and it should be understood that other colors, other than white, green and brown may be equally advantageous. Also, the fifty yard line 33 and the goal lines 21, 23 can employ the same color, and the colors of these lines can be interchanged in any fashion so long as the basic identification means for the lines and zones remains clear.

The present invention provides an extremely simple and highly insensitive football field marking system which greatly reduces the possibility of human error or misjudgement, on the part of the officials and the players, in the midst of the excitement and fast action which accompany normal play. The invention adds virtually nothing to the cost of marking the field, will be readily understood by all officials, players and coaches, and will serve to better inform the press and explain some of the lesser understood rules to the spectators. In addition, this invention can readily be adapted for league play with a minimum of rules change.

By the foregoing, there has been disclosed an improved football field line marking and zone identification means calculated to fulfill the inventive objects hereinafter set forth, and while a preferred embodiment of the present invention has been illustrated and described in detail, various additions, substitutions, modifications and omissions may be made thereto without departing from the spirit of the invention as encompassed by the appended claims.

We claim:

1. In a football playing field of the type having a generally rectangular configuration and being defined by longitudinally extending, generally parallel side lines approximately 160 feet apart and approximately 120 yards long and joined at their
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ends by generally parallel end lines, said field being marked by a pair of transverse goal lines generally parallel to and spaced approximately 10 yards from a respective end line and extending from side line to side line, and generally parallel, transverse yard lines spaced approximately every 5 yards from goal line to goal line and each of which extends from side line to side line; the improvement wherein the six transverse yard lines closest to each of said goal lines, said transverse goal lines and the transverse yard line which is substantially equidistant from each goal line are colored to distinguish from the other transverse lines.

2. The improvement as defined in claim 1 wherein said transverse goal lines and the transverse yard line which is substantially equidistant from each goal line are colored to distinguish from the six transverse yard lines closest to each of said goal lines.

3. The improvement as defined in claim 1 wherein the six transverse yard lines closest to each of said goal lines are red in color.

4. The improvement as defined in claim 1 wherein said goal lines are colored yellow and the transverse yard line which is substantially equidistant from each said goal line is colored orange.

5. The improvement of claim 1 wherein said field includes a hash line called the 2-yard line, located substantially 2 yards from each goal line and substantially equidistant from each side line, said goal lines being distinguished in color from said hash lines.

6. In a generally rectangular football playing field of standard dimensions which is bounded by longitudinal side lines and transverse end lines, said field having a pair of goal lines spaced selected distances from respective end lines and yard lines spaced selected distances from goal line to goal line, said goal lines and said yard lines being generally parallel to each other and to said end lines and extending from side line to side line; the improvement which comprises identifying the areas of said field within a selected distance from each goal line by coloring with a certain color only the selected yard lines within and defining said areas to distinguish those that are of said certain color from the other differently colored transverse lines adjacent said areas, said selected yard lines comprising some but not all of said yard lines, and identifying said goal lines and a yard line which is equidistant from each goal line by coloring these lines to distinguish from the other differently colored transverse lines adjacent thereto.

7. The improvement as defined in claim 6 wherein said yard lines within said areas are colored red.

8. The improvement as defined in claim 6 wherein said line which is equidistant from each said goal line is spaced approximately 50 yards therefrom.

9. The improvement as defined in claim 6 wherein said areas extend approximately 30 yards from their respective goal lines.

10. The improvement as defined in claim 6 wherein said field includes a hash line located substantially two yards from each said goal line and parallel thereto, said goal lines being distinguished in color from said hash lines.