

Name _____

Special Teams Heroes: Unveiling American Football's Special Teams Positions

In the electrifying game of American football, special teams players are often unsung heroes. They play a crucial role in various aspects of the game, from kicking and returning punts to executing field goals and extra points.



Kicker (K)

- **Placekicker:** The placekicker is responsible for kicking field goals and extra points. They must have precise accuracy and leg strength to kick the football through the goalposts. Placekickers are often called upon to score points for their team, making them an essential part of the special teams unit.
- **Punter (P):** Punters specialize in kicking the football as far down the field as possible. They typically punt on fourth down when their team is not in a good position to continue the drive. Punters aim to kick the ball high and far to give their defense a better field position to defend.

Returns

- **Kick Returner (KR):** Kick returners have the thrilling job of returning kickoffs from the opposing team. They need speed, agility, and vision to navigate through the kicking team's coverage and gain as many yards as possible for their offense.
- **Punt Returner (PR):** Punt returners field punts from the opposing team's punter. Their primary goal is to catch the ball cleanly and make a positive return. Punt returners must be sure-handed and elusive, avoiding tacklers to advance the ball downfield.

Special Teams Coverage Players

- **Gunners:** Gunners are fast and agile players who excel at covering punts and kickoffs. They sprint down the field to tackle returners and prevent them from gaining too many yards.
- **Long Snapper (LS):** Long snappers have the precise task of accurately snapping the ball to the punter or holder for field goals and extra points. Their snaps must be consistent and on target, ensuring a smooth operation.

Expectations from Special Teams Players

- **Accuracy:** Kickers and punters are expected to be accurate in their kicks and punts, ensuring that the ball goes where it is intended.
- **Distance:** Kickers and punters also need to have the leg strength to kick the ball for distance, whether it's for field goals, extra points, or punts.
- **Field Awareness:** Returners must be aware of the field and tacklers around them while trying to gain yardage without fumbling the ball.
- **Coverage:** Gunners and other coverage players must excel at tackling and preventing returners from advancing the ball.
- **Teamwork:** Special teams players must work together cohesively to execute plays successfully, whether it's a field goal attempt, punt, or kickoff return.

